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## KOTSIUBYNSKYI VS CONRAD: IMPRESSIONISTIC CROSSROADS

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### Abstract

This article presents a comparative study of Ukrainian and English literary Impressionism through the works of Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi's *Fata Morgana* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Drawing on the literary theory of Impressionism and the principles of cross-cultural (comparative) literary studies, the research investigates how writers from distinct linguistic and cultural backgrounds employ impressionistic techniques to convey psychological depth, sensory perception, and moral complexity. The study explores how the key traits of literary Impressionism – subjectivity, fragmentation, and vivid sensory imagery – manifest within diverse historical, ideological, and aesthetic contexts shaped by empire, national identity, and modernist thought.

Particular attention is devoted to the role of translation as an intermediary between languages and artistic systems. Comparative analysis of Ukrainian-English and English-Ukrainian translations reveals how impressionistic nuances are maintained, altered, or reinterpreted, shedding light on the challenges of preserving mood, rhythm, and atmosphere across cultural borders. Through close textual and discourse analysis, the study identifies both convergences and divergences in the ways Kotsiubynskyi and Conrad construct imagery, interiority, and representations of colonial or peripheral experience.

Ultimately, the paper positions Impressionism as a transnational aesthetic mode that transcends national and linguistic frontiers, linking Ukrainian and English modernisms through shared concerns with perception, consciousness, and artistic form. This research contributes a new intercultural perspective on literary Impressionism and its capacity to articulate the complexity of human experience in a global context.

**Keywords:** Impressionism, Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi, Joseph Conrad, translation, comparative literature, cross-cultural interpretation.

### 1. Introduction

This study aims to deepen the understanding of literary Impressionism by examining its formal and ideological expressions in Ukrainian and English works, particularly Kotsiubynskyi's *Fata Morgana* and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Grounded in Literary Impressionism Theory and Translation Theory, it explores how impressionistic traits – subjectivity, sensory detail, and fragmented narrative – are preserved or altered in translation. Using a cross-cultural comparative approach, the research highlights both shared and divergent features of Ukrainian and English Impressionism within their cultural and linguistic contexts. Situated at the intersection of Postcolonial Studies, Comparative Literature, and Translation Studies, it applies comparative textual analysis, discourse analysis, and hermeneutic interpretation to uncover parallels, contrasts, and the colonial imaginaries embedded in both texts.



This research examines the origins and expression of Impressionism in the works of Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi and Joseph Conrad, comparing their contributions and how scholars and translators interpret them. It analyzes the characteristics, influences, and variations of Impressionism in their texts, aiming to offer new insights into the movement through the lens of these two influential authors.

The object of analysis is the literary manifestation of Impressionism in two works: *Fata Morgana* by Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi (Ukrainian literature) and *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad (English literature). The study focuses on how impressionistic techniques – subjectivity, sensory imagery, temporal fragmentation, and psychological introspection – are expressed and transformed across different cultural and linguistic traditions, with particular attention to translation as a medium of interpretation and transformation. The primary aim of this research is to examine the convergence and divergence of Ukrainian and English literary Impressionism through a comparative and cross-cultural lens. It seeks to identify how Kotsiubynskyi and Conrad employ impressionistic techniques to convey human perception and moral conflict within the frameworks of national identity, colonial experience, and aesthetic modernism. Additionally, the study aims to evaluate how translation mediates impressionistic expression, revealing the challenges of transferring aesthetic and cultural nuances across languages.

The study aims to solve a set of questions, namely:

- how the core features of literary Impressionism – such as fragmentation, sensory detail, and subjectivity are realized in the works of Kotsiubynskyi and Conrad;
- in what ways their cultural, historical, and ideological contexts shape their respective impressionistic styles;
- how translation processes (Ukrainian-English and English-Ukrainian) preserve, alter, or reinterpret the impressionistic essence of each text;
- what these comparative findings reveal about the transnational nature of Impressionism as both a literary and cultural phenomenon.

This study's novelty lies in its intersectional methodology, combining the literary theory of Impressionism with cross-cultural (comparative) literary studies and translation analysis. It presents a systematic comparative exploration of Ukrainian and English Impressionism through Kotsiubynskyi and Conrad – two authors rarely juxtaposed in this context. It introduces translation as a diagnostic tool for identifying how aesthetic meaning travels between linguistic systems. It situates both writers within a postcolonial and intercultural dialogue, revealing shared sensibilities shaped by imperial experience and peripheral identities. The approach highlights Impressionism as a transnational aesthetic, bridging the local and the universal through perception, atmosphere, and cultural memory.

## 2. Method and material

The methodological framework integrates two theoretical pillars: Literary Theory of Impressionism, emphasizing the representation of fleeting sensations, inner consciousness, and fragmented perception as key stylistic and structural devices, and Theory of Cross-Cultural (Comparative) Literary Studies, focusing on the interaction between distinct literary traditions, languages, and cultural contexts.

The material for the analysis is primary texts, *Fata Morgana* (Ukrainian original, 1910; English translation, 1980) and *Heart of Darkness* (English original, 1899; Ukrainian translation, 2021), where analytical methods are applied. They include close reading of impressionistic techniques (imagery, syntax, narrative perspective), comparative textual and discourse analysis to trace stylistic correspondences and divergences, translation analysis to assess semantic, stylistic, and cultural transformations across versions, and hermeneutic interpretation to contextualize these findings within broader historical and ideological frameworks (colonialism, national identity, modernism). Together, these methods ensure a comprehensive exploration of literary Impressionism as both a stylistic phenomenon and a cross-cultural dialogue between Ukrainian and English modernities.

‘Impressionism’ as a specifically aesthetic term was launched in 1874 by a journalist, Louis Leroy, to ridicule the affronting formlessness of the pictures exhibited at the Salon des Independents, and particularly of Claude Monet’s painting entitled *Impression: Sunrise*. Impressionism, initially an artistic movement, was defined by its focus on light and color, with artists using primary colors applied in small, unblended strokes to create a sense of movement and change. The form of objects was often blurred, emphasizing the effect on the viewer’s eye rather than precise detail. This approach extended beyond art into literature, evolving from the earlier Realist movement, which focused on objective depictions of everyday life. In literature, Impressionism shifted away from Realism’s objective portrayal of reality, instead emphasizing subjective experiences and fleeting moments. Writers sought to capture the inner perceptions of characters, often prioritizing sensory details and psychological depth in the chapter “Impressionism and Post-Impressionism” in *The Oxford Handbook of Virginia Woolf* (2021), T. Katz argues that literary impressionism provides a key bridge into modernist experimentalism by privileging fleeting sensory impressions, interior states, and fragmented perceptions over coherent external narrative. She shows how this aesthetic allows modernist authors, even those like Virginia Woolf, to reconfigure subjectivity and time, turning momentary consciousness and material surfaces into the terrain of artistic innovation. Key characteristics of Impressionist literature include a focus on subjective perception, emphasizing characters’ impressions, thoughts, and emotions, while exploring their psychological depth through techniques such as stream-of-consciousness (Katz, 2021). It employs vivid sensory detail, capturing light, color, and sound to immerse the reader’s senses and create atmosphere. Narratives are often fragmented and non-linear, shifting between perspectives or periods to reflect the fluidity of human consciousness. A sense of transience pervades these works, highlighting the fleeting nature of experiences and impressions, while subtle symbolism (Howard, 1991) conveys deeper themes and adds layers of meaning. Through these elements, Impressionist literature prioritizes mood and emotional resonance over conventional plot structures, presenting a rich, immersive portrayal of human experience. Literary Impressionism, in J. Matz’s formulation, is the technique by which fiction privileges fleeting “impressions” – experiences that are neither mere sensations nor fully formed ideas – that mediate between past and present, sense and thought, thereby promising a kind of perceptual totality (Matz, 2001). Its legacy in modernist literature lies in how this promise ultimately becomes precarious: writers such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Marcel Proust show that while the impression aims to unite temporal moments and interior/exterior life, its very instability becomes a hallmark of modernist self-reflexivity and fragmentation (Matz, 2001).

While these features are not exclusive to Impressionism, they are central to its literary style. Impressionism in literature shares roots with Realism, but it diverges by focusing on subjective experiences and the impermanence of human perception (Impressionism in literature, 2016).

Ukrainian literary Impressionism emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries under the influence of European trends and the socio-political context of Ukraine. It blended realism with subjective “end-of-the-age” sensibilities, aiming to capture both objective and subjective impressions: “Ukrainian Impressionism blends realism with subjective, ‘end-of-the-age’ sensibilities, capturing objective as well as subjective impressions” (Nalivaiko, 1985, p. 158). As Holod notes, Impressionism conveys “a subjective impression” through objectification, achieved by visualization that “strengthens emotional explosions with solid truth, even in drawing” (Holod, 2005, p. 221). Key figures include Ivan Franko, whose poetry fused Realism, Romanticism, Symbolism, and Impressionism, marked by vivid imagery and the influence of painting (Holod, 1998, p. 328), and Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi, who added psychological depth and introspection. Other writers such as Lesya Ukrainka and V. Vynnychenko employed vivid imagery and symbolism to capture fleeting emotions. Rooted in national identity yet shaped by European aesthetics, Ukrainian Impressionism reflected rural life, landscapes, and cultural memory while adapting innovative literary forms to turbulent historical change.

In English literature, Impressionism emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, influenced by a shift towards experimental aesthetics and sensory experience. This period saw British writers adopting techniques from French Impressionist artists, who were gaining prominence in Europe. Both Impressionism and Symbolism, as reactions against tradition, emphasized the individual's private vision and developed during the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century epistemological crisis, marked by the 'death of God' and the decline of the omniscient author (Peek & Hamblin, 2004, p. 103). English Impressionist literature is characterized by a deep focus on subjectivity and introspection, centering on characters' inner thoughts, emotions, and psychological states. Rather than following conventional linear plots, it emphasizes mood and atmosphere, using vivid sensory detail and impressionistic depictions of light, color, and sound to evoke emotion. Its structures are often fragmented and experimental, frequently employing non-linear narratives and stream-of-consciousness techniques to reflect the fluidity of human consciousness. Symbolism and metaphor play a key role, conveying deeper meanings and revealing characters' inner struggles. Ordinary experiences are elevated, depicted with emotional depth and aesthetic significance. By dissolving traditional storytelling boundaries, English Impressionist literature captures fleeting impressions, ambiguous moments, and the transient, shifting nature of lived experience (Impressionism in literature, 2016).

### **3. Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi as the eminent Ukrainian Impressionist**

The main representative of Ukrainian Impressionism, M. Kotsiubynskyi, is a significant contributor to the development of Ukrainian modernism. In 1884 and 1885, he began as a realist with *Andrij Solovejko* and *Dlja zahal'noho dobra* (*For the Common Good*). Gradually, however, he forsook the realistic story in favor of short impressionistic psychological sketches written in 1902, such as *Na kameni* (*On the Rock*), *Cvit jabluni* (*The Apple Blossom*), and *Intermezzo* (in 1908). He contributed to the development of Ukrainian modernity to a considerable extent. He introduced sensory perception without unnecessary descriptions. Impressionism in his presentation blurs the boundaries between art. The world of man is surrounded by nature, created with the help of colors, sounds, and tactile sensations and impressions (Genyk-Berezovska, 2000). The impressionistic qualities of Kotsiubynskyi's prose are evident in his rich *sensory detail*, as his works vividly portray Ukrainian landscapes, climate, and cultural settings, immersing readers in the lived reality of rural life. His writing is also *psychologically profound*, moving beyond mere description to explore the inner conflicts of his characters and the moral and emotional tensions arising from their aspirations for land ownership – and, symbolically, control over their own lives. In this way, Kotsiubynskyi's narratives transcend simple adventure tales, evolving into nuanced explorations of human consciousness. His works also carry a pointed *anti-colonial perspective*, revealing the brutal realities of imperial domination. In *Fata Morgana*, the recurring motif of *black* exposes the corrosive foundations of the Russian empire: it symbolizes despair, suffering, and death while stripping away the façade of progress and civilization. Through this chromatic symbolism, colonialism is revealed as a shadowed system rooted in exploitation and relentless oppression, with *black* serving as a marker of both moral decay and the oppressive structures at the heart of empire.

The short story *Fata Morgana* draws on Kotsiubynskyi's knowledge of rural life in Podolia, Volhynia, and Chernihiv during the 1902 peasant unrest, supported by villagers' correspondence and documentary accounts of the movement. Within that backdrop, each peasant hero played out the drama of his dream against the tragic panorama of public events. As B. Rubchak observes, the detailed historical setting functions less as social chronicle than as "a dynamic canvas that serves as a backdrop for Kotsiubynskyi's triangular structure of opposing forces – the poet's thirst for the ultimate horizons of existence... versus the cruelly inhibiting horizons of the world" (Rubchak, 1981, p. 81).

Kotsiubynskyi's *Fata Morgana* portrays life in a Ukrainian village before and during the 1905–1907 revolution. The work is notable for its pioneering ideas and its masterful narrative technique. Kotsiubynskyi successfully depicts the archetypal characters of the contemporary Ukrainian rural community with a particular emphasis on the psychological depth of individual personalities.

Additionally, the narrative explores the class struggle between peasants and landowners as well as the rise and development of the national revolution, which sought to challenge the oppression and unfreedom imposed by the ruling classes. His striking use of *sensory detail* enables readers to become fully immersed in the textures and rhythms of rural Ukrainian life (1):

(1) „*Нема руїн. Скрізь нові будинки. Гук машин, сичання пари, тиск людей, ціле пекло роботи. Все рушається, живе, все таке принадне. I він чує силу у своїх руках, а в роті має смак холодного пива...*” (Kotsiubynskyi, 2017, p.3) / “*There were no more ruins: new work-shops everywhere, the sound of machines working and steam hissing, a crowd of people, and a hell of a lot of work to be done. All bustle, commotion, he liked it so much. And he felt the strength in his hands and the taste of cold beer in his mouth.*” (Kotsiubynskyi, 1980, p. 14)

Passage (1) captures the vibrant atmosphere of the newly established workshops, emphasizing sensory details such as the sound of machinery, the hiss of steam, and the general hubbub. Phrases like *a hell of a lot of work to be done* and *he felt the strength in his hands* evoke a sense of immediacy and physical engagement, while the reference to the taste of cold beer introduces an additional sensory layer to the scene. The English translation effectively conveys the core imagery and atmosphere of the original Ukrainian text, illustrating a significant transformation from desolation to a lively, industrious environment. Both versions express the shift from ruin to productivity. The Ukrainian phrase *Скрізь нові будинки* translates as *new workshops everywhere*, with the latter term reflecting the industrial context while preserving the meaning. Similarly, *ціле пекло роботи* is rendered as *a hell of a lot of work to be done*, which effectively conveys the intensity and scale of the labor involved. The Ukrainian *Все рушається, живе, все таке принадне* carries a poetic tone, suggesting vitality and charm. The English version, *All bustle, commotion, he liked it so much*, maintains this liveliness and positive sentiment while adapting to the English language.

In addition to vivid description, Kotsiubynskyi delves into the inner struggles of his characters, highlighting the moral and emotional tensions born from their desire to claim ownership of both land and life. In doing so, his narratives transcend mere adventure stories, developing into sophisticated studies of *psychological complexity*. Passage (2) below contains several images highlighting a somber, gray, and melancholic depiction of nature, viewed through a ‘dark screen’ due to the dire circumstances:

(2) „*Ідуть дощі. Холодні осінні тумани клубочать угорі і спускають на землю мокрі коси. Пливе у сірі безвісти нудьга, пливе безнадія і стиха хлипає сум. Плавуть голі дерева, плавуть солом'яні стріхи, вмивається слізами убога земля і не знає, коли осміхнеться. Сірі дні зміняють темній ночі. Де небо? Де сонце?*” (Kotsiubynskyi, 2017, p. 26) / “*It is raining. The cold autumn mists curl in the sky and come down to earth in thick wet braids. Anguish and despair drift along into the grey unknown, grief sobs quietly. The bare trees and thatched roofs cry, the wretched land bathes in tears and knows not when it will smile. Dark nights follow bleak days. Where, pray, is the sky? Where is the sun?*” (Kotsiubynskyi, 1980, p. 39)

The atmosphere seems to reflect both the revolutionary sentiments of the villagers and the author’s feelings. The sense of despair and sorrow is conveyed with nature itself likened to weeping trees. In the original, *y cіri безвісти* describes the bleak surroundings, while the English translation opts for *cold autumn mists*. The Ukrainian version emphasizes the mysterious and the indefinite sadness, whereas the English version highlights the cold and the seasonal blues. Both the original and translation powerfully depict nature’s response to the late autumn rain. The Ukrainian *голі дерева, плавуть солом'яні стріхи* and the English *bare trees and thatched roofs cry* evoke a poignant image

of nature mourning. Likewise, both texts use metaphoric tears to portray the rain's effect on the land. The Ukrainian *вмикається слізами убога земля* and the English *the wretched land bathes in tears* emphasize the sorrowful state of the earth and the people alike.

*Fata Morgana* unveils the destructive and corrosive core of the Russian empire. The motif of *black* signifies not only anguish, loss, and mortality, but also symbolically dismantles the empire's self-fashioned image of progress and civilization. In its place, *colonialism* emerges as a system shrouded in darkness, defined by relentless exploitation and domination, with *black* serving as the emblem of oppression and moral corruption at the empire's center.

To more effectively depict Malanka's character, the author highlights key traits such as her hard work and pride in passage (3):

(3) “*Мала, суха, чорна, у чистій сорочці, в старенькій свитці. Андрій не бачить її обличчя, але знає, що в неї спущені додолу очі й затиснені губи. Ми хоч бідні, але чесні.*” (Kotsiubynskyi, 2017, p. 3) / “*There was Malanka, small and thin, in a clean blouse and old coat. Andriy couldn't see her face, but he knew that her eyes were downcast and lips pursed. Though we're poor people, we're honest.*” (Kotsiubynskyi, 1980, p. 14)

In the Ukrainian original, *Мала, суха, чорна, у чистій сорочці, в старенькій свитці*, Malanka is introduced with brief but vivid descriptions. The English translation, *There was Malanka, small and thin, in a clean blouse and old coat*, successfully preserves the clarity and visual imagery of the original. The descriptive epithet *суха* is accurately rendered as *thin*, maintaining the intended depiction. Furthermore, the translation of *спущені додолу* as *downcast* in the phrase *her eyes were downcast and lips pursed* effectively conveys the somber tone and captures the mood of the original. However, the omission of the color term *чорна* (*black*) in translation significantly diminishes the passage's resonance. In Ukrainian, *чорна* not only evokes darkness and heaviness but also carries the connotation of exhausting, backbreaking labor. By leaving it out, the translation strips the text of its layered meaning, weakening both the sense of toil that defines peasant life and the symbolic association of black with suffering and exploitation. As a result, the richness of the original imagery is reduced, and the cultural weight embedded in the word is lost.

The passage below exemplifies key elements of Impressionism through its vivid depiction of the character's mental state (4):

(4) “*Дивно. Прожила життя, а воно раптом впало у прірву. Хоч би слід залишило, хоч би згадку яку. Все зап'яв морок. Все чорне. Навіть нинішній день одсунувся далеко, так далеко забіг, що відається давнім, давно забутим сном.*” (Kotsiubynskyi, 2017, p. 92) / “*It was strange. She had lived her whole life and suddenly she had fallen into a precipice. If only there were a trace left, some memory. Everything was engulfed by the darkness. Everything was black. Even today had receded far into the distance, so far that it seemed a forgotten dream.*” (Kotsiubynskyi, 1980, p. 118)

The use of metaphoric language, such as *fallen into a precipice* and *engulfed by darkness* (4), evokes a strong sensory impression of the character's disorientation and emotional turmoil. The repetition of *Everything was* further amplifies the overwhelming nature of the experience as if all aspects of the character's life have been consumed by the abyss. The phrase *Even today* receding into the distance introduces a temporal distortion, blurring the boundaries between past and present. This sense of temporal ambiguity aligns with the impressionistic focus on subjective experience and the fluidity of time. The notion that today *seemed a forgotten dream*, expressed through simile, deepens the character's struggle to maintain a grasp on reality. The Ukrainian *зап'яв морок* and the English *Everything was engulfed by the darkness*, where the English version employs direct wording to capture the immersion into darkness, closely adheres to the original meaning. The theme of time is

effectively maintained in both versions, highlighting the character's perception that even 'today' has receded far into the distance, reinforcing a sense of temporal dislocation. The past is depicted as a forgotten dream, underscoring the character's estrangement from reality. Both versions emphasize either the significance of memory or the absence thereof, suggesting a profound yearning to preserve a connection to the past.

The examples examined showcase the diverse range of impressionistic elements, detailed character development, and atmospheric scenarios that characterize impressionistic literature. Through skillful use of sensory details, time distortions, and a focus on personal experience, they provide a distinctive and emotionally impactful reading experience. Kotsiubynskyi's use of vivid imagery, metaphorical language, and sensory details draws readers into the impressionistic world he crafts. While the intensity and emotional depth of the descriptions can sometimes make events seem more dramatic, this likely reflects the author's goal of portraying life as vividly and expressively as possible. Based on his knowledge and impressions, Kotsiubynskyi's work epitomizes subjectivism and highlights the early signs of impressionism.

#### 4. Joseph Conrad as the eminent English Impressionist

Joseph Conrad is a pivotal figure in English literature, associated with the Impressionist movement. *Heart of Darkness* (1899) is widely recognized as a quintessential example of Impressionistic literature. It marks the beginning of his 'darker' works, which were not compiled into a collection until 1902 (York, 1982). His literary legacy is frequently interpreted at the intersection of impressionistic aesthetics and anti-colonial critique. Texts such as *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* illustrate his capacity to weave vivid sensory portrayals of colonial environments with a penetrating examination of the moral and political implications of empire. This synthesis allows Conrad to be read simultaneously as an impressionist writer and as a powerful critic of imperialism. The Impressionistic dimension in Conrad's prose involves *sensory evocativeness* as his fiction abounds in finely crafted depictions of colonial settings. *Psychological insight* is well-felt in his works since, alongside environmental detail, he delves into the inner struggles of his characters, highlighting the mental and ethical tensions produced by colonial encounters. His works are as much psychological explorations as they are descriptive narratives, providing keen insights into the multifaceted processes underlying human consciousness (Netragaonkar, 2016, p. 1647). Conrad's descriptions of the sea, landscapes, African jungles, and the unsanitary living conditions of the colonized natives present a realistic portrayal of these settings, allowing readers to immerse themselves in the characters and their environments (Netragaonkar, 2016, p. 1652). In doing so, his narratives transcend the adventure genre and assume the form of probing psychological studies. *Heart of Darkness* powerfully reveals the *exploitative core of empire*, depicting colonialism not as a lofty civilizing project but as a ruthless machinery of plunder and domination. The recurring imagery of *black* functions as a symbolic shorthand for this reality—evoking both the literal darkness of the colonized spaces and the moral corruption at the heart of imperial rule, where *black* becomes the chromatic emblem of oppression, brutality, and decay. Through vivid descriptive prose, Conrad captures the African landscape while delving into the complex issues surrounding colonialism and human morality. His writing is marked by an atmospheric quality that emphasizes the subjective experiences of the characters and their environments.

Conrad's use of metaphor in *Heart of Darkness*, particularly the comparison of the meaning of Marlow's experiences to an enveloping haze rather than the core of a nut, encapsulates the blend of symbolism and impressionistic *sensory qualities* in his work. This technique highlights the story's symbolic layers, while also reinforcing its impressionistic focus on sensory experience. The quote below illustrates key impressionistic elements through the phrase *evoke the great spirit of the past* and the focus on the personal subjective experience of someone who has '*followed the sea*' (5):

(5) “*And indeed nothing is easier for a man who has, as the phrase goes, ‘followed the sea’ with reverence and affection, than to evoke the great spirit of the past upon the lower reaches of the Thames.*” (Conrad, 2018, p. 6) / “*І справді, людина, котра шанобливо і палко віддалася, як то кажуть, ‘поклику моря’, може заввиграшки оживити тут, у пониззі Темзи, величний дух минулого.*” (Conrad, 2021, p. 3)

The language highlights immediate sensory impressions and memories connected to the river (5), invoking a sense of nostalgia and a link to the past. This emphasis on personal experience and emotion reflects the core tenets of impressionistic literature. The passage describes a person who has ‘*followed the sea*’ with reverence and passion, suggesting a profound connection to maritime life. The Ukrainian translation faithfully conveys this sentiment, capturing the essence of devotion to the ‘call of the sea’ with reverence and ardor. One notable distinction lies in the translation of *than to evoke the great spirit of the past upon the lower reaches of the Thames* as *може заввиграшки оживити тут, у пониззі Темзи, величний дух минулого*. The lexeme *заввиграшки* introduces a more playful, informal tone as compared to the original, yet it effectively conveys the notion of bringing to life or animating the great spirit of the past on the lower reaches of the Thames.

*Psychological detail* is well-seen through metaphoric imagery, such as *empty stream, great silence*, and sensory descriptions of the air as being *warm, thick, heavy, sluggish* conveys a highly subjective and immediate impression of the environment. This language creates a momentary snapshot that emphasizes the emotional and sensory impact of the scene, aligning with the impressionistic tendencies in literature. The vivid imagery immerses the reader in the atmosphere of the journey, evoking a strong and immediate sense of the surroundings (6):

(6) “*Going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish.*” (Conrad, 2018, p. 39) / “*Мандрі горіріч нагадували повернення до перших днів створення світу, коли рослинність буяла на землі й великі дерева були її владиками. Безлюдна ріка, непорушна тиша, непрохідний ліс... Повітря було тепле, густе, важке, сонне.*” (Conrad, 2021, p. 34)

Passage (6) describes the experience of traveling up the river, likening it to a journey back to the primordial stages of the world. It paints an image of a lush, untamed environment where vegetation flourishes and large trees dominate the landscape. The depiction includes an empty river, profound silence, and an impenetrable forest, with the air characterized as warm, thick, heavy, and sluggish. The translation effectively captures the essence of the English original, yet some linguistic differences emerge: *рослинність буяла на землі* conveys the idea of flourishing vegetation but may lack the connotation of *riotous* or *uncontrolled growth* present in the English lexeme *rioted*. Additionally, the phrase *Безлюдна ріка*, which is rendered from *An empty stream*, captures the emptiness accurately but may introduce a slightly different nuance, as *безлюдна* typically refers to something deserted or uninhabited, while *empty* in English may emphasize the absence of activity or movement.

In the sentence below (7), with a clear-cut *anti-colonial tone*, the phrase *deathlike indifference of unhappy savages* employs vivid and emotionally charged verbal means to convey the immediate subjective impression of passivity and detachment:

(7) “*They passed me within six inches, without a glance, with that complete, deathlike indifference of unhappy savages. Behind this raw matter, one of the reclaimed, the product of the new forces at work, strolled despondently, carrying a rifle by its middle.*” (Conrad, 2018, p.19)/ “*Вони проминули мене дюймів за шість, навіть не глянувши, із кам'яною байдужістю, властивою цим нещасним дикунам. За ними, тримаючи на плечі гвинтівку, сумно сунув один із “неофітів” – цей виплодок нового ладу.*” (Conrad, 2021, p.15)

The juxtaposition of the individual holding the rifle with this description intensifies the contrast between the oppressive environment and the individual ensnared by colonial forces. This imagery captures a momentary snapshot, emphasizing the emotional resonance of the scene, aligning with the

impressionistic tendencies in literature that focus on fleeting sensations and subjective experiences. In the English text, the phrase *complete, deathlike indifference of unhappy savages* is translated into Ukrainian as *із кам'яною байдужістю, власмівою чим нещасним дикунам*, which successfully retains the original emotional impact. The use of *stone-like indifference* in the Ukrainian version adds a nuance of coldness and detachment, subtly modifying the noun *indifference* while preserving the meaning and emotional load. The Ukrainian term *неофіт*, which is suggested as a correspondence to *the reclaimed* in English, adds a deeper sense to the meaning: *неофіт* typically refers to someone newly converted to a religion, particularly Christianity, and in this context, it implies a transformation or reclamation, suggesting a departure from the individual's former state. This choice reinforces the idea of a change brought about by external forces, emphasizing the transformative impact of colonial power. It enriches the depiction of the characters, highlighting their altered status or condition within the narrative.

The use of adjectives *somber*, *stately*, and *sinister* generates a vivid and emotionally charged depiction of the painting (8):

(8) *"The background was somber – almost black. The movement of the woman was stately, and the effect of the torchlight on the face was sinister."* (Conrad, 2018, p. 29) / *"Тло було темне, майже чорне. Жінка рухалася статечно, і щось лиховісне було в її обличчі, освітленому тим смолоскіпом."* (Conrad, 2021, p. 25)

The focus on the interplay of light and shadow, along with the personification of the woman holding a lighted torch, creates a subjective and immediate impression of the scene. This language captures a transient moment, aligning with the impressionistic qualities prevalent in literature. The translation accurately conveys the sense of darkness and near-blackness in the background. However, the choice of *темне* instead of *somber* offers a more straightforward description, slightly diverging from the subtler tone of the original English word. Similarly, the English phrase *the effect of the torchlight on the face was sinister* translated as *і щось лиховісне було в її обличчі, освітленому тим смолоскіпом* with the addition of *освітленому тим смолоскіпом* introduces a more specific reference to the torch, thereby intensifying the imagery.

The Ukrainian translation effectively captures the essence of the original English passages, preserving their core meanings, atmospheres, and thematic intentions. It skillfully conveys the vivid imagery, emotional tones, and nuances of the text, allowing Ukrainian readers to experience the work in a way that resonates with their language and cultural context. While consistently faithful to the source text, the translation also introduces subtle variations in expression, vocabulary, and tone, enriching the Ukrainian text. This balance between fidelity to the original and adaptive changes results in a translation that not only conveys the intended meanings but also evokes similar emotional responses. The analyzed excerpts display impressionistic elements, characterized by rich sensory descriptions, atmospheric imagery, a focus on subjective perception, and, at times, playful language, further aligning the translations with the principles of Impressionism in literature.

### 5. Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi and Joseph Conrad: similarities and differences

Both Conrad and Kotsiubynskyi employ highly visual, graphic representations of physical landscapes and the cultural ethos of colonized or peripheral regions. Their prose captures the complexity of natural and social environments, while also delving into the psychological depths of their characters. This dual focus enables the writers to reflect not only the external realities of colonial encounters but also the inner dilemmas of individuals shaped by them, combining impressionistic imagery with psychological insight.

Conrad, born on the territory of present-day Ukraine, in a space historically marked by imperial domination and cultural hybridity, approaches colonial themes with an awareness of displacement and marginality. His multi-cultural roots visibly shaped this style. Born in Berdychiv (today in

Ukraine) into a Polish noble family, Conrad was deeply influenced by the Romantic literary tradition of Mickiewicz and Słowacki read to him by his father and by the sensorial experiences of the Second Polish Republic Borderland (*Kresy Wschodnie*) environment. Polish critics, including Andrzej Busza (Busza, 2024) have emphasized how this ‘Polish literary baggage’ informed Conrad’s narrative sensibility and thematic concerns. Furthermore, contemporary reflections highlight Conrad’s acute awareness of his cultural in-betweenness and his capacity to observe and internalize the perspectives of multiple ethnic groups, a sensibility shaped by his upbringing in the multicultural borderlands.

Kotsiubynskyi, deeply engaged with Ukrainian folk culture and the realities of the empire, projects his own vision of colonial subjugation and resistance through symbolic landscapes and archetypal figures. His acute sensitivity to Ukrainian folk traditions and symbolic modes of rural life brings a complementary dimension to this comparative exploration. His evocative natural settings and psychological realism mirror Conrad’s dual concern with landscape and mind, but are rooted in a Ukrainian cultural ethos of resistance and identity (Abubakar, 2016).

Both *Fata Morgana* and *Heart of Darkness* exhibit prominent impressionistic qualities, yet they diverge significantly in cultural context, thematic focus, and narrative form. Written at the height of European imperialism, Conrad’s novella interrogates the exploitative foundations of *colonialism* in Africa, while Kotsiubynskyi’s work emerges from the Ukrainian socio-political milieu of the Russian empire, exploring the struggles of rural people caught in cultural and economic upheaval. Despite these differences, the two texts converge in their *impressionistic style*, employing rich sensory descriptions, vivid imagery, and deeply subjective perspectives that foreground the inner lives and emotional states of their characters. Both writers cultivate atmosphere through evocative language, drawing readers into immersive moods and settings that heighten the psychological intensity of their narratives. They also share a preoccupation with dark themes, though approached from distinct vantage points: *Fata Morgana* examines the emotional toll of political turmoil and the yearning for autonomy, while *Heart of Darkness* exposes the moral corruption at the core of European imperialism and the unsettling depths of human nature. Yet their divergences are equally telling. Kotsiubynskyi grounds his work in the Ukrainian landscape, weaving a fluid, introspective narrative that reflects both the beauty and hardship of rural life, whereas Conrad situates his tale in the Congo and frames it through Marlow’s retrospective account, creating a layered narrative that extends beyond individual experience. Ultimately, *Fata Morgana* critiques the oppressive conditions of the Russian empire, while *Heart of Darkness* confronts the brutal realities of colonialism in Africa. Together, these works illustrate how impressionistic techniques can illuminate vastly different cultural realities, each contributing uniquely to the development of modern literature.

## 6. Conclusions

This research examined the commonalities and distinctions between Ukrainian and English Impressionism, with a focus on the unique features of Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi’s *Fata Morgana* and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, as well as their corresponding translations. It established a framework for understanding how Impressionism, shaped by distinct cultural and historical contexts, manifests in both traditions while sharing stylistic and thematic affinities. The study highlighted the movement’s evolution in Ukrainian and English literature, tracing its defining features – subjectivity, sensory detail, fragmented structure, and symbolic depth and examining how these are preserved or transformed in translation. By comparing cultural sensibilities, linguistic nuances, and literary techniques, the research underscored both the universal qualities of Impressionism and its localized expressions. Special attention is given to how the subtleties of Ukrainian Impressionism are conveyed across languages and how Conrad’s work embodies impressionistic traits within the context of European Imperialism.

Special attention is given to how the subtleties of Ukrainian Impressionism – its rural imagery, psychological intimacy, and culturally rooted symbolism are negotiated in translation without losing their emotional resonance. At the same time, the analysis shows how Conrad’s impressionistic

techniques, such as shifting focalization and atmospheric ambiguity, reinforce his critique of European Imperialism and expose the moral instability at its core. The study also examines how translators preserve the delicate emotional textures and culturally specific nuances of Ukrainian Impressionism, ensuring that its sensory richness remains accessible across linguistic boundaries. In contrast, Conrad's work demonstrates how impressionistic fragmentation and subjective perception can be harnessed to illuminate the distortions and ethical disorientation produced by imperial power. Particular focus is placed on the strategies used to convey the fine-grained moods, symbolic layers, and sensory immediacy of Ukrainian Impressionism in translation. Meanwhile, Conrad's narrative reveals how impressionistic methods, especially atmospheric shading and psychological immediacy, serve to confront readers with the contradictions and moral blindness inherent in European imperialism.

This comparative analysis not only revealed the challenges and opportunities of cross-cultural interpretation but also emphasized Impressionism as a transnational movement. In doing so, it offered fresh insights into the interplay between language, culture, and artistic expression, while paving the way for future studies that might expand to other impressionistic works, languages, and interdisciplinary approaches.

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The author has no conflict of interest or funding support to declare.

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## КОЦЮБИНСЬКИЙ VS КОНРАД: ПЕРЕХРЕСНІ СТЕЖКИ ІМПРЕСІОНІЗМУ Оксана Молчко

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### Анотація

У статті здійснено порівняльне дослідження українського та англійського літературного імпресіонізму на матеріалі творів Михайла Коцюбинського «*Fata Morgana*» та Джозефа Конрада «*Heart of Darkness*». Спираючись на теорію літературного імпресіонізму та засади порівняльного літературознавства, дослідження аналізує, як автори з різних культурних та мовних середовищ використовують імпресіоністичні прийоми для відтворення психологічної глибини, сенсорного сприйняття та моральної складності. Розглянуто основні ознаки імпресіонізму, суб’єктивність, фрагментарність і насичену чуттєву образність, у контексті історичних, ідеологічних та естетичних координат модернізму, національної ідентичності та імперського досвіду.

Окрему увагу приділено перекладові як медіатору між мовами та художніми системами. Порівняння українсько-англійських і англо-українських перекладів показує, як імпресіоністичні відтінки – ритм, настрій, образність – зберігаються, змінюються або інтерпретуються наново, виявляючи труднощі відтворення естетичної атмосфери у міжкультурному контексті. Текстуальний і дискурсивний аналіз дає змогу простежити як збіги, так і розбіжності у способах творення образів, внутрішнього світу персонажів і зображення колоніальної чи периферійної реальності.

У підсумку імпресіонізм постає як транснаціональний естетичний феномен, що виходить за межі національних і мовних кордонів, поєднуючи український та англійський модернізми спільними художніми інтенціями. Дослідження пропонує новий міжкультурний підхід до осмислення імпресіонізму та його ролі у відтворенні складності людського досвіду в глобальному контексті.

**Ключові слова:** імпресіонізм, Михайло Коцюбинський, Джозеф Конрад, переклад, порівняльне літературознавство, міжкультурна інтерпретація.

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