

**Joseph Conrad. *Corazón de las tinieblas*.** Translated, introduced and annotated by Jorge Fondebrider. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Eterna Cadencia, 2021. 240 pp. ISBN 978-987-712-222-0.

Joseph Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness* (1899) at the height of the imperial venture and the novel's resonance, far from dying away with the passing of time, seems to reverberate with us in an age still vexatiously beset with racial issues.

Conrad, critically and sympathetically too, made Marlow declare his views about the hypocritical acts of colonial exploitation and the fate of the souls in "the dustbin of progress":

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. (32)

Translated into all major languages, the translation of *Heart of Darkness* into Spanish has been unceasing since 1931. The publication of *Corazón de las tinieblas* by Eterna Cadencia in Buenos Aires in 2021, translated, introduced and annotated by Jorge Fondebrider, marks a tipping point in the translation history of Conrad's most famous novel in the Spanish-speaking world. Since its first rendering into Spanish by Julia Rodríguez Danilewsky in Barcelona by the publishing house Montaner y Simón in 1931, *Heart of Darkness* has undergone countless processes of translation, as Fondebrider exhaustively records in one of the appendices to the 2021 edition. Dutiful to his own art and craft, Fondebrider lists the 36 translations which acknowledge the task of the translator, among them the first one to come out in Buenos Aires in 1954 by Damian Ch. Ochenschlaeger (La Reja publishing house; reedited in 1977 by Centro Editor de América Latina).

This "rioplatense" edition of the novel includes an insightful introduction, a section mentioning the English editions consulted by the translator (Kimbrough, 1988; Armstrong, 2017; Watts, 1990; Hampson, 1995) and three appendices which provide invaluable supplemental material, namely "The Congo Free State under Leopold II", "Autobiographical Sources" ("The Congo Diary", two extracts from *A Personal Record*, a letter to Maria Bobrowska and a letter to Marguerite Poradowska, both dated 24 September 1890), and "Heart of Darkness in Spanish", a comprehensive listing of the 36 translations published in both Spain and Latin America from the early 20th century to 2019. There is also a short select bibliography, which both attests to the thorough work of the translator and usefully provides a selection of updated critical studies to the lay reader.

The principle advanced by Leonora Djament, chief editor at Eterna Cadencia, that "editing is intervening in contemporary issues" (my trans.; Zunini) underlies the design and three-fold purpose of an edition which works towards refashioning the content and style of the original in language contemporary to us, contextualizing the inception and publication of the novel, and resituating it in the flux of recent acts of outrageous racial violence and hatred.

As regards the need to revisit some works in new translations, Fondebrider holds that "reality leads one to revise a work" (my trans.; Tentoni) and in this connection he considers that the task of the translator is not telling what the original said but translating it, "[t]he main point is not improving the original but rendering its style" (my trans.; Tentoni).

The introduction, the indispensable footnotes and the addenda lay out in broad but illuminating strokes the general horizon of racial hierarchy, civilizing zest and commercial greed prevailing in Conrad's day while, simultaneously, they enable parallelisms with the present juncture of systemic structural racism still extant in our societies. The inclusion of "the Congo diary", complete for the first time in Spanish, allows readers to fathom the distance between the chronicle of the tasks undertaken by Conrad in the Congo basin and the complex aesthetic achievement of *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad resorts to his own life experience, and, through Marlow, says Fondebrider quoting fellow translator Araceli García Ríos, "he can create the double effect of presenting it with authenticity and immediacy while at the same time enlarging and clarifying events in hindsight"

(my trans.; 22). This new edition, *Corazón de las tinieblas*, thus proposes to measure up *Heart of Darkness* against these past and present social, political and cultural milieux and to reevaluate Joseph Conrad as a man of his times and, as Antonio Muñoz Molina inescapably claims, “our contemporary” (my trans.; 25).

#### Works Cited

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. England, Penguin Books, 1986.

Fondebrider, Jorge. “Introducción”. Conrad, Joseph. *Corazón de las tinieblas*. Translated by Jorge Fondebrider. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Eterna Cadencia, 2021, pp.7-27.

Tentoni, Valeria. “Entrevista a Jorge Fondebrider: ‘La cultura funciona como una carrera de postas’”. *Eterna Cadencia*, <https://www.eternacadencia.com.ar/blog/contenidos-originales/entrevistas/item/jorge-fondebrider-la-cultura-funciona-como-una-carrera-de-postas.html>. Accessed 28 July 2021.

Zunini, Patricio. “Entrevista a Leonora Djament: ‘Editar es un modo de intervenir en los debates’”. *Eterna Cadencia*, <https://www.eternacadencia.com.ar/blog/contenidos-originales/entrevistas/dossier-editores/item/editar-es-un-modo-de-intervenir-en-los-debates.html>. Accessed 28 July 2021.