Conrad's Europe

Conference Proceedings
ed. by Andrzej Ciuk & Marcin Piechota

OPOLE 2005

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The cover shows a photo of the Hall at Riversdale with the table which JC used for the last 4 years of his life and the chair from 'Capel' days. Originally taken for Polish television in 1967 (?).
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The present volume is a product of the third International Joseph Conrad conference, organised by Joseph Conrad Society (Poland). The first took place in Gdańsk in 1997; its theme was "Various National Perspectives on Conrad." Five of the papers presented at the conference were published in *Con-Texts*, 2/3 (1999). The second, "Conrad and History," took place in Cracow in September 1999, within the framework of the Festival "Cracow 2000." Again, five papers were published, with an even longer delay, in *Con-Texts*, 4/5 (2003).

This volume reflects, much more fully, the proceedings of the third Conference, held in Kamień Śląski and Cracow in September 2004. It is intended to be the first volume of a new serial publication, the *Yearbook of Conrad Studies (Poland)*, planned under the auspices of our Society.

Zdzisław Najder

TEXTUAL NOTES AND ABBREVIATIONS

REFERENCES to Conrad's work are, unless otherwise noted, to Dent's Collected Edition (London, 1946-55) except for volumes available in The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad (CUP, series editor S.W.Reid). Several references are also to the World's Classics Conrad (OUP). The paginations of these editions are often identical. References to Conrad's letters, abbreviated *CL*, are to *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, ed. Laurence Davies *et al.* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983–; 7 vols. to date).

THE FOLLOWING ABBREVIATIONS
have been used in this volume:

for references to the works of Joseph Conrad:

AF *Almayer's Folly* (CUP; eds. David Leon Higdon and Floyd Eugene Eddleman)
HD *Heart of Darkness*
LJ *Lord Jim*
MS *Mirror of the Sea*
N *Nostromo*
NLL *Notes on Life and Letters* (CUP; ed. John Stape)
NN *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*
OI *An Outcast of the Islands*
PR *A Personal Record*
Rov *The Rover*
SA *The Secret Agent* (CUP; eds. Bruce Harkness and S. W. Reid)
SL *The Shadow-Line*
Sus *Suspence*
TH *Tales of Hearsay*
TOS *Typhoon, and Other Stories*

TU *Tales of Unrest*
UWE *Under Western Eyes*
V *Victory*

for references to the books by other authors:

CIP Najder, Zdzisław. *Conrad in Perspective: Essays on Art and Fidelity*. Cambridge: CUP, 1997.

CPB Najder, Zdzisław, ed. *Conrad's Polish Bachground: Letters to and from Polish Friends*. Trans. Halina Carroll. Oxford: OUP, 1964.

CUFE Najder, Zdzisław, ed. *Conrad Under Familial Eyes*. Trans. Halina Carroll-Najder. Cambridge: CUP, 1984.

GJA Jean-Aubry, Gérard. *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters*. 2 vols. London, Heinemann, 1927.

JCC Najder, Zdzisław. *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle*. Cambridge: CUP, 1983.

JCFA Said, Edward. *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1966.

CONRAD'S EUROPEAN AXIS: BETWEEN FLAUBERT AND DOSTOEVSKY

Andrzej Busza
University of British Columbia, Vancouver

For a number of years I have taught a senior undergraduate course entitled: "Conrad in a European Context." When I first conceived this course my motives were quite ingenuous. I wanted to teach a class in which I would be able to discuss some of my favourite authors: Conrad, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Nietzsche, Thomas Mann. And, indeed, teaching the course has always turned out to be a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding experience. My knowledge and appreciation of the European writers deepened and I acquired new perspectives on Conrad's work. Then, on reflection, I realized that the approach was not a novel departure but the consummation of a life-long project.

I began my serious study of Conrad by writing a thesis, which later became a monograph, on his Polish literary background. In effect, I proposed the reading of Conrad's work in relation to themes and motifs prevalent in nineteenth-century Polish literature and culture. The value and validity of this critical approach is now a commonplace of Conrad studies. It was not the case, however, forty or so years ago, when I first sought approval of my topic at University College, London. The notion of tracing the influence of Polish literature on Conrad was deemed not only quixotic but in effect pointless. The reigning professor expressed his supercilious scepticism laconically: "And was there any?" Then, to bring home the error of my ways, he directed me to a University of London thesis on the influence of Turgenev on Flaubert, which had concluded sadly and unequivocally that there was none. So the gauntlet had been thrown and I took up the challenge.

My inquiry was grounded not in some well thought out theory but had been set in motion by a rhetorical question; although of course it had theoretical ramifications and the theory to which I unconsciously subscribed ran counter to the then hegemonic New Critical orthodoxy. The latter claimed that "the purest criticism at-

tends only to the text, which it conceives as floating in a timeless vacuum: a text and meaning immutable, created by no flesh-and-blood writer and without flesh-and-blood readers in mind" (Guerard 1); whereas I have always favoured a less pure, more secular (in Edward Said's sense) approach, especially when dealing with writers so embroiled in historical reality as Conrad.

I had arrived at my topic by way of a real question: why was there a marked contrast between Conrad's popularity with the educated reading public in Britain and in Poland? (I am referring to the period preceding the Conrad revival in the sixties.) In Poland Conrad had been in the literary spotlight throughout the thirties; during the Second World War his popularity soared. It has been claimed that under the Nazi occupation *Lord Jim* was among the favourite reading of the young men and women who belonged to the Resistance. Indeed, in his recently published *Rising '44; "The Battle for Warsaw"* Norman Davies writes: "...the 'Class of 1920', which formed the most typical cohort of the insurgents, has been called 'Conrad's children' " (523). And when in my English high school we read Conrad's last completed novel *The Rover,* I was enthralled by the book whereas my classmates found it tedious. All this pointed to a difference in the horizon of expectations of the contemporary Polish and English reader.

At University College I had a friend who had been a fighter pilot during the Battle of Britain and who was taking a degree in philosophy. The UC philosophy department at that time was dominated by A.J. Ayer, a leading proponent of logical positivism. I occasionally attended seminars in Gordon Square, where ideas were boxed like crabs in the rigid containers of logical propositions – and if they didn't quite fit, the pincers were cut off – while all metaphysical questions were contemptuously dismissed as meaningless. I recognized a clear affinity between this philosophical purism and the hermetic aspirations of the New Critics, and later the pseudo-scientism of the Structuralists. I found support and a kind of rationale for my contextualist bias in the work of the English philosopher R.G. Collingwood, who developed out of his disagreement with "logical atomism" his question and answer logic. In his philosophical autobiography Collingwood writes:

> ...you cannot find out what a man means by simply studying his spoken or written statements, even though he has spoken or written with perfect command of language and perfectly truthful intention. In order to find out his meaning you must also know what the question was (a question in his own mind, and presumed by him to be in yours) to which the thing he has said or written was meant as an answer. (31)

Truth and intention in fictional narratives are highly complex issues, but they are not altogether irrelevant and meaningless. And one can argue that although Conrad wrote his texts in English, to a greater and more significant degree than most English writers, some of the "answers" relating to the whole gamut of axiological questions are, as it were, responses to questions posed in various European languages:

in particular, Polish, French, Russian (in translation), as well as, of course, English. And indeed, some of the more absurd readings of Conrad – and heaven knows there's been "enough with over measure" of these – have been generated by critics who have missed or misheard the culturally specific inflections of his "answers."

Rather than try to chart the entire map of Conrad's Europe of the mind, I shall limit my discussion to two poles of nineteenth-century European literary consciousness. Like Geneva and St. Petersburg in *Under Western Eyes*, Flaubert and Dostoevsky stand at the opposite ends of the literary and axiological space within which Conrad elaborates his fictional world. What objective validity my two markers hold may, and probably will, emerge as a by-product of this discussion; I have chosen them, however, first and foremost for their explanatory value as manifoldly differentiating coordinates.

Pound writes of Mauberley and himself that "His true Penelope was Flaubert" (173). The same could be said of Conrad. He begins *A Personal Record*, whose "aim" is to present "the feelings and sensations connected with the writing of my first book and with my first contact with the sea" (xxi), with a tribute to the old Norman Master:

> ...since saints are supposed to look benignantly on humble believers, I indulge in the pleasant fancy that the shade of old Flaubert — who imagined himself to be (amongst other things) a descendant of Vikings — might have hovered with amused interest over the decks of a 2,000-ton steamer called the *Adowa*, on board of which, gripped by the inclement winter alongside a quay in Rouen, the tenth chapter of "Almayer's Folly" was begun. With interest, I say, for was not the kind Norman giant with enormous moustaches and a thundering voice the last of the Romantics? Was he not, in his unwordly, almost ascetic, devotion to his art a sort of literary, saint-like hermit? (3)

It is interesting to note how in addition to canonizing Flaubert, Conrad "indulges in the fancy" of vesting him with a sea-connection. Flaubert's main and most important role was to provide Conrad with a model of the novelist as artist and the artist as supreme craftsman. "A work that aspires, however humbly, to the condition of art should carry its justification in every line" begins Conrad's famous Preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (xxxix). This insistence on total accountability, which more or less always has been a given in poetry, was now being applied to prose fiction. Flaubert demanded of the novelist the same kind of attention to detail at every level of the structure as well as to the interrelationship between the elements making up the text that Gautier or Baudelaire were striving for in their poems. This was, of course, an ideal to aspire to rather than, at present at least, an attainable goal. In his famous letter to Louise Colet, written when he was working on *Madame Bovary,* Flaubert said:

> What seems beautiful to me, what I should like to write, is a book about nothing, a book dependent on nothing external, which would be held together by the internal strength of its style, just as the earth, suspended in the void, depends on nothing external for its support; a book which would almost have no subject, or at least in which the subject would be almost invisible, if such a thing is

> possible. The finest works are those that contain the least matter; the closer expression comes to thought, the closer language comes to coinciding and merging with it, the finer the result. I believe the future of Art lies in this direction. (*The Letters* 154)

Early on in *Madame Bovary* we come across a passage where language becomes almost opaque and the mimetic thrust of the writing is at a minimum. It is, of course, the description of Charles Bovary's grotesque hat:

> His was one of those composite pieces of headgear in which you may trace features of bearskin, lancer-cap and bowler, night-cap and otterskin: one of those pathetic objects that are deeply expressive in their dumb ugliness, like a idiot's face. An oval splayed out with whale-bone, it started off with three pompons; these were followed by lozenges of velvet and rabbit's fur alternately, separated by a red band, and after that came a kind of bag ending in a polygon of card-board with intricate braiding on it; and from this there hung down like a tassel, at the end of a long, too slender cord, a little sheaf of gold threads. It was a new cap, with a shiny peak. (16)

If not quite a text about nothing, it is writing in which the signified approaches the condition of abstraction. What strikes the reader above all, is the sheer virtuosity of the performance: diction as well as syntax. Moreover, the passage demonstrates that Flaubert's texts are not only meticulously composed, but that they are quintessentially *written* texts. The underlying paradigm is *written* not orally-based discourse. Flaubert was showing the way to such writers as: Proust, Mann, Joyce, Woolf, Nabokov, Beckett, the Barneses – Djuna and Julian. Although Conrad took many technical lessons in the Flaubertian studio, he would not, indeed, probably could not follow the Grande Corniche of Modernism. By temperament, background and in view of his life-experience his artistic orientation was essentially – to use Said's terms – "secular" rather than "hermetic."[1] There is a world of difference between Conrad's contention that "art itself may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect" (Preface to *NN* xxxix) and Joyce's definition of art as the pursuit of the aesthetic image "luminously apprehended as selfbounded and selfcontained upon the immeasurable background of space and time which is not it" (230). For Conrad the world remained "an enigmatical spectacle" (Preface to *NN* xxxix): "a spectacle for awe, love, adoration, or hate" (*PR* 92), while the more radical followers of Flaubert – late Joyce, Robbe-Grillet, Claude Simon, Jean Ricardou – have turned reality into a text to be analysed, processed and reconfigured.

But even when Conrad is following Flaubert's lessons, he admires and does otherwise. In a literal sense Conrad's denial of the formative influence of *Madame Bovary* in a letter to Hugh Walpole is a little disingenuous but his overall assessment of the nature of his debt to Flaubert seems accurate enough. He emphasizes Flau-

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[1] See Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1983, 1-30.

bert's skill at "rendering ... concrete things and visual impressions" – a skill he shared and used most effectively. He then continues:

> I thought him marvellous in that respect. I don't think I learned anything from him. What he did for me was to open my eyes and arouse my emulation. One can learn something from Balzac, but what could one learn from Flaubert? He compels admiration – about the greatest service one artist can render to another. (7 June 1918; *CL6* 228)

I shall now try to demonstrate the difference between Conrad's and Flaubert's narrative style by referring to some specific passages. My first example comes from the story "Prince Roman." Here in two short paragraphs we have a description of a convoy of Russian soldiers moving through the Polish countryside:

> "One afternoon, it happened that the Prince after turning his horse's head for home remarked a low dense cloud of dark dust cutting slantwise a part of the view. He reined in on a knoll and peered. There were slender gleams of steel here and there in that cloud, and it contained moving forms which revealed themselves at last as a long line of peasant carts full of soldiers, moving slowly in double file under the escort of mounted Cossacks.
>
> It was like an immense reptile creeping over the fields; its head dipped out of sight in a slight hollow and its tail went on writhing and growing shorter as thought the monster were eating its way slowly into the very heart of the land." (*TH* 38)

The rhetorical composition of the two paragraphs is significantly different. The first offers a vividly visualised concrete scene; the images are graphic, precise, entirely devoid of figurative language. The second paragraph like an epic simile develops a metaphoric momentum of its own and shifts to a symbolic mode. The paragraphs embody and display the two contrary sides of Conrad's temperament and imagination – for lack of better terms – the realistic and the romantic. He shares this duality with Flaubert. But, whereas Flaubert worked very hard to separate the two (eventually producing works where either one tendency or the other predominates), Conrad chose to integrate, indeed often to render problematic the distinctions that have been used to discriminate between the two contraries. Obvious instances are the dialectic between Marlow and Kurtz, on the one hand; and Marlow and Jim, on the other. The interaction between the contrasting perspectives produces all kinds of ironic effects and ambiguities.

> "You should have heard him say, 'My ivory'. O yes, I heard him. 'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my – ' Everything belonged to him. It made me hold my breath in expectation of hearing the wilderness burst into prodigious laughter that would shake the fixed stars in their places." (*HD* 206)

Here, Kurtz's delusional hyperbole is countered and undercut by Marlow's even more hyperbolic irony. By contrast, in Flaubert irony is as a rule more obvious and univocal. Witness the following exchange between Emma and her cooling lover Rodolphe:

> "When midnight chimes," she said, "you are to think of me!" And if he confessed that he had not thought of her, there was a torrent of reproaches, ending always with the eternal question: "Do you love me?" "Of course I do!" "A lot?" "Certainly!" "You've never loved anyone else?" "Did you think I was a virgin?" he exclaimed with a laugh.

Emma continues with rising passion and agitation:

> "I am your slave, your concubine. You are my king, my idol – you are good, handsome, intelligent, strong!" He had listened to so many speeches of this kind that they no longer made any impression on him. Emma was like any other mistress; and the charm of novelty, gradually slipping away like a garment, laid bare the eternal monotony of passion, whose forms and phrases are for ever the same. (*Madame Bovary* 202-3)

The transition from dialogue to authorial commentary is seamless. A hint of *style indirect libre* conveying Rodolphe's thoughts in response to Emma's outburst leads to the extradiegetic reflection which, translated into imagistic terms, continues to express the sense of ennui that underlies his cynicism. There is no ambiguity here whatsoever. The reader's responses are carefully directed and controlled at every turn of the narrative. The reader is in effect compelled to recognize the ironic coding of the text.

And here we encounter perhaps the key characteristic and major paradox of Flaubert's novelistic practice: the conjunction of his insistence on impersonality with his ideal of total accountability. Although he eliminates almost completely the obtrusive narrator, so characteristic of earlier fiction, the authoritative function of the extradiegetic narrator is taken over by the various self-interpretative elements embodied in the narrative. Thus in spite of the illusion that in Flaubert's fiction the author is, in Joyce's phrase, "refined out of existence" (233) in fact authorial intention as embodied in the narrative is as constraining as ever. A supreme example of monologic fiction, Flaubert's writing is the literary corollary of nineteenth-century deterministic monism.

Flaubert's positivistic straight-jacket was clearly inadequate, ill-suited to represent Conrad's complex, fragmented, uncertain, and disordered view of reality. For a multiplicity of reasons both individual and historical, Conrad's world was anything but seamless, nor could his writing be. This is how Frank Kermode describes in his *Sense of an Ending* the philosophical significance of the year 1900, when Conrad was completing *Lord Jim*:

> In 1900 Nietzsche died; Freud published *The Interpretation of Dreams*; 1900 was the date of Husserl's *Logic*, and of Russell's *Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*. With an exquisite sense of timing Planck published his quantum hypothesis in the very last days of the century, December 1900. Thus, within a few months, were published works which transformed or transvalued spirituality, the relation of language to knowing, and the very locus of human uncertainty, henceforth to be thought of not as an imperfection of the human apparatus but part of the nature of things, a condition of what we may know. (97)

In Chapter 20 of *Lord Jim* Conrad gives us with poetic concentration and suggestiveness this new view of the world:

> "He [Stein] lit a two-branched candlestick and led the way. We passed through empty dark rooms, escorted by gleams from the lights Stein carried. They glided along the waxed floors, sweeping here and there over the polished surface of the table, leaped upon a fragmentary curve of a piece of furniture, or flashed perpendicularly in and out of distant mirrors, while the forms of two men and the flicker of two flames could be seen for a moment stealing silently across the depths of crystalline void." (215-6)

It is a world of fleeting impressions, of shadows, of distorting perspectives, of incertitude, where, in Marx's celebrated metaphor, "All that is solid melts into air" (83).

Although Conrad would chafe at the idea, this is a sense of reality that appears closer to that of my other pole of the axis of nineteenth-century European consciousness: Dostoevsky. In discursive prose (he is writing in a literary journal) rather than imaged language, Dostoevsky offers us an analogous vision of axiological chaos: "In our times all is confusion... everywhere people are quarrelling over foundations, principles... Scepticism and the sceptical view are killing everything, even the very view itself in the final analysis...Who among us in all honesty knows what is *evil* and what is *good*?" (Jackson 3). And his novel-tragedies are in essence a dramatization and elaboration of these harrowing, artless sentences, as well as an attempt to counter the "spirit of nihilism" which they reflect.

But while Conrad admired and emulated Flaubert, he abhorred Dostoevsky with passion: "I don't know what D stands for or reveals, but I know that he is too Russian for me. It sounds to me like some fierce mouthings from prehistoric ages" (27 May 1912, *CL5* 70). He called Dostoevsky a "grimacing terror haunted creature" (*CL6* 78) and caricatured his fictional world as one inhabited by "strange beasts in a menagerie or damned souls knocking themselves to pieces in the stuffy darkness of mystical contradictions" (*NLL* 41). And yet, as usual with Conrad, things are never as straightforward as they appear. There are hints that, as it were in spite of himself, he recognized Dostoevsky's power. He praised the French actor, theatre director and playwright Jacques Copeau, who had dramatized *The Brothers Karamazov*, for finding appropriate means to express "the tangled depths of all that psychology" (26 December 1911, *CL4* 526); and in the letter to Garnett, from which I have already quoted, he described *The Brothers Karamazov* as "terrifically bad and impressive and exasperating" (*CL5* 70). To my mind, Richard Curle comes as close as anyone to capturing the essence of Conrad's attitude to Dostoevsky:

> I have an idea [writes Curle] that his real hatred for Dostoievsky was due to an appreciation of his power. It is on record that he once told Galsworthy that Dostoievsky was "as deep as the sea," and for Conrad it was the depth of an evil influence. Dostoievsky represented to him the ultimate forces of confusion and insanity arrayed against all that he valued in civilization. He did not de-

> spise him as one despises a nonentity, he hated him as one might hate Lucifer and the forces of darkness. (26)

When one reads this comment, one thinks of Marlow's feelings towards Kurtz.

Ralph E. Matlaw claims that "The patent similarity of two great novels, *Crime and Punishment* and *Under Western Eyes*, is unique in literature" (218). Although this may be an exaggeration, what is certain is that there is no other Conrad text that invites to be read, at least in part, as a polemical response to the work of another writer. The links between *Crime and Punishment* and *Under Western Eyes* have been thoroughly explored, most recently with both insight and circumspection by Zdzisław Najder in his *Conrad in Perspective.* As there seems little of significance to add to that topic, I shall conclude my discussion by relating *Crime and Punishment* to Conrad's earlier treatment of the theme of transgression and expiation, *Lord Jim.*

What perhaps justifies most discussing the two novels in relation to each other is their common concern with fundamental axiological – above all, ethical – issues. In the final analysis, both confront and seek to resist the undermining of moral absolutes. For Raskolnikov the great challenge is the contextual morality of utilitarianism:

> "In my opinion, if, as the result of certain combinations, Kepler's or Newton's discoveries could become known to people in no other way than by sacrificing the lives of one, or ten, or a hundred or more people who were hindering the discovery, or standing as an obstacle in its path, then Newton would have the right, and it would even be his duty ... *to remove* those ten or a hundred people, in order to make his discoveries known to all mankind." (*Crime and Punishment* 259; pt. 3, ch. 5)

Marlow is beset by even more radical axiological anxiety, which involves epistemological problems as well as ethical ones:

> "I see well enough now that I hoped for the impossible – for the laying of what is the most obstinate ghost of man's creation, of the uneasy doubt uprising like a mist, secret and gnawing like a worm, and more chilling than the certitude of death – the doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct." (*LJ* 50)

At the heart of *Crime and Punishment* is a premeditated murder: a gratuitous transgression of the traditional moral code.[2] Dostoevsky thus puts into question the very basis of traditional morality. Raskolnikov conducts an ethical experiment, the outcome of which is by no means clear at the outset. Moreover, the context of his action (motives, psychological factors, external circumstances, as well as consequences), most of which is presented *after* the murder, constitutes the bulk of the book. In the end, Dostoevsky demonstrates that the new morality is at odds with human nature. Porfiry, the police investigator, seeks to undermine the viability of the new ethic by rational means during his lengthy conversations with Raskolnikov; while Sonia guides Raskolnikov to the threshold of spiritual recovery

[2] It's worth noting that the Russian word *prestuplenie* (literally, "overstepping"), which makes up the first part of the title, has wider connotations than the exclusively legalistic English word *crime*.

through love and religion. She is ultimately more successful since perverted *reason* has led him into ultimate folly.

In *Lord Jim* moral categories as such are never in question; what is at issue is the degree of Jim's responsibility for his conduct on the *Patna.* Conrad arranges circumstances in such a way that Jim is *almost* not guilty. And Jim tries desperately *not to see* the unvarnished truth of his conduct: "There was not the thickness of a sheet of paper between the right and the wrong of this affair," he protests. To which Marlow replies: "How much more did you want?" (130). Marlow then proceeds to guide Jim to recovery following his moral disaster through the exercise of reason and sympathetic understanding.

Perhaps even more revealing about the differences between Conrad's and Dostoevsky's value systems are the expiatory phases of each story. Jim errs through being excessively absorbed with himself, and fails to live up to a code that is communal in its essence. Having eventually recognized his failure under the tutelage of a member of the community, he must try to regain his position of trust and responsibility and thus to re-establish his bond with society. Insofar as this involves fidelity to his idealized conception of himself (a form of altruism) he succeeds. Raskolnikov cuts himself off from humanity through his sin against nature, mankind, God. In order to achieve re-integration he must submit his wilful ego to natural law: "Instead of dialectics there was life – and something completely different had to work itself out in his consciousness" (550). Through love, through total commitment to an individual human being – Raskolnikov is being re-united with mankind, nature, the All. In Dostoevsky redemption entails the loss of self; in Conrad's *Lord Jim,* the tragic hero asserts individuality by sublimating the self. Although in neither text do we have full closure.

Conrad's attitude to Flaubert and Dostoevsky – my two poles on the European literary axis – is riddled with contradictions and paradoxes, mirroring his complex relationship to the West and the East, and beyond that perhaps reflecting also Polish cultural and historical dualities. Conrad admired Flaubert, learned from his stylistic and technical innovations, yet must have found his myopic worldview constricting; Dostoevsky he resented and rejected, but sharing many of his concerns, found the Russian novelist sufficiently absorbing to engage him in an ideological and artistic polemic. The relationship of a writer to the great near contemporaries (both Flaubert and Dostoevsky were born in 1821, a year after Conrad's father) can be much more complex than the Oedipal "Anxiety of Influence" postulated by Harold Bloom.

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EUROPE AS AUTOBIOGRAPHY? *A PERSONAL RECORD*

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What the title of this paper suggests – that "Europe" could be a metaphor of autobiography – may meet with an immediate rebuttal. The revaluation of autobiography since the 1980s owes a lot to the rediscovery of "women's autobiography" and "ethnic autobiography."[1] Slave narratives and working-class autobiographies in the eighteenth and nineteenth century have also begun to offer us alternative autobiographical traditions. Needless to say, "being autobiographical" has always been considered a characteristic of postcolonial literature (think about Jamaica Kincaid and Maryse Condé, not to mention Jean Rhys and V. S. Naipaul). This is also why postcolonial fictions, unfortunately, tend to be valued as ethnographic information rather than works of art.

And yet, for all those "minority autobiographies" flourishing in the Euro-American literary market, "Europe as autobiography," or alternatively, "the West as autobiography," is a trope that appears persistently in autobiography criticism since the latter half of the last century. This paper starts by re-examining critical and theoretical discourse on autobiography, and tries to show how the idea of autobiography has been constituted vis-à-vis the ideas of "Europe" or "the West." It is in this context that I propose to reread Joseph Conrad's *A Personal Record* both as an emergent autobiographical theory that pioneered late twentieth-century theories, and as a case of autobiography in which our own ideas of Europe and the West were being constructed.

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[1] James Olney's 1988 anthology of autobiography criticism includes sections entitled "Ethnic and Minority Autobiography" and "Women's Autobiography" that introduce pioneering studies of these fields.

"Europe" and "the West" are concepts just as ambiguous as "autobiography." Although these two terms are sometimes used synonymously, it is obvious that they are not exactly the same. They are similar in the sense that they do not only refer to certain geographical areas but also refer to certain cultures and ethnicities. To a great extent, "Europe" and "the West" are both ideological constructs. In *The Invention of the West* Christopher GoGwilt makes a brilliant argument on the conflict, alliance and interaction between "Europe" and "the West." He contends that today's idea of the West (i.e., the West as Western Europe and North America) was "invented" at the turn of the century through political contexts of the time: firstly, the East/West division on the imperialist world map that had already powerfully been established, and secondly, the division between Eastern and Western Europe that was becoming increasingly significant. *A Personal Record* was written precisely when the politico-geographical idea of Europe was transformed into today's ideology of the West. In this sense, Conrad's autobiographical writing – an attempt to reconstruct his "European" and "Western" self – can be considered to dwell in the same historical sphere as our own discourse on autobiography and Europe.

Theories of Autobiography

According to James Olney, the earliest theory on autobiography was formulated by Georges Gusdorf in the 50s (*Autobiography* 1980). Gusdorf regards autobiography not as a simple record of events but as a product of the awareness of the singularity of one's own life, to which the author tries to give meaning. Most importantly, autobiography does not exist anywhere and anytime, but is limited to a certain time and space. He argues that autobiography is "a solidly established literary genre, its history traceable in a series of masterpieces from the *Confessions* of St. Augustine to Gide's *Si le grain ne meurt*, with Rousseau's *Confessions*, Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'outre tombe*, and Newman's *Apologia* in between" (Gusdorf 28). Underlying this clearly-defined canon is Gusdorf's conviction that autobiography is "not to be found outside of our cultural area," "a concern peculiar to Western man," or "a concern that has been of good use in his systematic conquest of the universe"; when non-Europeans write autobiographies, they will have been "annexed by a sort of intellectual colonizing to a mentality that was not their own" (29). His repeated use of colonialist metaphors suggests that autobiography is driven by the desire to integrate and control the other into the system of the self – a desire that is also a violent reaction against the recognition of the other within that universe of the self.

Olney's *Metaphors of Self* is often considered a pioneering autobiography criticism written in English. Olney shares certain views in common with Gusdorf, still assuming that autobiography is an artistic representation of life as a unified, mean-

ingful entity. However, he does not regard autobiography as a definite genre but as a set of "metaphors" of the self. Also, he defines autobiography as a happy union between scientific and poetic discourse on the self: "one discovers biologists in harmony with poets, and natural scientists with theologians; *the scientific West even meets the spiritual East on this point*" (*Metaphors* 21; italics added). This image of "spiritual East" is clearly linked with his idea of poetic discourse and thence, "metaphors," which mediate each individual's unique experience and bring to mutual understanding.

Olney develops the vital part of his argument through his reading of Jung's autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections.* Through Jung, autobiography is redefined as the cooperative work between the conscious mind and the unconscious; thus Jung's own autobiography is "the conjunctive metaphor between felt experience and projected theory" (92-93) where the subject-object distinction is blurred out. Since "there is no way to alter the complete identity of subject and object," Jung's autobiography insists, simply, "I am I" (93). Olney's next concern is how this totalized and unique experience of "I" can be communicated to others. Metaphors and myths are considered to be inherited from "our ancestors" and thence become the basis for communication. Encouraged by Jung's interest in mandala and other non-Judeo-Christian symbols, Olney argues that this community of "we," based on the common heritage of metaphors may not exclusively be that of the "Europeans." Using the Orientalist metaphor again, autobiography can be explained as the locus where the "Western" science decodes the mystery of "Eastern" symbols.[2]

And yet, Olney's fusionist view, expressed characteristically in his "West meets East" metaphor, remains separate from the poststructuralist idea that emphasizes the split, rather than the unity, of the self. Poststructuralism questions the idea of autobiography as a self-sufficient institution of self-reference; autobiography cannot be a perfect representation of the totalized self – the discrepancy between the subject "I" and the object "I" is simply unbridgeable. Roland Barthes's autobiography, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* is often considered an exemplary poststructuralist autobiography, and it is indeed an implementation of this splitting of the self. The well-known epigraph, "it must all be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel" puts in question the conventional identification between the narrator, the protagonist, and the author – the identification which Philippe Lejeune, another pioneering theorist of autobiography, has formulated as the necessary condition for a text to be autobiography. Barthes also defies the usual expectation of autobi-

[2] Also importantly, intersubjective and intercultural communication became an issue in Olney's argument partly because his interest in autobiography began with his contact with modern African literatures. Shortly after *Metaphors of Self* he published a pioneering book on African literature, *Tell Me Africa*, which includes a chapter devoted to "African autobiography."

ography being chronological by arranging fragmentary texts alphabetically; the seemingly arbitrary sequence of events is reminiscent of the fragmented and multiplied image of the self. This poststructuralist image of the self is deployed by postcolonial theory in order to challenge the idea of the unified subject by emphasizing ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity in the formation of the colonial and postcolonial subject.

Conrad and Autobiography

Through these observations on criticisms and theories I have rediscovered Conrad's autobiography as a case that presents its own radical theory on autobiography. It marks the age when the currently-circulating idea of the West was being constructed, and it reveals how cultural territory, such as Europe and the West, becomes a recurrent and convincing metaphor of the autobiographical self.

Conrad's autobiography in the conventional sense of the term is *A Personal Record*, the text initially serialized from December 1908 to June 1909 for the *English Review* under the title of *Some Reminiscences*. Before this Conrad had already written autobiographical essays published in various periodicals, which came out in book form as *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906). Compared with *The Mirror of the Sea*, *A Personal Record* was clearly planned to be a literary enterprise.[3] Conrad wrote in a letter to Fisher Unwin that it is "not of a gossipy character" but "will have its importance both in the life and the work of an author who ... has his place in English literature" (*CLA* 441). Also, *A Personal Record* is a manifest autobiography which both conforms to and challenges the pre-established norms of autobiography. Nearly half a century before Gusdorf, it declares Rousseau as the symbolic figure of the tradition of autobiography, who is at the same time the archenemy that should be defeated.

Autobiography has not been a neglected field in Conradian scholarship, although the majority of scholars and critics have been using Conrad's autobiography mainly as a (rather unreliable) source for biographical information and do not consider it for its own merit. One of the few, and probably the most important, exceptions is Edward Said's monograph, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*. Said's major achievements in the book include the fact that he considers prefaces, personal letters, and autobiographical fictions, alongside manifestly autobiographical writings, as important material for his study. In doing so, he deviates from the structuralist theory of autobiography (i.e., autobiography as a definite genre) and violates the methodology of new criticism in which autobiographical writings are

[3] *The Mirror of the Sea* is more casually written, its narrative aiming to be a collective autobiography, or a story of the "we" community of the sailors who all unite with their worship for the goddess of the ship – in this sense *The Mirror of the Sea* is supplementary to the "I" story of *A Personal Record*.

used as auxiliary measures in order to construe the complex meaning of a specific work (which is, primarily, considered an autonomous entity). This also reveals how the problematic of the textual "outside" motivated Said's reading of Conrad at the very beginning of his academic career.

Yet, despite Said, this paper proposes to read *A Personal Record* strategically as a text that aims to be a "work of art" with a well-organized plot – with beginning, middle, and ending each of which is connected with the others by the sense of causality. Or rather, this is the way how the text wishes to be read – autobiography as Gusdorf, Olney, and Lejeune define it is a genre of literature in which inconclusive human life should be reorganized into a story with the definite beginning and the concrete ending. However, the ultimate purpose of this paper is to show how the attempt to read autobiography as an artistic whole must inevitably fail; as Said has suggested, the textual boundary of an autobiography is by definition obscure, "life" being always inconclusive, "events" never perfectly linked with each other as causes and effects.

Anti-Confession

A Personal Record has often been considered a difficult and puzzling text; its seemingly inconsequential loquacity and chronological confusion defies our usual expectation that an autobiography should record one's life just as it happens. In "A Familiar Preface" Conrad himself writes that critics charged him "with discursiveness, with disregard of chronological order (which is in itself a crime) with unconventionality of form (which is an impropriety)" (*PR* xx). The preface itself gives a prosaic explanation of the reason for such unusual narrative practices, but Chapter V, which in the *English Review* appears as the first chapter of the second volume, gives another version of explanation. He virtually nominates Rousseau as his arch-enemy, who brought "the extreme thoroughness" to "the work of justifying his own existence" (95). Concerning himself, Conrad declares: "I was by no means anxious to justify my existence" and it is "sufficient for me to say … *J'ai vécu*" (94). With the text's typically mock-serious tone, he openly dismisses the idea of an essentially author-like existence as the origin of his literary career: "the coming into existence of the first book is quite an inexplicable event" and "I cannot even point to boredom as a rational stimulus for taking up a pen"; "The pen at any rate was there, and there is nothing wonderful in that" (90). Later in the same chapter he recounts the story of "the general's daughter" who intrudes into his study and interrupts his writing of *Nostromo* by her awkward comments on his work: "She had robbed me of at least twenty lives, each infinitely more poignant and real than her own" (102). This insertion of a seemingly irrelevant episode (along with Conrad's highly misogynist comments) is just as intrusive as the general's daughter herself;

however, he uses this episode in order to explain his methodology: "this horrible but ... perfectly true reminiscence tells you more than a whole volume of confessions *à la* Jean Jacques Rousseau would do" (99-100).

Conrad's criticism of Rousseau may to some extent remind us of Paul de Man's reading of the episode of "a stolen ribbon" in the first volume of *Confessions*. De Man argues that Rousseau's confessions are urged not so much by his sincere and spontaneous feeling (i.e., the inner need to confess) as by the need "to excuse" and justifying himself (*s'excuser*). Whereas the ribbon stands for the only cognitive evidence of the crime, Rousseau multiplies confessions verbally and performatively; in the end he confesses the origin of the crime, namely, his desire for Marion, which indeed functions as an excuse for his crime. Moreover, Rousseau's confession is ultimately a device that facilitates the exposure of his crime – confessions for confessions' sake – and what Rousseau really wants is "neither the ribbon nor Marion, but the public scene of exposure which he actually gets" (de Man 285). Reading via de Man, we may consider that Conrad's manifest anti-confession, which is also a recurrent motif in *Under Western Eyes* (the novel he was working on simultaneously with the autobiography) is a deconstructive gesture through which he attempts to demystify the "origin" of the self.[4] If the pursuit of the uncontaminated "original" self constitutes the central theme of Rousseau's *Confessions*, Conrad's autobiography is not unaware that the origin is performatively created through the act of confession.[5]

Instead of recounting events of his life chronologically, Conrad's autobiography has its own logic with which the seemingly incoherent episodes are ordered. It starts with talking about one episode, and the episode includes a topic, or even just a word, which reminds him of another event of life (often chronologically backwardly), which in its turn becomes a hint of a third event. Also, as is often pointed out, the first four chapters (that consists of the "first volume" in the *Review* version) are loosely connected with one theme, namely, the composition of Conrad's debut novel, *Almayer's Folly*. It looks as if Conrad tries to find out from where his first literary work has begun, and for that purpose traces back all the places he and

[4] In a letter to J. B. Pinker (13 September 1911) Conrad commented that *A Personal Record* would supplement *Under Western Eyes*: "I wished to explain ... how I came to write such a novel as *Under Western Eyes* ... so utterly unlike in subject and treatment from anything I had done before. That *Personal Note* will make it intelligible to such people – my public – who care for and attach some importance to my work" (*CL4* 477).

[5] Michel Foucault considers the concept of "anti-confession" from a different angle. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* Foucault argues that rather than a spontaneous expression of the self, the act of confession originates in a social institution, the production of the truth based on the power relation between the confessor and the one who confesses. Foucault's argument may be more helpful for the analysis of the anti-confessional motifs in *Under Western Eyes*, where Razumov's repeated (and partially failed) confessions are more clearly linked with institutional practices.

the manuscript of the novel have been to; as the opening sentence of Chapter I declares, "Books may be written in all sorts of places" (*PR* 3).

Most importantly, this unusual narrative sequence of *A Personal Record* is an integral part of Conrad's strategy of anti-confession. Through its retrospective gesture, Conrad's autobiography deliberately inverts the chronological order of the cause and its effect, claiming that the effect indeed precedes the cause, the fact being suppressed in the linear narrative of Rousseau's chronologically-arranged confessions. In other words, Conrad is not searching for the Romantic origin of the self, but rather, for what in Said's terminology may be called "beginnings" of his writerly ego: "the designation of a beginning generally involves also the designation of a consequent intention" and thence, the beginning is "the first step in the intentional production of meaning" (*Beginnings* 5; emphasis deleted). Through the authorial intention, however, beginnings are discovered, or rather "created," infinitely in number; the beginning of his first novel (or his literary career) could be the day when he commences his last voyage as a sailor, or when he receives the first criticism on the novel, or when he declares his will to go to "the blank space" on the world map, or when he writes the first word of it, or when he reads a work of English literature for the first time – or perhaps it is the day when, in Borneo, he meets someone called Almayer, who has a mysterious desire to have a pony shipped there. Thus the "first volume" of the autobiography can be read as an allegory of authorship and the authorial intention that produces multiple beginnings, each of which defies the notion of the singular, pre-existent – in Said's word, "passive" – origin (*Beginnings* 6).

What looks like a crucial anecdote takes place, according to Conrad's report, in 1868: as a nine-year-old, he puts his finger on "the blank space then representing the unsolved mystery" (*PR* 13) of the African continent. This famous episode appears to be a particularly privileged scene, and could be termed the "primal scene" according to Freudian theory, partly because similar scenes recur in Conrad's other texts as if he were obsessively coming back to the scene. In *Heart of Darkness*, the blank space has already ceased to exist: "It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery – a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness" (*HD* 52). In other words, the blank space has already become "dark" and a part of the all-devouring Europe (or the West). And yet, when the scene is replayed about a decade later in the autobiography, only the "blankness" of the space is emphasized: "*there* being the region of Stanley Falls which in '68 was the blankest of blank spaces on the earth's figured surface" (*PR* 13: emphasis original). The primal scene might be discovered there, or rather, it should be intentionally pointed to; however, the author's finger points to a blank, or the very absence of the named origin.

Autobiography and Cultural Territories

It should also be noted that in *A Personal Record*, as in *Heart of Darkness*, different cultural or national territories are locatable in a kind of chronological order; the spatial difference is often represented as the temporal difference. Poland and England are the two, most important cultural-national territories that appear in *A Personal Record*, although the boundaries of these territories are equally blurred and ambiguous (Poland is overlapped by the Ukraine and Russia, and England is often synonymous with Britain and the British Empire). Poland represents the past, whereas England indicates the future; between the two lies the vast and seemingly all-inclusive territory of Europe, where both Poland and England are on the margins.

Concerning Poland, Conrad himself tries to dig up not only his personal memories but also memories of the other people and generations – "Every generation has its memories" (*PR* 56) as he puts it – as if to reconstruct a trans-historical narrative of the nation through these collective memories. Certainly Poland is a privileged place to which Conrad attaches a great significance; the letter K of the signature J.C.K., affixed to "A Familiar Preface" to the 1911 version of *A Personal Record*, can be considered evidence of his suppressed identification with the nation and his patriotic father, Apollo Korzeniowski (GoGwilt 111). Nevertheless, the Polish episodes in *A Personal Record*, especially the stories of the legendary patriot "Nicholas B," Conrad's grand-uncle, reveal the difficulties to define what Poland really is. Nicholas, lieutenant for the French (or "European") Army during the Napoleonic Wars, suffering from an extreme hunger, has eaten a dog in the Lithuanian forest – notably, it was this last bit of the story, rather than his heroism, that have had the strongest impact on Conrad as an imaginative child. The "Polish myth" as Avron Fleishman has put it, or the myth of Conrad's homeland which is "Poland, or more precisely Ukraine" (*PR* 19), is most effectively disclosed by the last episode about Nicholas B (Fleishman 4-5). On the occasion of the insurrection of 1863, the indifferent or hostile Ukrainians loot his house in his absence. These episodes add further complication and difficulty to Conrad's negotiation with Poland, which turns out to be an ambiguous, heterogeneous, and decentred concept.

Conrad's Poland is also intertwined with the idea of Europe, although the reference to Europe and things European in the main text of *A Personal Record* is less burdened with the emotional attachment and patriotic sentiment which is so manifest in the "Author's Note" written in 1919 for the collected edition. In the main text, the adjective "European" appears, for example, in the description of the uninspiring appearance of a hotel in the Valley of the Reuss which Conrad visited with his tutor in 1873: the hotel "resembled the house which surmounts the unseaworthy-looking hulls of the toy Noah's Arks, the universal possession of *European* childhood" (*PR* 38; emphasis added); Europe's celebrated cultural heritage is here diminished into the toy of Noah's Arks. In the "Author's Note," however,

Europe clearly embodies positive values. Conrad emphasizes there the strong cultural tie between Poland and (Western) Europe: "Nothing is more foreign than what in the literary world is called Sclavonism, to the Polish temperament" whereas "the whole Polish mentality, Western in complexion, had received its training from Italy and France and, historically, had always remained, even in religious matters, in sympathy with the most liberal currents of European thought" (*PR* vi-vii).

This unconditional affirmation of Poland's Western-ness and European-ness (the two terms are used almost synonymously here) is also a gesture by which Conrad tries to exclude "Sclavonism," or Russia, from the territory of Europe. He famously declares in "An Autocracy and War" that Russia is "a yawning chasm open between East and West" (*NNL* 100). Again in this "Author's Note," Russia is nominated as the other that should be excluded from Europe. Still, it is impossible to categorize Russia as "East" and, indeed, the "yawning chasm" returns inside Europe through the very gesture of exclusion. Also in *Under Western Eyes*, Conrad struggles to draw a clear boundary between West and non-West, even though the novel inadvertently reveals that Russia is an outside within the West itself.

England as Ending

Whereas *A Personal Record* has multiple beginnings, it may seem to have a definite ending at least. Chapter VII, the last instalment of *Reminiscences* supplied for the *Review*'s June 1909 issue, closes with the memories of the first English ship he touched, of the first English speech addressed to him, and the most impressive sight of the Red Ensign: "The Red Ensign – the symbolic, protecting warm bit of bunting flung wide upon the seas, and destined for so many years to be the only roof over my head" (*PR* 138). The Ensign appears as a dramatic and decisive closure upon the otherwise inconclusive story of one's life.

However, the autobiography was not planned to end as it is. The serialization for the *English Review* was interrupted due to Conrad's illness, and afterwards he stopped contributing to the *Review* because of his disagreements with Ford (see *JCC* 349). He was thinking of extending the autobiography for a future publication (*CL4* 308); as a matter of fact, he did not write any more of it apart from two prefaces. In a letter to Ford (dated 31 July 1909), Conrad tries to justify the ending, insisting that it fits his overall design of the text (then called *Some Reminiscences*): "It expresses perfectly my purpose of treating the literary life and the sea-life on parallel lines with a running reference to my early years"; moreover, "It begins practically with the first words of appreciation of my writing I ever heard and ends with the first words ever addressed to me personally in the English tongue" (*CL4* 263). Thus Conrad suggests that for him becoming a writer amounts to becoming

a writer of the English language; the autobiography of a writer which constitutes the "first volume" of the *Reminiscences*, is deliberately linked to that of an "English" sailor, the "second volume." The forced and forceful ending allows us to read the entire text as the celebration of England and its language.

The English language, as well as England, is a recurrent and obviously important topic in Conrad's autobiography. Special (if slightly ironical) emphasis is put on his first contact with the language, spoken by the two British engineers he meets in Switzerland during the 1873 tour: "I could listen my fill to the sounds of the English language as far as it is used at a breakfast-table by men who do not believe in wasting many words on the mere amenities of life" although one of the engineers speaks "with a strong Scotch accent" (*PR* 39). Zdzisław Najder argues that although outwardly he maintained that the idea of writing an autobiography came from Ford, Conrad had a strong motivation to write an account of his life. Najder suggests that Conrad wanted to counter-attack Robert Lynd's review published in the *Daily News* in August 1908. Lynd criticized his "choice" to write in English instead of Polish, insisting that a writer "who ceases to see the world coloured by his own language – for language gives colour to thoughts and things in a way that few people understand – is apt to lose the concentration and intensity of vision without which the greatest literature cannot be made" (*JCC* 341). Indeed, Chapter VI, the second chapter of the *Review* version's "second volume," opens with an allusion to Robert Lynd as "that robust man" who "leaves not a shred of my substance untrodden" (*PR* 107).

Throughout the autobiography Conrad somehow attempts to prove that English is the language of his destiny. Ironically, in order to refute Lynd's linguistic nationalism, Conrad resorts to similar mythologizing of the English language. At the end of the second examination for the British Merchant Service, recounted in the latter half of Chapter VI, he declares to the examiner: "I had thought to myself that if I was to be a seaman then I would be a British seaman and no other" (119). This is followed by a lengthy recollection of his initiation into the sea, where he declares: "what I told the last of my examiners was perfectly true. Already the determined resolve, that "if a seaman, then an English seaman," was formulated in my head though, of course, in the Polish language" – this is because "I did not know six words of English" (122). In the "Author's Note" Conrad goes as far as to insist: "my faculty to write in English is as natural as any other aptitude with which I might have been born" (v), trying to discard the legendary story, spread by Hugh Clifford, that as for his literary medium he made a deliberate choice between French and English.[6]

[6] Clifford wrote several reviews on Conrad. The essay Conrad refers to here is "The Genius of Mr. Joseph Conrad," published in the *North American Review* (June 1904).

The nationalist sentiment for England and its language may also be considered the last resort from the danger of total disintegration of his self into "all sorts of places." Books *may* be written in all sorts of places, but from now on he *must* write his own books in England; England thus becomes the metaphor of his unified "European" and "Western" self. England as ending can be seen as the moment of a wish-fulfilment. Most importantly, however, the entire text of *A Personal Record* defies all the expectations of this happy ending; the text tells us that England as ending is still a temporary arrangement and is not the definitive meaning of Conrad's life. Things English are not all as awe-inspiring as the Ensign; another emblematic figure of England, appearing in the middle of the text, is the "unforgettable Englishman" he meets in Switzerland in 1873, who is "clad in a knickerbocker suit" and "wore short socks under his laced boots" (40). Despite his inadequate appearance this English man is thought to be "the ambassador of my future" (41).

Also, there is a sequence of episodes, which concerns Conrad's first encounter with English literature, in which the "future" England indeed meets the past Poland. Those episodes appear in Chapter IV. He tries to recollect what he was reading on the evening before he began to write *Almayer's Folly*, and thinks it might have been one of Anthony Trollope's novels. Trollope is "one of the English novelists whose works I read for the first time in English" (*PR* 71). Yet this is by far not his first contact with English literature since he had also read the works of "men of European reputation" in translation before he could read them in English. He then claims that his first introduction to English literature was *Nicholas Nickleby*, which amazed him by the novel's near-perfect translatability into Polish, that "how well Mrs. Nickleby could chatter disconnectedly in Polish and the sinister Ralph rage in that language."

However, immediately after this remark he admits he is wrong, and reveals that the very first work of English literature he read was actually the manuscript of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* translated by his father. According to the information given by Conrad himself, the incident happens during the family's exile in Russia, less than a year after his mother's death, when he is eight years old and is living "on the outskirts of the Town of T –" (*PR* 71). One afternoon he is caught by his father while sitting at his writing-table and reading the manuscript; however, his father does not reprimand him but tells him simply to read the page aloud. Through this incident he earns "the right to some latitude in my relations with his writing-table" (72). The episode, albeit evasively, reveals the irony that Conrad's introduction to English literature might possibly trace back to its Polish translation, and finally to his father Apollo, whose writing-table could signify another beginning of Conrad's own literary career. In this last episode, Conrad significantly rediscovers Polish literature symbolized by his father's writing-table through his acquaintance with English literature; the ending is now self-declaredly pointing to the beginning. We may

consider that for Conrad, Europe, or the West, amounts to the vastly open, and yet infinitely closed space created by this temporal circularity between past and future, the space called "all sorts of places" that may contain Russia, the African continent, and Asia, where it is still possible that books are written.

Conclusion

As we have been observing so far, Conrad's autobiographical writing utilizes the trope of "Europe as autobiography" or "the West as autobiography" as late twentieth-century theories of autobiography do. However, "Europe" in *A Personal Record*, unlike in Gusdorf's and Olney's theories, does not necessarily connote unity and autonomy. Rather, the autobiography explores ambivalence and self-contradiction within the trope itself – the ambivalence repressed but inherently present in Gusdorf's "colonialist" metaphor, and only partially revealed in Olney's fusionist argument. It is true that the (western) European identity may to some extent serve to unify his multiple self-images by defining and excluding what is *not* Europe (eg Russia). And yet, none of those metaphors of the self – "Europe," "West," "Poland," or "England" – can finally constitute a singular, linear narrative, or a narrative with a singular beginning and a definite ending. Instead they overlap, conflict, and intersect with each other; the most convincing image of Conrad is evoked only through such plural and inconclusive narratives, the image described by Said as follows: "an overwhelmingly untidy existence as a French-speaking, self-exiled, extremely articulate Pole, who had been a sailor and was now, for reasons not quite clear to him, a writer of so-called adventure stories" (*JCFA* 4).

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CONRAD IN KRAKÓW

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It was in that old royal and academical city that I ceased to be a child, became a boy, had known the friendships, the admirations, the thoughts and the indignations of that age.

("Poland Revisited," *NLL* 145)

Conrad's "Political Sensibility"

In his letter to Stefan Buszczyński (March 17th), written a year before their arrival in Kraków on February 20, 1869, Apollo Korzeniowski asserts his desire "to bring up Konradek not as a democrat, aristocrat, demagogue, republican, monarchist, or as a servant ... of those parties – but only as a Pole," the wish in tune with his other plans for his 11-year-old son to which he gave expression in the same letter, i.e. to settle in Kraków, "in the vicinity of that Holy Sepulchre," which may become little Konradek's "holy, royal cradle!" (*CUFE* 113). Although, taking Apollo's words literally, Kocówna states that in spite of his father's plans for him it was the Ukraine that constituted Conrad's actual "cradle" (34), the observations made by Miłosz in his study of Conrad and a stereotype may in fact point out to the success of Apollo's plans for his son, despite appearances to the contrary (Dąbrowska 185-7).[1]

Comparing Conrad and the "old Polish *szlachta*" from the borderlands, whom he remembered from his childhood, Miłosz finds the writer's 19th century "political sensibility" strikingly similar to theirs despite the fact that, unlike them, Conrad had the chance to distance himself from the stereotypical way of thinking about Russian autocracy as a source of unmitigated resentment and terror, by removing

[1] As Dąbrowska asserts, this view confirms Ujejski's, expressed in his book *O Konradzie Korzeniowskim* (1936).

himself from the places of persecution and captivity. Miłosz sees the only explanation of this phenomenon in the fact that on the day of Conrad's departure from Poland "his political sensibility was wholly formed, and the new experience, belonging to a totally different sphere of life, had absolutely no bearing on that sensibility" (Dąbrowska 185, trans. mine).[2] Incidentally, the place the young Conrad departed from for Marseilles in 1874 was Kraków, where he had spent the most formative years of his life, from the age of eleven to sixteen.

In fact one can hear the echo of that "sensibility" in Conrad in his letter to Cunninghame Graham of Feb. 8th 1899, in which he refused to speak up at a socialist meeting in London, making it clear that he did not trust the idea of international brotherhood because it ignored "the national sentiment the preservation of which is my main concern" (*CL2* 158). In the same reply to Graham, he explained his lack of interest in socialism in terms of his "fidelity to an absolutely lost cause, to an idea without a future" (161). It is also this attitude on his part that seems to have been responsible for his hatred of the idea of a revolution. Hence it is hardly relevant, as Addison Bross does in his article on the missing theme in Conrad "The January Rising and Its Aftermath," to question the validity of either Conrad's assertion that the Polish Risings of 1830 and 1863 were not revolutions but "revolts against foreign domination," or dismiss his insistence that his father as a Januarist did not plan "for the subversion of any social or political scheme of existence" (*PR* xiv), or, for that matter, to regard as "simplistic" (Bross 80) his vision of the class relations in his homeland, which he claims were marked by "a special regard for the right of the unprivileged of this earth" (*PR* xiii). In fact the issue, which Bross finds "problematic," is best explained by Miłosz: "The cause of radical reform was championed as the means to an ultimate end: [Poland's independence] ... [T]he leading militants ... contenting themselves with a purely emotional sympathy for the downtrodden" (129).

The Political Debates of Conrad's Kraków Days

According to Bross, Conrad's opinions on the two Polish uprisings and on his father's role in the latter are not only perfectly attuned to his general silence about the event which had deprived him both of his parents and his childhood, but also to his failure to come to terms with the political issues discussed in Galicia during his residence there, on the eve of his voluntary exile. While it is true that with both

[2] Similarly, Dąbrowska concludes that Conrad's Polishness did not and could not develop for it was tantamount to a custody of the 17-year heritage of his life in Poland, complete with all its attachments, resentments and aversions, for, as she says, "Conrad was a bearer of a talisman . . . a stereotype of Polishness, . . . a guardian of the treasure of the Polish soul threatened by outside forces" (189-90, trans. mine).

Risings the social issue of serfdom[3] was a by-product of the national issue, it is also psychologically justifiable that with his painful familial memories, faced with the debate which either questioned the wisdom of the 1863 Insurrection or discredited it altogether, Conrad should have held his peace. For, the debate raging in the intelligentsia circles of Kraków and Lwów during Conrad's sojourn there was directed against traditional Polish romantic patriotism represented by his father. While Kraków's "Stańczycy" group advocated revisionist attitudes aiming at demythologising and rewriting Polish history, the positivists urged economic development and conciliation with the partitioning powers (Bross 68). Bross notes that Conrad's silence on those debates coincides with his "striking" lack of recognition, "considering his close relation with Tadeusz Bobrowski" (74), of the discrepancy between his uncle's positivist *Pamiętniki* ("Memoirs"), on which he relied for the writing of *A Personal Record* (1912), and his own "post-romantic vision of his homeland and its plight" (Bross 82) presented in that book.

Conrad's Polish Reading

Although Miłosz's, Dąbrowska's and Bross's comments on Conrad's unshaken "political sensibilities" may sound disparaging at times, this is exactly the heritage that Conrad may be legitimately said to have derived not only from his childhood in the Ukraine, his father's conspiratorial activities in Warszawa and his exile in Siberia, but first and foremost from his six years in Galicia, and especially the five spent in Kraków (1869-1873). It is there that he was first exposed to regular education and began to pursue his later almost compulsive reading habits, at first guided by his father's recommendations – during his illness an escape from despair (*NLL* 168) – and, after Apollo's death, cultivated on his own to be later followed even on ships, even in the remotest corners of the globe (Kosek "Bagaż" 44).[4] As, however, Karol Kosek rightly suggests in his article on Conrad's "literary baggage" from Galicia, foreign critics tend to underrate the influence of Conrad's Polish cultural heritage and his reading during the Kraków days of his life on his future literary career, the attitude which Conrad himself unwittingly encouraged, for not only did he (or Jessie) not mention any specific titles but was also in the habit of citing different authors to different audiences as if to meet the expectations of his interlocutors, which led especially English critics to mistaken conclusions that Conrad was well-versed exclu-

[3] See Miłosz (131-4), for a comprehensive discussion of the issue in the context of the Polish national cause.

[4] As the writer himself asserts in *Poland Revisited* (1921), he brought his reading habit as a heritage from his Kraków days, in accordance with the cultural tradition of the Polish *szlachta* always curious about and responsive to the news from the 'wide world' (Kosek "Bagaż" 45).

sively in Western European literatures. At the same time, in his 1914 interview for a Polish journalist Marian Dąbrowski (*CUFE* 199), Conrad ignores all foreign writers, citing only Mickiewicz and Słowacki as his masters, whereas in a letter to Garnett (20th Jan., 1900) he curiously confines Polish literature to the 15th [sic!] century poet Kochanowski, his contemporary Józef Korzeniowski, and his own father (*CL2* 243-7), leaving out the two Romantics, Mickiewicz and Słowacki altogether.

Kosek offers a highly convincing explanation why Conrad refrained from giving his non-Polish "friends" any information concerning Polish literature or his Polish cultural and literary background ("Bagaż" 50). In his 1920 correspondence with Count Eustachy Sanguszko Conrad complains: "I have been long aware of Western Europe's ignorance of the character, history, ideals and essence of the Polish nation" (Jabłkowska 264-5, trans. mine), while in a letter to H. D. Davray (26th Jan., 1908) he explains that he has been writing for the English, always keeping in mind the impression his writings will evoke in the British readers (*CL4* 28). Moreover, he was well aware of the British aloofness towards foreigners as well as England's reluctance to act on Poland's behalf at the expense of the propriety of their relations with Russia, whether tsarist or Soviet, the attitude which has unfortunately hardly become outdated over the period of 80 years that have elapsed since Conrad's death. He felt this attitude most keenly after publishing *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*, when he had to rebut Garnett's accusations of serving the English audience what they did not want to hear, i.e. the truth about tsarist Russia (Kosek "Bagaż" 50).

As to Conrad's "literary baggage" from Galicia in general and Kraków in particular, there indeed was *one*, literally speaking, as Conrad-Bobrowski correspondence from the two years (1874-6) immediately following the young man's departure for Marseilles testifies to. Conrad in fact lost that luggage twice on his distant voyages to Martinique and the Carribean, begging his uncle to replenish his Polish stock soon afterwards, to which the practically-minded Bobrowski replied by advising Conrad to order the missing copies in Kraków or in a Polish bookshop in Paris as a cheaper and safer solution (Jabłkowska 20, 27). This suggests that Conrad was in constant touch with a selection of Polish books, esp. *Pan Tadeusz*, which he "never tired of reading on [his] unending journeys," as he himself admitted to Retinger (Retinger 29), and which may have accounted for his perfect Polish accent despite the forty years that elapsed between his departure from his homeland and his return to it on the eve of WWI.

Speculating about the names of the Polish authors whose books Conrad may have taken along, apart from Mickiewicz and Słowacki, Krasiński, Rzewuski and Fredro are mentioned. On the basis of Bobrowski's letters to Conrad, Kosek adds to that list the authors evidently known to the writer at the time, as might follow from Bobrowski's references to some catchy phrases used by them in their books, which Conrad's uncle may have counted on the boy to find pleasure in recognising, and thus quoted – Pol, Zaleski, Kochanowski, Wężyk (Kocówna 63-4; Kosek "Bagaż" 57).

Next, Kosek points out that in the aftermath of the 1863 Rising, the Polish market, especially in Kraków, Warszawa and Lwów, was literally flooded with magazines, periodicals, publications and literature for children and young people, written to popularise Polish history and culture, i.e. subjects which were either altogether missing from the school curricula concocted by the partitioning powers, or completely distorted and falsified. That during his Kraków days Conrad must have come across such publications seems almost inevitable in view of the fact that upon his arrival in Kraków Apollo was invited to contribute to the *Kraj* magazine, and when still in Lwów he had written a comedy for children about the Polish national hero Tadeusz Kościuszko. Incidentally, at that time, as reported by J. Kałuska, Konradek was said to have himself tried his hand at plays about the January Rising and wrote a drama titled *The Eyes of King John Sobieski* (Kocówna 32-3).

Judging by Konradek's habit of reading whatever his father recommended (Najder *Życie* I 42), the boy must have read the books produced by Apollo's friends and such contemporary Polish writers as the notorious and extremely prolific Kraszewski (Kosek "Bagaż" 62), and Łoziński perceived as the Polish Balzac or Scott and translated into foreign languages (69), as well as many others. In conclusion of his nearly 50-page article on the issue, Kosek emphasises that the "cultural baggage" from Conrad's Kraków days with which Conrad left for Marseilles was indeed huge, contrary to the claims of both Polish and foreign Conradians, and did not only cover Polish history and literature but also publications on all current issues – Polish and European alike, foreign literature in the original (French, Latin, German) and in translation, as well as theatrical productions, including Shakespeare (75). Finally, Kosek puts forward what seems to be a valid claim, that Conrad's later interest in geography may have also been incited by Wincenty Pol, a professor of geography and Apollo's friend (62). Moreover, without disclaiming the validity of all the other motives behind Conrad's decision to go to sea, he suggests that it may have been directly inspired by Conrad's reading of Łoziński's *Narwoj's Stories,* whose serialisation in *Przegląd Lwowski* in 1872 coincided with Conrad's first mention to his uncle of his dream to go to sea, and his harping on the idea for the two years to come. The main hero of *The Twelfth Guest,* Wit Narwoj, the most popular literary creation of the day, was seventeen, exactly Conrad's age at the point of the writer's departure for Marseilles, when he travelled abroad, after having extracted himself from the custody of his grumbling father. The other stories of the series present Narwoj's adventures abroad, combined with his social advancement in the world, a situation evocative of Conrad's own.[5]

[5] Kosek adds that echoes of Łoziński's other book, *Madonna Busowiska,* translated into French by Conrad's aunt Marguerite Poradowska, can be traced in *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* ("Bagaż" 71-2).

The Idea of Fidelity

As Najder points out in his illuminating article "Fidelity and Art," Conrad's indisputable cultural heritage from his native Poland included the idea of fidelity. Although little Konradek's early days had been steeped in the idea of fidelity to the national cause through the example of his parents' devotion to it, it is in his formative years spent in Kraków that he seems to have adopted it as his own. This happened both owing to his father's educational efforts and Conrad's exposure to public education in whatever *gymnasium* he attended in Kraków at the time, or whatever private tutoring he received either there or in Przemyśl and Lwów,[6] where, as Najder suggests: "Polish Romantic poetry and patriotic literature were read and reread" ("Fidelity" 13), particularly if the pensions he was sent to were run by former Insurrectionists, i.e. Ludwig Georgeon (Kraków) and Antoni Syroczyński (Lwów). Moreover, as stressed in Kosek's article on Conrad's education in Galicia ("Wpływ" 53-6), the years 1865-1874, almost exactly coinciding with the period of Conrad's sojourn in Kraków, were crucial for the reinstatement of Polishness in the Austrian partition of Poland,[7] culminating in the acquisition of autonomy on 21 Dec. 1867, slightly over a year before the Korzeniowskis' arrival in Kraków.

In 1868 Apollo wrote to Buszczyński: "I am now writing only because I cannot act," suggesting that the demands of life, in the sense of national and social obligations, were far more important for him than the demands of art (qtd in Najder, "Fidelity" 14). Although 44 years later in "A Familiar Preface" his son asserted that "the temporal world rests on a few very simple ideas ... among others on the idea of Fidelity" (*PR* xxi), he appears to have opted *voluntarily* for what his father was *forced* to choose, i.e. the demands of art over those of life, even though it is on the idea of fidelity, as Ian Watt asserts, that Conrad's ethic rests in all his novels (6). As Najder emphasises, Stein's declaration in *Lord Jim* "to follow the dream ... *usque ad finem*" (to the bitter end; *LJ* 215) directly echoes the principle of fidelity celebrated by the Polish Romantics, and curiously enough, for lack of an alternative, also the positivists like Bobrowski, who often resorted to the phrase himself while exhorting his nephew to perseverance ("Fidelity" 15-6). That despite some allegations to the contrary Conrad did take up this Romantic heritage of fidelity to the national cause can be seen from his words addressed to Garnett in 1907, in which he compares the Polish and the English definitions of fighting: "You forget that we have been used to go to battle without illusions. It's you Britishers that 'go in to win'

[6] For a detailed discussion on the controversial issue of which *gymnasium* in Kraków Conrad attended, if at all, see Najder (*Życie* I, 54-5); Adamowicz (56-65); Kosek ("Wpływ" 59-81).

[7] Formerly the most ruthless of all the occupying powers, aiming at denationalising the Poles living there within one generation

only. We have been 'going in' these last hundred years repeatedly, to be knocked on the head only..." (*CL4* 492), the statement which proved painfully true once again, barely 20 years after Conrad's death, in 1944 in Warszawa.

Kraków Revisited – 1914

Conrad's 1914 visit to Poland (July 28 – Oct. 9), undertaken at the initiative of Otolia Retinger, the wife of his Polish friend Józef Retinger,[8] and the official invitation of her mother Emilia Zubrzycka, turned out to be more than introducing his boys to their father's life, more even than telling his family: "*il'a quelque chose derrière moi*" (Retinger 155). In Retinger's own words, it was a "pilgrimage," during which "[T]he past was talking to him... and to him alone...". And the past did come to him not only through his astonishing ability after forty years to find his way from the Grand Hotel by moonlight through the narrow streets to where he could see Rynek as he remembered it as a schoolboy, "from the side view of the Florian Gate under the shadow of the Church of the Holy Virgin" (150). First and foremost, the past came to him through his astounding realisation upon being shown on July 30 through the vaulted rooms of the old Jagiellonian Library, then housed in Collegium Maius, that, firstly, his father, a helpless "victim of Muscovite tyranny," severely criticised by Bobrowski, was in fact a great man, still revered nationwide half a century after his death; and, secondly, that his manuscripts had survived rather than being burnt (Najder *Życie* II 174-5; Adamowicz 35-6) as Conrad had long mistakenly believed and reported in *The Mirror of the Sea* and in his letter of Jan. 20th 1900 to E. Garnett (*CL2* 247). A few months later, he made his first written public statement about his father when in "Poland Revisited" he recollected Apollo's last journey, to Rakowicki Cemetry, which turned into a huge national manifestation of "all the generous 'Youth of the Schools', the grave Senate of the University, the delegations of the Trade-guilds" (*NLL* 169).

And it is only the outbreak of WWI the next day after Conrad's visit to the Library that prevented the curator, incidentally Józef Korzeniowski, from making the copies of Apollo's manuscripts for Conrad. And those would have comprised a two-volume collection of Apollo's poetry, drama and prose (1849-68), until 1907 in the hands of Stefan Buszczyński, some of his correspondence (with J. I. Kraszewski, among others) as well as personal poetry addressed to his wife Ewelina

[8] Józef Retinger (1888-1960), born in Kraków, died in London; holder of two Ph.D. degrees (law at the Jagiellonian University and humanities at the Sorbonne); exchanged his career in humanities (*Histoire de la littérature française du romantisme à nos jours*, 1911) for one in politics (*The Poles and Prussia*, advocating Poland's ethnic right to territories in German hands); a great advocate of the Polish cause; a formidable and controversial figure and maker of pre-and post-war European politics; founder of the modern idea of United Europe, and of the so-called Bilderberg group.

and little Konradek, formerly in the hands of Teofila Bobrowska, Conrad's grandmother. A later deposit, made by Jessie seven years after Conrad's death, in 1931, consists of the Korzeniowski and Bobrowski family documents and papers, including Apollo's and Conrad's Russian passports from 1868, the year of their arrival in Galicia; a copy of the 1889 document annulling Conrad's Russian citizenship; and Bobrowski's financial accounts from the years of his custody over his nephew.

Kraków saw two unusual, emotional scenes involving Conrad, as observed by his son Borys and Retinger, respectively: his kneeling down to pray at his father's grave, and kissing a man (the man was Retinger) on both cheeks, in accordance with "the ancient Polish custom ... which he held in detestation" otherwise (Retinger 153). The third instance of uncommon conduct in the family, triggered by this emotional Polish visit, concerned Jessie, Conrad's wife, who was reported praying in front of Queen Jadwiga's black cross at the Royal Cathedral of the Wawel Castle, as a Catholic might (Retinger 154).

Extremely moved by the sight of the Wawel and the cathedral, which had been recently rebuilt and restored to the nation, after serving as barracks for the Austrian occupier, Conrad observed that nothing much had changed in Kraków between 1874 and 1914, least of all in the Market Square: "the unnecessary trees the Municipality insisted upon sticking between the stones ... steadily refusing to grow" and "the paving operations ... exactly at the same point," the sight ominously familiar to the eye 90 years later, Conrad's "suspicion of the unchangeableness of things" (*NLL* 164-6) ironically confirmed today.

"[T]he helpless prey of the Shadows [he] had called up" (*NLL* 169f), caught between the Austrian and the Russian partitions on the fatal day of August 1, 1914, Conrad observed a general aura of anticipation and optimism in the nation, awakened by an all-European military conflict that many believed spelled freedom for Poland. No longer able to visit Retinger's mother's estate on the Russian side, after barely five days in Kraków, the Conrads had to take refuge in Zakopane on Aug. 2. And it is there, as previously in the Royal city, that the writer met with a number of representatives of the contemporary political and literary elite of Poland, for "those long nocturnal Polish talks," which both updated him on the recent developments on the Polish literary and artistic scenes (Żeromski, Prus, Wyspiański, Nalepiński, Rembowski, also through extensive reading (Najder *Życie II* 176-7) – and gave rise to his later Memorandum to the British government concerning the Polish cause (177-9). Two months later, financially aided by Pinker and supplied with a special travel pass obtained through "connections" for their return journey to Vienna, Conrad with his family left for Nowy Targ in a peasant horse-drawn carriage, on the night of 7/8 Oct, arriving in Vienna three days later on a train full of wounded soldiers.

The Secret Agent in Kraków

Conrad's last encounter with Kraków can easily be regarded as a misadventure. The dramatised version of *The Secret Agent* prepared jointly by Aniela Zagórska, the authorised Polish translator of his works, and Bruno Winawer, an interwar Polish playwright, whose comedy *The Book of Job* Conrad translated into English, survived merely five nights on the stage of Kraków's *Bagatela* theatre at Easter time, i.e. March 26-28th, 3rd and 7th April, 1923. Objections to the dramatic version of *The Secret Agent* in Poland were similar to those made to the London performance: "defective stagecraft and absence of concentration of effect" (*CPB* 282) despite the fact that Conrad had reduced the number of acts to three, and reshuffled the scenes to compress the action. Ludwik Skoczylas, the reviewer of *Goniec Krakowski*, showed more consideration for Conrad as an internationally renowned writer than for his play, blaming the director for opting for an unfortunate blend of realism and symbolism instead of hitting upon a uniform convention.

Why, then, did Bruno Winawer report to Conrad that the play had been favourably received (Conrad's letter to Aniela Zagórska; *CPB* 282)? The answer perhaps lies in a short, unequivocally laudatory note in *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* on March 28, two days after the first night, which celebrates the play's great success. The newspaper showed considerable interest in the appearance of Conrad's play in Poland, by publishing a leader on the writer's life and work on the day of the premiere and a review three days later. Ringing the note of national pride in Conrad's international reputation, the leader intended to re-introduce Conrad to the Polish audience and anticipated a quality performance. The review itself was much less enthusiastic, although it began with a laudatory and reassuring tribute to Conrad's achievement as a writer who had "jumped out of his Polish skin" while never betraying his Polishness. Praising the acting, the reviewer none the less characterized the plot as a morbid reflection of Conrad's nightmarish memories of his childhood spent in partitioned Poland, concluding that neither the play's subject nor its rendering of the novel deserved to be called high art. Another unfavourable review appeared on the same day in the Kraków daily *Czas*. Remarking that Conrad was apparently more at ease in the middle of an ocean than on stage, the author blamed the play's failure on its very prerequisites – vagueness of plot and character, which roused the curiosity of the audience without satisfying it.[9]

Conclusion

To conclude, let me evoke the assertion expressed by Czesław Miłosz in his article on Apollo Korzeniowski, of an overpowering, if often implicit, influence of

[9] For a more detailed discussion of the issue see Branny 5-7, from which this section partly derives.

the firmest beliefs, commitments and loyalties of Conrad's father on the writer's own way of thinking, despite appearances to the contrary, and thus stress the pivotal role in Conrad's further life of his Kraków days. In this context Miłosz's inspiring suggestion in the conclusion of his article that perhaps Kraków will live to see a monument to Apollo, "portraying the man with the boy who owed him so much ... both men fanatics of persevering tenacity ... appealing to lost virtues amid a world of commerce and industry," with "a kind of greatness peculiar only to Quixotes" (Miłosz 138, 140), sounds particularly relevant. Although it is not entirely implausible that Retinger could also be counted in that number, what certainly bound him and Conrad together was what also bound Conrad and his father, i.e. concern for the Polish cause.

A Cracovian by birth, by initiating Conrad's visit to the Royal city in 1914, Retinger brought to a full circle what Apollo had begun 45 years earlier: Conrad's youthful days in Kraków bore the fruit of his patriotic memorandum "A Note on the Polish Problem," written at the request of Retinger for circulation in the Foreign Office (Knowles 122). The Paine of Europe, however mysterious his dealings, undertaken in whosever name and by whatever means, at that time Retinger seems to have been mainly concerned with the issue best expressed by the title of his own memorandum: an independent Poland as a safeguard of Europe's political equilibrium (*La Pologne et l'équilibre européen*). Both of them, as Retinger insists – Conrad and himself – "nothing else than ... Pole[s]" (152), despite some personal issue that seems to have cast a shadow over this unusual friendship – between an elderly gentleman that Conrad was at the time, and the "devil's little cousin," as General Sikorski was later to refer to Retinger, Conrad's junior by over 30 years, whose political activities the writer viewed with "dismayed admiration" (Najder *CPB* 260 ftn. 1).

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"ONE OF US": CONRAD AND ENGLISH POLITICS AND CULTURE

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My subject is Conrad's early engagement, both as citizen and as writer, with England and Englishness. Taking as my starting-point Terry Eagleton's claim that "There are of course vital historical affinities at work in any culture, which the postmodern cult of the discontinuous damagingly ignores" (3). I shall consider the political and cultural "affinities" that confront Conrad as he negotiates his path from British mariner to English writer and then use these to frame my discussion of his early career as an author. In the process I hope to show that the contemporary debate surrounding Englishness is itself composed of the "irreconcilable antagonisms" to which Conrad referred in his letter to the *New York Times* "Saturday Review" of 2 August 1901 (*CL2* 348). One obvious consequence of this concerns the charge of racism levelled at "Heart of Darkness." To reflect an inclusive English perspective, Marlow must necessarily represent both pro- and anti-imperial views. The Manichaean criticism that lines up behind either Achebe or his opponents serves ideological allegiances but it is not comprehensive.

I

On 19 August 1886, in London between overseas duty in the *Tilkhurst* and *Highland Forest*,[1] Conrad officially became a naturalised citizen of Great Britain, a subject of Queen Victoria.[2] Biographically the timing is felicitous: his naturalisation

[1] The *Tilkhurst* in which Conrad shipped as second mate for a round trip to the East, leaving Hull on 27 April 1885, returned to Dundee on 16 June 1886; the *Highland Forest* left Amsterdam, bound for Java, on 18 February 1887 with Conrad as first mate. He signed off on 1 July to receive medical treatment in Singapore.

[2] Rather than Tsar Alexander III, although he would only be released from his status as a Russian subject in 1889.

was granted between Conrad's failing and passing his master's certificate (in July and November of the same year). The *Tilkhurst* voyage itself separates his first-mate and captain's examinations. A Polish nobleman now cased in a distinctly better quality of British tar, Conrad's first known letters in English date from this time. Written to Spiridion Kliszczewski from Singapore, where the *Tilkhurst* offloaded coal, and Calcutta, where she loaded jute, they offer his first thoughts about the politics of his soon-to-be adopted country.

Achieving his captain's certificate Conrad had succeeded against the understandable early resistance of his uncle, Tadeusz Bobrowski. Conrad recalls his response to passing his examination thus: "It was an answer to certain outspoken scepticism, and even to some not very kind aspersions. I had vindicated myself from what had been cried upon as a stupid obstinacy or a fantastic caprice" (*PR* 120). His sense of becoming his own man, of identity, is inescapably linked to British seamanship, as his writing would later identify him with the great tradition of English letters.[3]

The essays and occasional pieces that spanned his writing career show that Conrad had an active not simply a legal bond with the public life of Britain. He was a professional twice over, a professional seaman and a professional writer, and professionalism, by definition, is exclusive. Citizenship, by contrast, is inclusive. Despite such off-hand comments as "I never look at the papers, so I know nothing of politics and literature (*CL2* 138), the subject matter of Conrad's essays suggests that they emerge from his reflections on the pages of the daily press – now responding to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5; now attacking theatrical censorship; now bringing his maritime expertise to bear on the *Titanic* disaster, and charging the Board of Trade and the press with irresponsibility; now discussing Poland's re-emergence as a nation state after the First World War.

On the other side of this coin is Conrad's scepticism voiced, for instance, in his 1904 essay on Anatole France, whom he describes as "a good republican": "political institutions, whether contrived by the wisdom of the few or the ignorance of the many, are incapable of securing the happiness of mankind" (*NLL* 30). As John Stape argues, Conrad's political writings "transcend their specific circumstances to become larger statements about the nature of the state and the individual's relationship to it, concerns rooted in his family's experience as well as those of the average civilized individual" (*NLL* xlvii).

[3] One is reminded of his letter to Marguerite Poradowska of 4 September 1892: "one becomes useful only on recognizing the extent of the individual's utter insignificance within the arrangement of the universe. When one has fully understood that, by oneself, one is nothing and man is worth neither more nor less than the work he accomplishes with honesty of means and purpose, and within the strict limits of his duty to society, only then is one master of one's conscience, only then has one the right to call oneself a man" (*CL1* 113-14).

Conrad reveals his early political allegiances as Conservative in the letters to Kliszczewski of October and December 1885.[4] They record that he read the (Conservative) *Daily Telegraph* sent to him by Kliszczewski "expecting great things" (*CL*1 12) in the wake of the Liberal government's defeat by a Conservative budget-amendment in June 1885, and on the general election in November that year: "I and the rest of the 'right thinking' have been grievously disappointed by the result of the General Election" (*CL*1 15-16). The elections yielded a Conservative victory, but with a minority government. (Importantly, they ushered in 20 years of near-unbroken Conservative rule.) Conrad's family history complicates his political allegiance to an Empire composed of territories whose boundaries took no account of tribal origins.

Whether Conrad realised it or not when he famously declared to another refugee from Poland, "When speaking, writing or thinking in English the word Home always means for me the hospitable shores of Great Britain" (*CL*1 12), there was already a public clamour to restrict immigration into Britain. In a letter to *The Times* of 31 May 1904, the young Liberal, Winston Churchill, defended "the old tolerant and generous practice of free entry and asylum to which the country has so long adhered and from which it has so often greatly gained" (10), but the Conservative government's "Aliens Act" of 1905 restricted immigration into Britain for the first time.

Politically, Conrad's sentiments formulate a sense of his Polish history. Having pinned his hopes on the Conservatives to form an anti-Russian alliance with Germany, his despondence about Britain's limited influence on Continental affairs is evident. Following the election and the constitution of a minority Conservative government he proclaims: "Joy reigns in St. Petersburg, no doubt, and profound disgust in Berlin" (*CL*1 16). In time Conrad would come to warn that German expansionism could lead to a divided Europe (in "Autocracy and War") – and, of course, by which time German imperialism had already declared its hand, not least in Kaiser Wilhelm's telegram of 3 January 1896 sent to congratulate President Kruger on successfully repulsing Jameson's invasion of the Transvaal. Kipling remembered the Jameson Raid as "the first battle in the war of 14-18 – a little before its time but necessary to clear the ground" (letter to Herbert Baker, 13 January 1934; in Lycett 296-97).

Conrad's political sentiments are shaped by his reaction to what he perceives as a dead Poland. British politics evoke only "a state of despairing indifference; for, whatever may be the changes in the fortunes of living nations, for the dead there is no hope and no salvation! ... nothing remains for us but the darkness of oblivion"

[4] Kliszczewski is listed as Josef Spiridion in the 1881 Census, suggesting that, like Conrad, his anglicanization included changing his name.

(*CL*1 12). The morbid patriotic sentiments directly echo those of the poem written by his father to commemorate Conrad's birth, with its lines: "*Poland your Mother* is in her grave" and "no salvation without Her!" (in *CUFE* 33). It was in this letter, too, that Conrad foresaw "the lurid light of battlefields somewhere in the near future" (*CL*1 12).

Conrad was British, as he assured David Bone, "by choice": "I am more British than you are. You are only British because you could not help it" (Bone 160). And the Britain of Conrad's choice was imperial. The great fact of British life, the empire, provided Conrad with a living, with security, and with a sense of communal recognition and belonging. As a member of the British Merchant Service, engaged in the practical reality of empire, Conrad was part of the great web of communication that assimilated remote areas of the world into the British economy. It would be surprising if his political allegiances were not Conservative. His response to British politics, as his letters to Kliszczewski show, is fashioned by a combination of immigrant complex and self-preservation.[5]

But while Conservative imperialism dominates British politics at this period, the age is equally characterised by portents of imperial disintegration, and, related to this, strains between old hierarchies of authority and power and an incipient democracy. Conrad's political anxieties extend to the rising tide of Continental socialism and the ineffectuality of Empire to counteract this: "The great British Empire went over the edge ... Where's the man to stop the crashing avalanche? | Where's the man to stop the rush of social-democratic ideas? ... the sun is set and the last barrier removed. England was the only barrier to the pressure of infernal doctrines born in Continental back-slums" (*CL*1 16).

Whether "born in Continental back-slums" or not, the "rush of social-democratic ideas" that Conrad dreaded was certainly gaining purchase. Gladstone's Reform Bills in 1884 and 1885 extended the vote and, in effect, prepared the way for the extended franchise guaranteed by the Act of 1918 – up to which point only about 60% of adult males had the parliamentary vote. British political life mirrored the changing configurations and realignments of national identity. Its leanings towards socialism were evident in the founding of the Fabian Society in 1884, whose members included Sidney and Beatrice Webb, George Bernard Shaw, and H. G. Wells. In 1886 unemployed East Enders rioted in Trafalgar Square and looted shops in Oxford Street; in the two years that followed strikes by East End matchgirls and dockworkers launched the new and powerful unionism. The need for an increasingly unionised working class to be represented in the House of Commons led to the formation of the Independent Labour Party in 1893.

[5] Immigrant complex is taken to mean the process whereby one tends to overcompensate for being an outsider by adopting small "c" conservative causes of the adoptive polity and even suppressing one's original cultural traits.

Conrad's response to contemporary public events is surprisingly muted at times. The deaths of Queen Victoria (1901), Gladstone (1898), and Salisbury (1903), for instance, go unmentioned in his surviving letters, while Edward VII's coronation is barely noticed. But if this reticence is itself his comment upon national politics, he is exercised by international events, such as the Boer War, "the Krüger-Chamberlain combination" as he calls it (*CL2* 302).[6] While one may put some of this interest down to the fact of his friend, Ted Sanderson's involvement, his comments about the respective merits of British generals suggests a deeper fascination. It is the internationalist Conrad who argues to Zagórska in December 1899 that: "This war is not so much a war against the Transvaal as a struggle against the doings of German influence. It is the Germans who have forced the issue. There can be no doubt about it" (*CL2* 229).

A contemporary cartoon that appeared during the Boer War depicts Kitchener and Kipling as toy figures, representing respectively the sword and the pen, with the accompanying doggerel: "When the Empire wants a stitch in her | Send for Kipling and for Kitchener" (see Buitenhuis 7). And if Kipling, who Rider Haggard described as a true "watchman of our Empire" (in Lycett 306), was the poet of the right, the left too had its cultural voices, in writers such as George Bernard Shaw, who observes in *Misalliance* (1909): "Rome fell; Carthage fell; Hindhead's turn will come."

Conrad's early anxieties about private and professional acceptance are acutely registered in his letters. On the one hand, a letter from Helen Watson, Ted Sanderson's wife-to-be, is "like a high assurance of being accepted, admitted within, the people and land of my choice" (*CL1* 347), and, on the other, criticism of *The Secret Agent* leads to the outburst: "Ive been so cried up of late as a sort of freak, an amazing bloody foreigner writing in English" (*CL3* 488). Looking back on his life as an immigrant, Conrad would write: "I went out into the world before I was seventeen, to France and England, and in neither country did I feel myself a stranger for a moment: neither as regards ideas, sentiments, or institutions" (to George T. Keating, 14 December 1922; *CL7* forthcoming). Yet, the professional detachment of the writer corresponds to a mirroring perception of him as "an alien of genius" (in Sherry, ed. 185), and he remains on his death, to Virginia Woolf at least, "our guest" despite having spent the greater part of his life living on English soil.

Conrad's early novels, to which I shall now turn, suggest the pattern of his engagement with prevailing public themes: imperialism in *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*; maritime history in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* and *Typhoon*; and, "framed" by this "sea stuff," the "hidden" rules of social inclusion that define the gentleman, in *Lord Jim*. I am aware that my brush strokes are broad here, since all

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[6] Joseph Chamberlain, the Conservative Colonial Secretary, told the House of Commons in his maiden speech: "I believe in the British Empire and I believe in the British race" (in Lycett 276).

three concerns, the Empire, the Sea, and Inclusiveness are interrelated and mutually defining. But this is part of my point: when Conrad settled in England to write, he was well equipped to train an ethnologist's eye on the natives at a moment when what it meant to be English was being contested. He brought to bear an immigrant's perspective, uniquely coloured by his Polish experience and French and British Merchant Marine histories, on the ambiguities and paradoxes in English life. As Marlow says: "the onlookers see most of the game" (*LJ* 224).

II

Ideologically Conrad's first two novels propose a view of imperialism. His career in the British Merchant Service made him an ideal intermediary between the western and exotic worlds. In this he was not alone: Pierre Loti was another professional mariner turned author. In English letters, colonial administrators like Rider Haggard and colonial journalists like Rudyard Kipling were also able to draw upon personal experiences for their fiction.

Exotic literature reflected the new imperialism. By 1891 Andrew Lang could remark: "people have become alive to the strangeness and fascination of the world beyond the bounds of Europe and the United States" (in Kucich, ed. 3). In itself this is odd, given the pervasive impact of Empire upon British public life before this moment. Nonetheless, characters such as Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu, and spectacles like Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, ensured that the exotic became part of everyday education. The glimpses it offered of strange worlds, however, were ideological, "generally reinforcing the sense of superiority of the 'civilized' over the 'savage' " (Hobsbawm 80). In Conrad's hands this genre of exotic fiction is forced to encounter alien ways of thinking that place its logic and coherence in question.

It is tempting simply to dismiss, say, the colonial fantasies of Haggard, whose jingoistic ruthlessness caught something of the popular spirit and whose "beastly *bloodiness*" led Henry James to complain to Stevenson: "They seem to me works in which our race and our age make a very vile figure" (letter of 2 August 1886; *Letters* 3 128). Yet Allan Quatermain's observation that "in all essentials the savage and the child of civilisation are identical. ... Civilisation is only savagery silver-gilt" (*Allan Quatermain* 14-15) would resonate a decade later in "Heart of Darkness."

Conrad endows the exotic with a geographical and historical reality. The fictional setting for *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* is closely based upon the remote coastal region of Berau in north-east Borneo, which Conrad visited while serving in the *Vidar*.[7] Geographical coincidence is complemented by histori-

[7] Present-day Kalimantan, which Conrad visited while serving as first mate in the SS *Vidar* between September and December 1887. Conrad traced his decision to become a writer to his meeting with William Charles Olmeijer in Berau in late 1887: "if I had not got to know Almayer pretty well it

cal verisimilitude that allows us to identify the temporal setting of *Almayer's Folly* as the mid-1880s and *An Outcast of the Islands* as the early 1870s.[8] Of course, a work of fiction need not be in thrall to the real world, and Conrad often uses his sources creatively rather than exactly. Nonetheless, in these novels the very process of making history is critically examined through the prism of literary fiction.

Located in space and time, Conrad's fictional challenge to the idea of Empire as heroic, exotic adventure is coextensive with political reality. The imperialism that is debunked in *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* is Dutch rather than British. Fidelity to personal experience, an eye on the market place, and immigrant sensitivities towards his adopted homeland may all have contributed towards this. Whatever the reason, from the standpoint of an English author writing for a British readership, explicit criticism is directed towards one of Britain's imperial competitors.

Through the characters of Almayer and Willems, ironically referred to as "These two specimens of the superior race" (*OI* 63), Conrad subverts any assumption of their racial superiority in favour of an essential similarity within which the European is outsmarted and outmanoeuvred by supposedly primitive intelligences. In Conrad's first attempts at stream of consciousness writing – Almayer's swoon over the body he believes to be Dain's; or Willems' delusions when shot by Aïssa – European identity itself becomes detached from reality and fragments. And this at a moment when the American and European publics paid their coin to gawp at "savage" on display in P. T. Barnum's travelling exhibitions.

In *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* the colonial perception of the natives as fit for conquest itself becomes the subject of an answering (post-colonial) gaze that recasts its assumed strengths as weaknesses, its dreams as folly, and its superiority as specious. If the era's imperial speech habits and vocabulary reverberate through these novels then what Cedric Watts terms their "covert plots" – such as Abdulla's betrayal of Almayer – provide a countermanding structure that high-

is almost certain there would never have been a line of mine in print" (*PR* 87). At the time of their meeting, Conrad was serving as first mate in the *Vidar*, a Singapore-based steamer plying her trade between Singapore and ports on the islands of Borneo and Celebes (present day Sulawesi).

[8] Established by Royal Charter in 1881 and mentioned at the opening of Chapter 3 of *Almayer's Folly*, the British North Borneo Company led the Dutch to strengthen their position in north-east Borneo and to the setting up of a joint British-Dutch commission in 1884 to settle boundary disputes. The predicament of the fictional Almayer is thus coextensive with historical and political reality: an agent for the British firm of Lingard and Co., Almayer reasonably expects to prosper under the British but not under the Dutch – the chief of the Dutch Commission tells him that "the Arabs were better subjects than Hollanders who dealt illegally in gunpowder with the Malays" (36).

Dain Maroola's arrival in Sambir is similarly grounded in historical fact. His contribution to the fictional plot of *Almayer's Folly* in search of gunpowder can be traced to the Dutch reversals against the Sumatran Achinese in 1881 that fostered unrest throughout the Archipelago.

lights the myopia of Western attitudes. The novels dramatise the paradoxes of imperial ideology, such as Willems' desire for Aïssa: "She was too different from him. He was so civilized! ... and he could not live without her" (*OI* 28). The exotic space that fostered European fantasy and adventure is here fraught with dangers of quasi-Darwininan "degeneration," theorised by Max Nordau and given literary form in Stevenson's simian Mr. Hyde or H. G. Wells' parable of the Eloi dependent upon yet at the mercy of the dark Morlocks. Conrad voices complex contemporary anxieties about the vulnerability and sustainability of the imperial vision that challenge Kipling's description of the "half-devil and half-child" ("The White Man's Burden").

Kipling may have expressed an aggressive view of Empire, but he is also more nuanced than such quotations allow. Returning to England and English society from India in 1889, he found himself confronted by what he saw as decadence that threatened the imperial mission: "They derided my poor little Gods of the East ... Their aim was peaceful, intellectual penetration and the formation of what today would be called 'cells' in unventilated corners" (in Lycett 196).[9] The implication seems to be that the British Empire was vulnerable on two fronts: from without in the shape of international competition and from within through a failure of the will to rule. When Kipling issues his injunction to "Take up the White Man's burden" (in 1899), it is addressed to America not Britain, suggesting that the torch, not to mention the sword, of Empire has passed across the Atlantic. Roosevelt found it "rather poor poetry, but good sense from the expansionist point of view" (in Lycett 311). Even Kipling's "Recessional," written to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, warns of the impermanence of empires.[10] And six year's before this he wrote in "The Long Trail": "your English summer's done." Seen in this light, Kipling, the poet of the right, was as much of an outsider in English society as Conrad was.[11]

Conrad portrays an imperialism in decline, overcome by the perceived barbarism against which it has constructed its self-image. Supporting this, a rich mix of cultural and racial allegiances complicates Eurocentric over-simplifications. As Watts notes, the Balinese Dain escapes from a combination of Dutch soldiers, Arabs, and a Siamese slave-girl, thanks to a Sulu-Malay-Dutch alliance (50-51). Once noted, the racial diversity renders culturally corrosive Nina's observation of her fa-

[9] A decade later Kipling wrote to Cecil Rhodes: "England is a stuffy little place, mentally, morally and physically" (letter of 24 October 1901; in Lycett 340).

[10] Far-called, our navies melt away; | On dune and headland sinks the fire: | Lo, all our pomp of yesterday | Is one with Nineveh and Tyre! |Judge of the Nations, spare us yet, | Lest we forget, lest we forget.

[11] Tantalisingly, no trace has yet been found of Conrad's (unpublished) essay on Kipling submitted to *The Outlook* in February 1898 (see *CL2* 32-34).

ther as "traditionless" (28). If the ostensible criticism is of Dutch colonialism, it is their colonial competitor in the Archipelago, the Englishman Lingard, who provides the impetus. Indeed, the Malay trilogy charts a pattern of imperial demise centred on Lingard, from his failure to keep his word and save Hassim and Immada in *The Rescue*, through the loss of his trading monopoly in *An Outcast of the Islands*, to his disappearance in *Almayer's Folly*, where he is a memory.

Conrad's *Vidar*-experience came during an unbroken spell of nearly two-and-a-half years service abroad.[12] By the time he returned to Europe in May 1889, as a passenger in the SS *Nürnberg*, eleven years had passed since Conrad had first set foot on English soil. I estimate that he had spent only three years of this in Britain, and one of these being caused by the delay in setting sail in the *Palestine*. This is the degree to which the Merchant Service fashioned Conrad's early sense of what it was to be English.

III

Nowhere in Britain is one ever more than seventy miles from the sea and, unsurprisingly, the sea is intimately woven into the national story. To W. H. Auden the sea is "that state of barbaric vagueness and disorder out of which civilization has emerged" (17); Ackroyd suggests that the pastoral image of England stems from the vision of the island as a haven from the sea (263).

By the time Conrad began writing fiction, the sea had become a national obsession that expressed itself in agitation for a bigger and better navy. Britain's naval policy in the 1870s and 1880s responded to the threat of the Russo-Turkish War of 1878-79. The word "jingoist" stems from a popular music-hall refrain of the time:

We don't want to fight, yet by Jingo! if we do,
We've got the ships, we've got the men, and got the money too.
We've fought the Bear before, and while Britons shall be true,
The Russians shall not have Constantinople.

It is difficult to overestimate the impact of popular sentiment upon political decision-making. 1878 is also the year of Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore* with its jibe at "landsmen all" to "Stick close to your desks and never go to sea, | And you all may be Rulers of the Queen's Navee!"

The Nigger of the "Narcissus" and *Typhoon* identified Conrad with the prevailing national mood.[13] He also contributed to the Trafalgar centenary on 21 October 1905

[12] Between sailing out to the Far East from Amsterdam in the *Highland Forest* in February 1887 and returning to Europe in May 1889, as a passenger on the SS *Nürnberg*, a ship involved in the immigrant trade from Germany to Adelaide.

[13] The national celebration of the sea assumes various artistic forms: musically, for instance, it is heard in such compositions as Elgar's *Sea Pictures*, Delius' *Sea Drift* (1908), and Vaughan Williams' *Sea*

the essay on Nelson,[14] that brings to a patriotic close *The Mirror of the Sea*, which appeared a year later. The customary finale to the last night of the Proms, Henry Wood's *Fantasia of British Sea Songs*, with "Rule, Brittania!" as its stirring conclusion, was first performed as part of the Trafalgar celebrations in 1905.

Between them *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* and *Typhoon* represent successive phases in Britain's maritime history: sail and steam. If the *Narcissus* provides an elegy for the vanishing era of sailing ships, then the less romantic steamship, the *Nan-Shan*, is a tribute to the mechanisation necessary for Britannia still to "rule the waves." With the benefit of historical hindsight, we can see that the celebration of Englishness in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries coincides with the peak of Empire and thus seems to be partly motivated by fears of decline.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus" is more than a recessional to maritime England, it also politicises and historicizes the sea. Whether trade follows the flag or the other way round, the division of the seas into profitable trade-routes intimately linked the two marine services: merchant shipping depended upon naval protection. In the face of increasingly professional foreign competition, the sheer scope of the empire strained Britain's ability to meet her demand for sailors, and foreign sailors were not unusual in the Merchant Service. To Berthoud, the international face of the Merchant Service left it "relatively free of the worst prejudices of nationalism. Thus when, as the century wore on, it came to rival the Royal Navy in the regard of the country, it did not wholly succumb to the contagion of jingoism" (xi).

Whether manifest in Donkin's social agitation or in the nepotism that Mr. Baker accepts will enable Mr. Creighton to "get on" in the service (*NN* 167), class is a central theme in *The Nigger*. Conrad, whose own period in the Merchant Service entailed class demotion, declared in a letter of 1922: "Class for me is by definition a hateful thing" (letter to Elbridge L. Adams, 20 November 1922; *CL7* forthcoming). This did not stop him signing off from two of his English ships with the aristocratic "de Korzeniowski" – nor equating "infernal doctrines" with "Continental back-slums" (*CL*1 16).

The concept of "the gentleman" reverberates through the novel, its selectivity at times rhetorically undermined by appropriation, as when Wait asks: "Is your cook a coloured gentleman?" (*NN* 19). Exchanges among the crew repeatedly call the stereotypes of class and race to the service of casual abuse. Thus, to James Wait, the victim of the racist term "nigger," Donkin is "East-end trash" (45) and Belfast an "Irish beggar" (80). His "Canton street girl" would "chuck – any toff – for a coloured gentleman" (149).

Singleton's choice of reading matter, *Pelham: or The Adventures of a Gentleman* (1828), certainly contributes towards the theme, but Pelham is a gentleman dandy.

Symphony (1910), while literature boasts Kipling's *The Seven Seas* (1896), Newbolt's *Admirals All* (1897), John Masefield's *Salt-Water Ballads* (1902).

[14] Published in a "Trafalgar Day" supplement of the *Standard* (13).

One aspect of Nordau's theory of "degeneration" is that it acquires a subtle manifestation in the person of the artist – an idea given an added boost by the Oscar Wilde exposé of 1895. Reductively stereotypical – and lampooned in a host of cartoons of the era – the image of the effete, emasculated dandy contributed to the reclassification of the idea of a gentleman. Interestingly, a disillusioned Kipling looks beyond the ruling classes for the survival of the British Empire: "The big smash is coming one of these days, sure enough, but I think we shall pull through not without credit. It will be the common people – the 3rd class carriages – that'll save us" (Letter to J. W. Mackail, 21 July 1897; in Lycett 300).

In his attitude towards authority, duty, and work, Singleton represents the claims of inherited tradition. Anarchically opposed to this is the figure of Donkin who, as he announces in his first speech, is also travelling " 'ome," he too is "an Englishman" (*NN* 9, 12). His "picturesque and filthy loquacity" (101) offers a hypocritical blend of supremacist racism towards "Those damned furriners [who] should be kept under" (13) and employment rights: "Who took any notice of our wrongs? Didn't we lead a 'dorg's loife for two poun' ten a month?' " (100). His may be the "social-democratic ideas" and "infernal doctrines" against which Conrad fulminated in 1885, a year after he shipped in the actual *Narcissus*, but well before the British working-man had a vote.

The case against Donkin is overwhelming: the advocate of humanitarian rights who is not above stealing from a dying man; the socialist who would put the lives of the crew at risk by letting the ship drift unmanned. But perhaps he is another "gentleman": a parody gentleman. After all, if the recognisable qualities according to the crew, with whose vision the narrating voice comes to identify, are money, "a clean job for life" (32), and speech-habits, then, by the time they spurn his invitation to join him in a farewell drink, he is better dressed and is "goin' ter 'ave a job ashore" (169). Vocally, his voice is intentionally resonant: in the narrative's ventriloquism, the artist's ear is more attuned to and concentrates more upon reproducing Donkin's speech-habits – not least those of labour agitation: his is not a call to "mutiny" but rather to "strike, boys, strike!" (121).

Challenging the ship's hierarchy, Donkin threatens tradition, too: the storm on deck he inspires structurally, balances the storm at sea, but are the storm-heroics mirrored in the incipient mutiny – or in resisting it? The cohesive force of the forecastle can only be salvaged for politics when it reformulates its notions of service, including what it means to be socially "other," and begins to address the differences in power that render individuals unequal.[15]

[15] From one angle, Donkin's extremist views herald the more reasoned debate that can take place in the contested space he has created between the status quo and his threatening alternative.

Donkin calls the language of technology to his assistance when, trying to incite the crew, he asks rhetorically: "Are we bloomin' masheens?" (121). *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* is a hymn to sail and manpower at a moment when the iron steam ship was eroding the supremacy of the sailing ship. "Typhoon" offers a complementary, mechanised, portrait of sea-life, where Captain MacWhirr's name has a mechanical resonance and the crew have been transformed into engineers who work in the bowels of the ship and communicate with the deck through a speaking-tube that recalls the upstairs-downstairs life of the bourgeois household.

By comparison with *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, the maritime adventure depicted in "Typhoon" is robbed of some of its romance. Duty and heroism remain, but the work of the crew is now done by machinery. Temperamentally, Captain MacWhirr seems ideally suited to skipper a steamship: unimaginative and literal, his response to life gives human expression to the functional and mechanical power of the *Nan-Shan*.

MacWhirr's decision not to change the *Nan-Shan*'s course is sometimes construed as a further example of literal-mindedness: he lacks the imagination to get out of the way of the "dirty weather" (20). But MacWhirr is equally driven by faith in the technology behind a "full-powered steamship" (31), telling Jukes: "We must trust her to go through it and come out on the other side" (88), and a recognition that, in the world of maritime trade, time is money. Following the "storm strategy" (34) would add "Three hundred extra miles to the distance, and a pretty coal bill to show" (33). It is little wonder that, when looking for a "reliable skipper," his employers identify him as "the very man" (7, 8).

As the typhoon finally reveals to MacWhirr "the wrath and fury of the passionate sea" (19), his ordeal compares with Singleton's "completed wisdom" (99). But this is a portrait of captaincy, and MacWhirr needs to be compared with Allistoun. Both Allistoun and MacWhirr make decisions for which they alone are responsible and upon which their ships depend, sharing the prestige, privilege, burden, and loneliness of command (*T* 39-40). After the near-riot in the *Narcissus*, Allistoun reasserts the claims of authority and order aboard his ship by forcing Donkin to replace the iron belaying-pin to its rightful place and function. With structural symmetry, the unpretentious MacWhirr deals with the crisis posed by the Chinese workers. "Couldn't let that go on in my ship, if I knew she hadn't five minutes to live" (88), says MacWhirr *dutifully*, a quality he combines with a sense of fair-play, the quality that, perhaps above all, once typified England to the outsider. "Equitable Division," was the working title for "Typhoon." In a letter to his wife, MacWhirr expresses his "hope to have done the fair thing" (94).[16]

[16] In his own letters, Conrad describes England as "hospitable" in 1885; "Merry England" in January 1899; and, during the Boer War, the immigrant has turned patriot: "liberty ... can only be found under an English flag" (*CL2* 229).

IV

If the feminised, transgressive image of the gentleman-dandy offers a critique of inherited social demarcation, then it is but one expression of a wider national debate in nineteenth-century Britain that encompasses authority and Empire. The Crimean War at mid-century, for instance, had already undermined traditional respect towards the "officer and gentleman." Early defeats during the siege of Sebastopol led British soldiers, who were themselves famously viewed by the Russians as "lions commanded by asses," to claim that they had been "massacred by the authorities." Similarly, opposition to the Boer War demonstrates that scepticism about British imperialism was increasingly a fact of British political life. Hobsbawm notes that: "Freedom for India, like freedom for Egypt and Ireland, was the objective of the British labour movement" (72).

As Jim's experience on Patusan demonstrates, English character and empire-building are intertwined in imperial narratives. Reviewing one such narrative, Marlow's own favourite, *A Ride to Khiva* (in *Nation*, 29 March 1877), Henry James wrote: it "offers a very entertaining image of a thoroughly English type of man – the robust, conservative, aristocratic soldier, opaque in intellect but indomitable in muscle" (*Literary Criticism* 812). Already we can appreciate how Jim does and yet doesn't fit the mould.

Historicized, Conrad's insistence upon Marlow's status responds to a central aspect in the widespread contemporary debate about the formalized institutions and structures of Englishness. Marlow is a gentleman who, particularly in *Lord Jim*, addresses gentlemanly behavioural codes such as honour, and his designation of Jim and Jewel as "knight and maiden meeting to exchange vows amongst haunted ruins" (312) embeds such codes within the context of chivalry.

In *The Return to Camelot*, Mark Girouard considers how the Victorian period's idea of "the gentleman" was fashioned by its fascination with the age of chivalry – as witnessed in the Eglinton Tournament of 1839, where, in defiance of what they perceived as the "Penny Coronation" of Victoria, Tory peers dressed up as medieval knights and conducted a jousting tournament in a symbol of aristocratic virility. The qualities of the ideal knight are well known: he was brave, loyal, true to his word, courteous, and merciful. Death was preferable to dishonour. The fascination with chivalry coincided with an enlargement of the gentlemanly class: "By the end of the century thousands of middle-class Victorians, if asked their social rank, would have unhesitatingly answered ... that they were gentlemen" (262).

While economics redefined social status at home, Empire played its part abroad. John Merriman, the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony remarked in 1908 that colonists who would have been ranked as working class in Europe were "delighted on arrival here to find themselves in a position of an aristocracy of colour" (in Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds. 213).

The old saw connecting "an officer and a gentleman" takes on various guises in *Lord Jim*, with Jim being accused by the *Patna* crew of thinking himself "too much of a bloomin' gentleman" (117) to lend a hand during the desertion of the ship. Jim confesses to Marlow during their conversation at the Malabar House: "Of course I wouldn't have talked to you about all this if you had not been a gentleman. I ought to have known . . . I am – I am – a gentleman, too" (131), to which Marlow reaction is: " 'Yes, yes', I said hastily" (131). The mirroring identification Marlow seeks in his "younger self" thus extends to their shared status as gentlemen, whose definition is intimately linked to comportment.

Jim stands at the point of intersection between two mutually defining codes of conduct: personal honour and public duty. The issue of lost honour that provides a mainspring of the plot is consequent upon Jim's feeling of disgrace at having betrayed a code of behaviour in which he continues to believe – a different thing from the guilt at failing in his professional duty, for which he is duly punished by having his certificate cancelled.

During the Court of Inquiry, Brierly asks Marlow to intercede with Jim: "let him creep twenty feet underground and stay there! By heavens! *I* would. ... The fellow's a gentleman if he ain't fit to be touched – he will understand" (66, 67). If Brierly recognises the gentleman in Jim, by his own admission he lacks the "courage" (Marlow's term; 66) to face the consequences. But this "courage" is itself a public expression of the "professional decency" (68) that identifies the marine service. On the sinking of the *Titanic*, in April 1912, *Punch* published a cartoon of mourning Britannia together with verses that praised "that gallant breed | Schooled in the ancient chivalry of the sea" (in Girouard 6).

In Brierly's case at least, the easy identification of "officer" with "gentleman" is troubled. Moreover, as he claims: "We aren't an organised body of men, and the only thing that holds us together is just the name for that kind of decency" (68). The inference is that the "decency" that marks an officer lacks precise definition, yet we know it when we see it – or when we don't.[17] Significantly, Brierly gives Jim's crime a particularly English inflection by invoking "a stiff upper lip" (68).

Complementing the *Patna* half of the novel, with its emphasis upon the gentleman-officer, is the Patusan sequence in which Jim is given the chance to redeem his lost honour in another guise: the gentleman-as-imperialist. Jim's success in Patusan is curiously reminiscent of Lingard's boast about Sambir: "I brought prosperity to that place. I composed their quarrels, and saw them grow under my eyes" (*OI* 45). The presentation of Jim on Patusan indicates a bifurcated political

[17] According to Sir Ernest Baker, "It is impossible to think of the character of England without thinking also of the character of the gentleman. But it is also impossible to think of the character of the gentleman clearly. It has an English haze" (in Giles and Middleton, eds. 59).

self-awareness: imperially, his conduct appeals to notions of efficiency and order; socially, it reaffirms faith with the gentlemanly, chivalric tradition of honour.

Two very different versions of imperialism progress", both of them English, are contrasted in the novel's denouement, in the challenge posed to *Lord* Jim by *Gentleman* Brown, with their honorific titles allegorising the issue of social rank. Brown arrives in Patusan during Jim's absence in the interior; by the time that Jim returns, old rivalries have already been re-ignited among the natives. Jim's European influence has been to interrupt rather than erase the islanders' struggle for dominance that necessarily defines government. Again, one is reminded of Lingard here: "His trade brought prosperity to the young state, and the fear of his heavy hand secured its internal peace for many years" (*OI* 200).[18]

According to the Privileged Man, Jim would become disgusted with "acquired honour" on Patusan (338). His defence of racial purity is summarised by Marlow as: "we must fight in the ranks or our lives don't count" (339). Initially having wanted to see Jim "squirm for the honour of the craft" (46), it is a tribute to Marlow's own long voyage of inquiry that he can now speculate whether "at the last [Jim] had not confessed to a faith mightier than the laws of order and progress" (339). This last phrase is a euphemism for imperialism, used ironically in *Heart of Darkness*.

Yet Jim negotiates the protocols of race and in the process reclaims his sense of self worth. The fine line between honour and its loss in the novel is couched in Marlow's question that the French Lieutenant declares is "too fine for me": "couldn't it reduce itself to not being found out?" (149). And yet from such "fine" paradoxical threads hang social inclusiveness and social definition. Jim remains acutely aware of his detachment from the outside world where, as Marlow says, "no one wants him" (317) and "Nobody, nobody is good enough" (319). Despite the shadowiness of the "ideal of conduct" (416) he pursues, true to his "word," Jim's suicide quite literally reaffirms his faith and his place in the gentlemanly tradition that is voiced, as Ian Watt noted, in the Cavalier poet Richard Lovelace's "To Lucasta, Going to the Wars": "I could not love thee, Dear, so much, | Loved I not honour more" (Watt 353).

Conrad's early fiction unites the local and the universal: the sense of belonging to Great Britain that is inextricably linked to Greater Britain. The novels capture a national identity, bound to its (now threatened) place in the world, in the process of rediscovering itself. By revealing Englishness as an extensive network of influence at a moment when England's grip on Empire if not loosening is the subject of public and political unease about her role, Conrad historicises and politicises the

[18] The history of colonial expansion is similarly conflicted: preceding the infamous "Scramble for Africa," for instance, it was David Livingstone's horror of the slave-trade in Africa that led him to recommend European colonization and the "three Cs" – Christianity, civilization and commerce.

very notion of Englishness in fictions that are both celebratory and elegiac. Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan cites "homesickness" as integral to the plight of the Modern hero (3). Jim never returns "home," but is there a home to return to? The further the *Narcissus* sails up the Thames, the more alien England seems. As Bob Dylan sings: "You can always come back, but you can't come back all the way" ("Mississippi"). In "Youth" the frame narrator describes Marlow's narrative as a "chronicle"; the word is aptly chosen for these fictions record moments of resistance to imperial culture, when inherited national values and virtues confront individualism and materialism.

Conrad's sense of Englishness in his early novels is transitional. Having initially tried to hide his Polish background from English readers, he comes clean after this period and admits that he is not English, for instance in *A Personal Record.* Viewed as cultural commentary, sentimental and empirical impulses fashion his response to his adopted country. But the identity of England in which he is simultaneously an insider and an outsider is itself in the throes of reformulation, for which his own words provide a frame of expectation.

An immigrant in an age of Empire, Conrad's biography is bound up with the national struggles of England, whose changing face is reflected in these sea and land tales. Inevitably, the nation's sense of itself is indebted to the image of itself as seen by one of its greatest outsiders. As the recurrent subject of the gentleman demonstrates, Conrad's engagement with England is extensive with an appeal to the stability of tradition that, as his *szlachta* inheritance confirms, is European and not uniquely English. If this complicates the perception of him as "one of us," it none the less asserts that "He stood there for *all* the parentage of his kind" (*LJ* 43; emphasis added).

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A NOBLE WANDERER OF EUROPE: TRACES OF THE BYRONIC IN CONRAD'S MARLOVIAN TEXTS

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Postcolonial writers at the end of the twentieth century focused attention on Joseph Conrad, a writer of the previous *fin de siècle*, and threw down a gauntlet of sorts on the issue of Conrad's legacy.[1] Yet, as Steven Donovan states, "no one, not even Conrad's sternest critic, disputes the claim that his writing offers a critique of imperialism itself" (32). Even Chinua Achebe and Edward Said, two of Conrad's most polemical critics, admit some sympathetic connection between the writer and his subject: Achebe states that "Conrad saw and condemned the evil of imperial exploitation" (262), while Said offers that most readings of *Heart of Darkness* (the usual target of the postcolonial critique) "rightly call attention to Conrad's scepticism about the colonial enterprise" (*Culture* 198). The postcolonial critique has a bearing on a discussion of "Conrad the European" because some feel that the discordant note stuck by the colonized masses of Conrad's time somehow influenced Conrad's modernism (Al-Dabbagh 71). Indeed, it is a *modern* Europe which is made the target of an angry retrospective against the *spirit* of the colonialist of

[1] This is also readily suggested by the titles of recent postcolonial scholarship on Conrad, including Mongia, Padmini, "Narrative Strategy and Imperialism in Conrad's *Lord Jim*," *Studies in the Novel*, 24.2 (1992): 173-187; Kaplan, Carola M., "Colonizers, Cannibals, and the Horror of Good Intentions in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," *Studies in Short Fiction*, 34.3 (1997): 323-334; Caminero-Santangelo, Byron, "Legacies of Darkness: Neocolonialism, Joseph Conrad, and Tayeb Salih's 'Season of Migration to the North'" *Ariel*, 53.1 (1999): 7-34; Maier-Katkin, Birgit, and Daniel Maier-Katkin, "At the Heart of Darkness: Crimes Against Humanity and the Banality of Evil" in *Human Rights Quarterly* 26.3 (2004): 584-605, here the authors refer repeatedly to 'Christopher Marlow' as the protagonist in *HD*; and Ayuk, Athanasius Ako, "Weary Sons of Conrad: White Fiction Against the Grain of Africa's Dark Heart," *Studies in the Novel* 36.4 (2004): 586-87.

one hundred years ago: and it is evident that Europe is still greatly distrusted. Conrad is often closely identified – unfairly – with a negative stereotype of the European, and is even seen as an "agent" of the Colonialist project and process. Tom Henthorne points out that "it has been increasingly popular to regard Conrad as a racist and imperialist, at least among postcolonial critics" a number of whom characterize him as a "Western demon" (203). Hildegard Hoeller speaks of "refraining from the horror of the racism of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" (130), while Bruce Hendricksen suggests Conrad's "sin" is to take one's own experiences as normal and to present oneself as an authority on the discourse of the "other" (296). The political formulation has a basic, if simplistic, dualism: innocent, blameless local people and culture are "robbed" of their "own way," and hence, it is presumed, of a certain un-European happiness. As Donovan states,

> modern scholars have been divided over the precise relation of Conrad's ideas to a racist and imperialist past that is now almost wholly reviled. Conrad's ideas stand trial, so to speak, in a court of imperial crimes against humanity. (32)

The good news is that Conrad is being attacked *as a European*, not as "Conrad." In "Meditations on Conrad's Territoriality," Zdzisław Najder discusses Conrad's use of non-European characters:

> His Malay, Arab, and black (in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*) protagonists are clearly shown as moral equals to his European characters. Chinua Achebe, I think, is wrong in his well-known essay on alleged racism in "Heart of Darkness." He is so not only because he misinterprets the story's general structure, meaning, and technique, but also because he misses (or denies) the fact that African characters are fully humanized by the powerful presentation of their suffering, both collective as in the "Grove of Death" and individual as in the person of Kurtz's African mistress. (3)

Elsewhere, Najder discusses Conrad's critical gaze:

> ...Conrad was a stern "Eurocritic." He stressed the hypocrisy and rapaciousness of colonialists, and the failure, moral and psychological, of the white "civilization" when faced with completely different cultures. Still, his angle of vision remained European – in the sense that he evaluated Europeans by their own standards, in terms of their own ideals and crimes, myths, blunders and inadequacies. ("Conrad's Europe" 215)

Although Conrad was by no means typical, he was himself a kind of European: a questing, wandering, romantic figure. For his uncle and guardian, he was a worrisome, yet beloved charge, and a political exile from Poland (Fletcher 20-24). Joseph Conrad's place in European culture is that of "a voice." In "Youth" and *Heart of Darkness* we hear in Marlow the voice of an endangered nation and an endangered class: Polish aristocracy – *szlachta*. But Conrad's is a living voice, not an anachronism, and a powerfully critical voice. Much of *Heart of Darkness*, for instance, can be read as a satire on Europeans' ambitions, both intellectual and material. Edward Said points out that European works that talk about the "East" have long tended to lump their subject into an "Oriental" category (*Orientalism* 4-5) and

criticizes European writers for creating superficial characters to represent the "East": characters not personalized or fully realized by the Western writer. Said adds that Achebe's criticism of Conrad "does not go far enough" (*Culture* 165) and claims that Conrad "writes as a man in whom a Western view of the non-Western world is so ingrained as to blind him to other histories, other cultures, other aspirations" and that "All Conrad can see is a world dominated by the Atlantic West....He could not understand that India, Africa and South America also had lives and cultures with integrities not totally controlled by the gringo imperialists and reformers of the world" (*Culture* xviii). Though criticized either for writing as a European, or for writing "about" (in settings or locations in) Africa or Asia or South America, Conrad nevertheless primarily engages issues for and about Europeans, and even when his stories are set in locales far from the Danubian plain, the focus tends to turn back to his own experience and concerns *as a European.* Najder points out in "Conrad's Europe" that half of Conrad's work is set in Europe, often in several countries in the same story, and when it is set ostensibly outside Europe, it is always about Europe, not Africa or South America or Asia:

> Events in the other half of his novels and stories are placed outside Europe, but only in the strictly geographical sense. All the time Europe is eyed from afar and remains the locus of reference - by no means idealized. (2)

When Hoeller speaks in favour of a "postcolonial revision" of *Heart of Darkness* (130), it is therefore an idea fundamentally flawed because it assumes that *Heart of Darkness* is about Africa, while as Najder rightly indicates, it is about Europe and the Europeans. Najder elsewhere points out that the specificity of the locations in Conrad's fiction need not even be about a real-life place at all, witness *Nostromo*, yet as with *Heart of Darkness*, it is always still first "about" Europe ("Meditations" 1).

One needs to reclaim Conrad from postcolonial discourse, because postcolonial criticism, while an interesting topic, is not a central one to Conrad studies. There are other issues, also valid, which bring us back to Joseph Conrad the European, and to "othering" within the context of Europe. Consider Joseph Conrad's place in European culture: in many ways, Conrad is 'central'; his fiction, and his person, comprised the countries of Europe as perhaps no other writer did. Conversely, Europe's place in his fiction is also central. Notwithstanding the influence and inspiration provided by Africa, Asia, and South America, it was nevertheless, first and last, about Europe and about Conrad himself. What is important of course is the sense of critique, with inter-European issues at the fore. As Najder adds:

> ...Conrad has unique qualifications to be described as a European writer. This is why I have once suggested that if the European Union were to award literary prizes, Joseph Conrad would be a perfect candidate. ("Conrad's Europe" 217)

There are Byronic parallels in *Heart of Darkness*, especially to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and to *Manfred*, another Faustian work. Byron was another European who

wandered the world in order to remain pensively fixed on his place of origin (Joyce also comes to mind). *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is a narrative of travel by an exile, a noble and once profligate but now sated wanderer, like Kurtz a mixture of pride, crime, apathy, exotic experience, and secret woe, and like the hero of *Lord Jim*, seeking distraction and oblivion as much as redemption. Like the hero of *Manfred*, the hero of *Nostromo* is hounded by remorse, and towards the end of the novel seems aloof and alien, and shrouded in mystery, a similar position can be found for Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*. Like "Youth," *Heart of Darkness* shows lonely obsession, Byronic superiority and suicidal impulse:

> No, they did not bury me, though there is a period of time which I remember mistily, with a shuddering wonder, like a passage through some inconceivable world that had no hope in it and no desire. I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams. They trespassed upon my thoughts. They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretence, because I felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I knew. (155-56)

In "Youth" there is the complete set of Byron's works purchased on shore leave with all Marlow's money, which may be an autobiographical incident from Conrad's own life at sea. In this Byronic episode, the young aristocrat is Marlow, but as Fletcher points out, Marlow's attempts to alleviate a dispiriting boredom might very well have been those chosen by Conrad (34). The place (Falmouth) and his captain's name (Beard) are also the same, and encourage the autobiographical association. In "Youth," Marlow's *Judea* recalls Conrad's real-life experiences on board the *Palestine,* and it is Conrad's, and Marlow's, first voyage to the East. Buying the Byron set with all his money is also an economically improvident act which makes perfect sense when you consider Conrad's own "youth."

The Byronic question: Is Marlow trying to *find* himself or *lose* himself? (*HD* 99). Man is "inscrutable at heart" (*LJ* 352), and this also is certainly auto-biographical. Think of the Romantic loyalty and likely disillusionment of Conrad's father, Apollo Korzeniowski, quite "above" bourgeois survival, then think of his aristocratic but dangerous political activities. And think of Marlow's aloof description of the capitalist "loot" taking in Africa, "lots of it," symbolized by the ivory: "not a pretty thing" (*HD* 101-3, 69-70). Or, as the idea is put in *Nostromo*, "There is no peace and no rest in the development of material interests" (*N* 511), interests which Arnold Kettle in *The Introduction to the English Novel* calls "Imperialism" while praising Conrad's "profound comprehension" in his presentation of the "inter-relation between the individual and society" (qtd in Watt 71). As Watt points out regarding *Nostromo*, "The novel's real thematic subject is merely the 'corruptibility of man' " (75), which sounds like *Heart of Darkness* as well. *That* is the issue, and it's a "big" one, and so why even *suggest* that Conrad should have prioritized "West/non-

West" over (European) "individual/society" as his main "issue of choice" for fictional treatment?

Conrad's voice – which may also be seen as the voice of his family and class – and a Polish voice – speaks from a minority viewpoint: a noble of the European aristocracy speaking self-consciously as such and in a way that may seem surprising in an age when we might conceive of the European elite class as exclusively capitalist and predatory. Yet it was just this "otherness," this elite status, from which he derived his sense of superiority, from his Polish nationality and from his agrarian aristocratic past, both of which must have set him apart in bourgeois Paris and London. Fletcher discusses Conrad's self-conscious identity and perhaps self-construction as a Polish aristocrat: he seems to have developed an awareness of difference and found his voice in that context, one part of Europe looking at another (10). A wanderer, but a noble one at that, with special perspectives born of birth, breeding, and a broad and mixed "European" education, both books and travel, both Romanticism and Capitalism. Fletcher also discusses the two main personal influences on Conrad, his father, Apollo, and his Uncle, Tadeusz Bobrowski, the latter of whom was a practical, efficient but enlightened man who worried about Conrad's honestly acquired Korzeniowski Romanticism (13). Conrad was, from birth, caught between a Romantic cause (his father's Polish nationalism) and a sense of responsibility (his uncle's enlightened practical sense): the kind of responsibility his uncle showed to him and which Conrad felt for his own son. Born peripheral and marginal to the European project, Conrad becomes central, and his literary products are the happy result. *Nostromo* and his "Marlovian" texts "travel widely," but they remain obsessed with defining and understanding the European: certainly it is Europe, not Africa or Asia, that is analyzed critically in Conrad.

The Marlovian stories, in which Marlow occurs as character or narrator, include the short story "Youth," the novella *Heart of Darkness*, and the novels *Lord Jim* and *Chance*. Also, Nostromo in the novel *Nostromo* is somewhat Byronic, as Decoud is somewhat Marlovian (Watt 62), and the Marlow character in his various manifestations tends in some way to represent Conrad himself (Fletcher 34). Suicide is an issue, and it is hard to overlook Conrad's own attempt at suicide, which is clearly at the root of Decoud's death in *Nostromo* and Lord Jim's suicide/execution in *Lord Jim*. Conrad's intimate description of the depression, alienation and suicide of Decoud is particularly chilling when you consider the similar circumstances that attended Conrad's suicide attempt in Marseilles as a young man. The parallels between Conrad and Decoud are bold, stripped bare, and shocking.

By comparison, the Byronic texts include *Manfred*, *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan*. Conrad continues and furthers the Byronic in two ways: by including Byronic elements and allusions in his work and by creating Byronic characters in his own right, thus making his own contribution to European Byronism, Byron being the

"other" writer who was so very European, broadly speaking: another exile, another aristocrat. There is something Faustian about *Heart of Darkness*, but it is not so much Faust that is reflected in Conrad, as much as Faust through Byron: a Byronic Faust. The beginning of *Manfred* reads like the beginning of Goethe's *Faust Part I*, with the Byronic twist that it is not wealth or power that is sought from the spirits of earth and sky, but forgetfulness, a goal both of Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* and Jim in *Lord Jim* (*HD* 97; *LJ* 217). Byron's Manfred is Faustian, and is similar to Goethe's Faust also in that he disdainfully rejects what is offered to him: he is a totally "autonomous man," independent of any external power or any authority: his own mind generates the values by which he lives to suffer pain or joy. There is an aristocrat's sovereignty issue here, as Gothic as a castle and a title and some allodial property rights or a rebellion to assert some birthright of independence or claim to patrimony: a patrimony of the mind, Promethean.

The sin of Conrad's man, Nostromo, "our man," is similar to the sin of Byron's Manfred: it is a nameless sin, earlier than the silver, related to Teresa Viola. It is also vague, haunting, and consuming. Kurtz is Faustian in the sense of reaching too high, or for too much, like the original Dr. Faustus of Christopher Marlowe (notice again the use of the same name, Marlow, in Conrad's fiction). Faustus thirsts for a power infinite, his ambition is to be the "great emperor of the world" (1.3 104). Weary of sciences, impatient with the limitations of life, he calls up Mephistopheles. Marlow, and Conrad, both have their own "Mephistopheles," but made of "papier mâché" (*HD* 95; Fletcher 56). The story of Kurtz, then, seems more Faustian, in the sense of a tragedy wrought by overreaching, the overreaching of a spirit locked between earth and sky, between apes and angels, beasts and gods. Does he seek the same thing as Faust? No, it is more complex, and here is Byron again. So it is less "Faustian" because it is "Faust through Byron."

Thanks to Byron's popularity, the "Byronic" became important to European literature in Goethe's time and continues today, issuing from Byron's works directly and also from the cumulative influence of later writers, such as Conrad, who bear in their texts variegated reflections of Byron and the Byronic. The Byronic character is often described as an "arch-rebel" figure, but not overtly political. The character has erotic interest perhaps related to his "titanic" or "cosmic" self-absorption. Nostromo comes to mind, while Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* seems quite profoundly self-absorbed. Such self-absorption as we see in Byron's characters led the way to the kind of modern self-positioning *vis-à-vis* the cosmos as dominated the European literary imagination for the rest of the nineteenth century and led to Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, a character outside of the "normal" boundaries good and evil. Other literary descendents of Byron's "Byronic" characters prior to Conrad include Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, Rashleigh in Scott's *Rob Roy*, Eugene Onegin in Pushkin's play of that name, and Chateaubriand's

René.[2] There are moods of black depression and the magnetism of a volatile temperament. The Byronic character is fascinating, faulty, impetuous, indolent, gloomy, changeable and, alternatingly, gay. This list of adjectives describes Byron himself, but also applies to Nostromo, and both Byron the man and Nostromo the character share a need to confess, to tell the truth, about themselves and about the world they live in. In the end, Kurtz confesses to Marlow, the final ritual, whereas Nostromo attempts to confess to Mrs. Gould.

The Byronic character could be moody, passionate, and remorse-torn, a wanderer, but, paradoxically it seems, unrepentant: one questions his sincerity. Manfred represents a development from the earlier "Manfred" of the Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto*. The character is an alien and is perhaps alienated from society. He is a mysterious, gloomy spirit, and we see this in Kurtz but we see it in a different way in Nostromo. The Byronic character would like to be immensely superior somehow, to have powers beyond those of the common man whom he typically regards with distain. Here again we see parts of Kurtz and parts of Nostromo. Memory tortures him; there is some enormous, nameless guilt, one that drives him toward an inevitable doom, a dark fate, and here again we can point to Kurtz and to Nostromo, but also to Jim in *Lord Jim*:

> Why hurl defiance at the universe? This was not a proper frame of mind to approach any undertaking; an improper frame of mind not only for him, I said, but for any man. He stood still over me. Did I think so? He asked, by no means subdued, and with a smile in which I seemed to detect suddenly something insolent. But then I am twenty years his senior. Youth is insolent; it is its right-its necessity; it has got to assert itself, and all assertion in this world of doubts is a defiance, is an insolence. He went off into a far corner, and coming back, he, figuratively speaking, turned to rend me. I spoke like that because I – even I, who had been no end kind to him – even I remembered – remembered – against him – what – what had happened. And what about others – the – the – world? Where's the wonder he wanted to get out, meant to get out, meant to stay out-by heavens! And I talked about proper frames of mind! "It is not I or the world who remember," I shouted. "It is you-you, who remember." (217)

Isolated, absolute, self-reliant, inflexible, pursuing his own ends, with a self-generated moral code pitched against any opposition, human or supernatural: here certainly is Kurtz and Kurtz's final cryptic phrase, hurled at the cosmos, "The Horror! The Horror!" (*HD* 154).

If a certain conventionality exists on the part of the reader, the reading of the Byronic character may invite interest because of the "terror" a reader might feel at

[2] Like Napoleon, himself a pre-Byronic character, Byron loved the pre-Romantic poetry of James MacPherson (as did Sir Walter Scott) and can perhaps trace some of his own "Byronic" nature to MacPherson, his brooding Scottish antecedent, and to their common Highland and aristocratic backgrounds. There is also in back of Byron the Scottish writer Dr. John Moore, author of the pre-Byronic novel *Zeluco* (1786) and friend of Smollett, yet ***another*** famously Gothic and melancholy/satirical Scot.

the character's obliviousness to "human" concerns: his liminal status is terrifying, but potentially fascinating. The Byronic "hero" also has a metaphysical significance, he is somehow just outside of or askance or askew to the Victorians' surface optimism. He may defy "the power that made him and doomed him," like Kurtz, or Frankenstein, or, if he must submit, he will not quite acquiesce willingly in the "vast wrong," and here is Nostromo. There is an ultimate refusal, a rebellion against the cosmic injustice of limitation, suffering and death. There is also a sense of nihilism, and a sense of the *Übermunsch* with no grounds for action or value outside of the individual will of the character himself: Yet ironically, it is from his "sin" that he derives his freedom, Kurtz in the Jungle, Nostromo on the sea, the archetype of the "sailor of the nation of the sea," the sovereignty of the open air. Such characters know the conventionality and groundlessness of moral codes.

The Byronic character has more emotion, more capability, and feels more suffering, though it is often a mental suffering of his own creation, a kind of indulgence: Is he a hero, or is he too immature, too selfish and too irresponsible? What kind of hero is he, an existential failure? A fatal hero of the mind? Perhaps the question is best answered by reading Conrad, for between Jim, Kurtz, Marlow, and Nostromo, it is hard not to think of a Byronic attribute which is not covered in Conrad's fiction. Conrad and Byron were both aristocratic European writers and created biographical characters, and Conrad's feelings about Poland's struggles under the Russian Empire recall Byron's autobiographical comments on his own Gordon ancestors in the Scottish Highlands, who could be said to have similarly suffered under *English* Empire. These "colonial" struggles contribute a sense of sadness to their characters and to their writing in general. Conrad for his part creates Marlow, a noble wanderer, an exile, perhaps a "Conway boy." He also brings Nostromo to life, a character who has a stormy relationship with his "mother" in Sulaco, and this reminds one of the similarly stormy relationship between Byron and *his* mother. Conrad, too, had a model to hand in the Byronic suffering of his father in the cause of Polish nationalism (Fletcher 7-13), perhaps itself a case of *Mickiewiczian* Byronism (Miłosz 327). Something of Byron is also at work in Nostromo: as with Byron's own characters, there is a refusal to live comfortably within the wrongs wrought by society in their respective times, or condone evil by inaction, a case of "evil" looking back on evil.

Marlow challenges mentally, he is against tyranny, or fake posturing anyway, and he likes justice – or at least the "truth." He is aloof, proud, disdainful and derives strength from intellect. He does not expect reward; he is above it, aristocratic. He is sentimental (Kurtz's fiancée) but he is also proud, haughty and unreachable. He is a man of feelings and thoughts, but he is also cynical and ironic. Capable of deep and strong affection, he is against cant, and for freedom and liberty. Only among the "grand" forms of nature can he find counterpart to his own giant passions:

a physical landscape of jungle or sea must match with the psychological landscape. He is anti-social and of a misanthropic yet humanistic complexity: an intellectual prude in the Tory tradition of Dean Swift lies in back of the Byronic hero.

So, a profligate adventurer, without fear of the excommunicating judgement of society, or of a society. He has travelled the world and discovered cultural relativism. And he does act: like the young Conrad in Marseilles, he judges, requites, and finally destroys *himself.* There is something self-destructive at work in "Youth" which matches with the same fatality in the character of Kurtz and even in Nostromo. Fate plays its role in *Heart of Darkness*, and Nostromo's favourite one liner is "I was betrayed," but it has the flavour of fate.[3] They are fatal heroes. There is a bit of *Don Juan* in "Youth," in the plot and setting of it on the sea, a man wandering, observing, with an eye unfettered. It is tragedy of a kind; they are doomed by fate, or by short-sightedness, which is the same thing, born of human limitations. There is moral ambiguity of course: they do not curse God, they resist *almost* stoically what they cannot overcome. In "Youth," Conrad's description of the leader of the fatal crew of the dammed ship Judea,"do or die", seems lifted from Byron's *The Corsair*: "With his handsome and disreputable head, his hooked profile, his long white beard, and with an uncorked bottle in his hand, he resembled one of those reckless sea-robbers of old making merry amidst violence and disaster" (*Selected Short Stories* 88). Ironically, the Byronic character in *The Corsair* is named "Conrad," a sea-pirate based somewhere in the Greek islands near Turkey: "Sunburnt his cheek, his forehead high and pale/The sable curls in wild profusion veil" (IX 11-12). Well, is that Byron's Conrad, or Conrad's Nostromo, the sailor from a sun-drenched southern Italian seaport? Byron tells us "there was a laughing devil in his sneer/That raised emotions both of rage and fear" (IX 31-32), and that is certainly Nostromo. When Byron's Conrad disappears never to be seen again, "He left a corsair's name to other times, Link'd with one virtue and a thousand crimes" (XXIV 19-20).

He did indeed leave a corsair's name for other times: "Conrad." The name is yet another link between Conrad and Mickiewicz, and Conrad and Byron. Conrad was called "Konrad" as a boy, a name made famous by two characters of the name in the poetry of Mickiewicz. Apollo Korzeniowski may have chosen the name for Mickiewicz's sake, for he himself strikes one as a Mickiewiczian character, a literary and patriotic Pole, and an aristocrat. Apollo, besides naming his son "Konrad," introduced the great Polish poet and his nationalist or revolutionary themes to his son (Gurko 11). Mickiewicz's influence on the Korzeniowski family was not uncharacteristic for Polish families, but the name "Conrad," Conrad with a "C," is

[3] Stephen, the hero of Conrad's abandoned autobiographical novel *The Sisters*, is also a Byronic character drawn against a backdrop of betrayal.

a symbolic link also to Byron. It is both a link to Byron himself and a link to Byron through Mickiewicz (Miłosz "Adam Mickiewicz" 326). Mickiewicz translated some of Byron's works into Polish, and Byron's earlier character "Conrad" of *The Corsair* and *Lara* is a probable source for Mickiewicz's Byronic Konrad – Conrad with a Polish "K." Like Byron's characters, Mickiewicz's Konrad is also biographical. Much of Conrad seems symbolized by this Byronic ("Conrad" in his later life), Mickiewiczian ("Konrad" in his Apollo-influenced Polish youth) name, while Conrad himself acknowledged being inspired by Mickiewicz, as Najder points out (*CIP* 201-212).[4] In *Under Western Eyes* Conrad does seem to draw directly upon Mickiewicz's *Dziady* ("Digressions,") as Czeslaw Milosz points out:

> The "Digression" can be called a summation of Polish attitudes to Russia in the nineteenth century, and Joseph Conrad, who of course had read that poem, seems to repeat its contents line for line in some of his writings, especially in *Under Western Eyes.* (*The History* 225)

So, eventually, Konrad the character gives way to Conrad, the English writer. Now "Conrad" is a name linked inexorably with the sea, but with hints of the Wandering Jew. Conrad the corsair had "one virtue and a thousand crimes" and the virtue in this case is loyalty or perhaps chivalry. In contrast to the verdict of *The Corsair*, we might say that Nostromo had rather one crime and a thousand virtues, but the effect is the same, the great man, the free spirit, cannot be understood by society. He is misunderstood because he *must* be misunderstood; to "understand" him is to undermine the conventions of society. He must be sacrificed. Yet Nostromo strikes for his own reasons, regardless of "their" looming punishment. He is in the end his own harsh judge, after failing in his bid to defy fate. It is difficult to conceive of figures as large as Nostromo or Kurtz as being affected by the judgments of a conventional society they reject. It is "beneath" them somehow, and sovereignty is always an issue. Nostromo is the more Byronic, latent with inexpressible guilt. But then who are "we," in the context of *Nostromo*, that Nostromo should be "our man"? Are we English? Are we Italian or Spanish or French or Polish? The best answer to this question is probably, in the context of Conrad, that we are "European."

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CONRAD THE EUROPEAN: "AUTOCRACY AND WAR" AND "THE HEROIC AGE"

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Conrad's letter to Henry Newbolt of 19 July 1905 contains the first mention of a request for "a short article on Nelson" (*CL3 275*). It came from H. A. Gwynne, the editor of the *Standard* who was planning a special supplement on 21 October to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar, the greatest naval triumph in British history when Lord Nelson died at the very moment of his supreme triumph. Conrad confessed to Newbolt who had recently published *The Year of Trafalgar*, that "[m]y ignorance of the Admiral's career is appalling" but that he found the request "tempting" (*CL3* 275). On 21 September Conrad reported to Galsworthy, "I've just finished a Nelson – a 3000 words utterance" (*CL3* 280) and it was published on Trafalgar Day under the title "Palman qui meruit ferat" (Nelson's motto, "Let him who merits bear the palm"). In early January 1906 Conrad decided to include the "Trafalgar" essay in the papers and sketches of *The Mirror of the Sea* in order to make the volume "a long book" (*CL3* 311); and renamed "The Heroic Age" it concluded the volume published in October 1906.

The slight critical attention this essay has received from Morton Darwen Zabel, Jocelyn Baines, and Avrom Fleishman, hinges upon its place in the overall structure and thematics of *The Mirror of the Sea.* Otherwise, "The Heroic Age," as far as I am aware, has been totally ignored by Conradians. My approach to "The Heroic Age" draws upon Conrad's letter to Newbolt, where tackling the "tempting" subject of Nelson prompts him to ask "whether it would be permissible and of any use for me to try the Monthly Review" [of which Newbolt was the founder and former editor] "now and then with an article upon politics (not 'home') something in the style" of "Autocracy and War" in the current July issue of *The Fortnightly Review.* "Now and then," Conrad continues, "I feel a sort of stirring up of thought (probably worthless) and a sort of inwards voice (probably silly)" (*CL3* 275).

Gwynne's invitation was probably prompted by the spate of sketches (later gathered in *The Mirror of the Sea*) recently published in the magazines wherein Conrad drew upon his personal experience and memories of the British Merchant Service. Conrad hoped that these sketches "would do no harm to my popularity" (*CL3* 136), not least because they enabled him to escape charges of Slavonicism and feelings of "foreignness" by foregrounding his English credentials: and writing on the most national of all Great Britain's celebrations may well have appeared to him as an ideal opportunity to emphasise his English lineage. Moreover, he felt that "of a life that in its whole was a Great Masterpiece something can always be said – something that would not be mere rhetoric since it would spring from deep conviction" (*CL3* 277).[1] However, as I hope to show, "The Heroic Age" is inflected with an "inwards voice" and deep convictions that are as much Polish and European as English, "an inwards voice" that informs the stirring thoughts in his despairing analysis of Europe's and Poland's future in "Autocracy and War" in the dismally unheroic year of 1905, and that accounts for the qualified, sober, even sombre, celebration of Nelson and "the national spirit."

Conrad was stirred into thought in "Autocracy and War" by the destruction of the Russian fleet in Port Arthur, Manchuria by the Japanese in February 1904, followed by a succession of defeats for the tsarist forces that in turn triggered the revolutionary year of 1905, marked by massive social discontent, strikes, guerrilla warfare, and revolutionary activity throughout the Russian Empire. Tsarist reverses inspired Polish patriots with new hopes of independence, and throughout the provinces of Russian Poland, and especially on the streets of Warsaw and Łódź, the Polish socialists and revolutionaries were waging a furious rebellion against the hated tsarist forces, even as Conrad composed this essay. And, by the time Conrad came to write his "Trafalgar" essay, Russian Poland was not only in rebellion against the tsarists, but a brutal civil war was raging as all factions of the Polish national resistance, torn apart by feuds and schisms resorted to political and sectarian murders.[2] For the first time in over forty years the issue of Poland's future and the

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[1] In the same letter, Conrad told Newbolt"'I know Southey's 'Life' and that's about all. … I know nothing except what every one knows" (*CL3* 277). Southey is not uncritical of Nelson, but his *Life of Nelson*, (always in print since it was first published in 1813), is that of "a Great Masterpiece": "England has had many heroes, but never one who so entirely possessed the love of his fellow countrymen as Nelson. All men knew … that with perfect and entire devotion, he served his country with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength; and, therefore, they loved him as truly and as fervently as he loved England" (Everyman Library 245-46). Hereafter, Southey followed by page numbers in parentheses. For a brief account of the development of the myth of Nelson's heroism, see Cynthia Fansler Berhman, *Victorian Myths of the Sea*: 91-107.

[2] The *Times* (often on page 3) reported these murders and other internecine struggles among the Polish nationalists, and especially the socialists, under such bland rubrics as "The Disturbances in Poland."

possibility of Poland's independence were back on the European agenda and widely discussed in the press and the journals. Conrad's attitude to Poland is of course hugely complex, much debated and, as Najder reminds us, "highly emotional and by no means consistent." Najder, however, is surely right to conclude that "a despairing resignation over the future of Poland remained for many years the chief element in his thinking" (*CPB* 24, 25). And, certainly, Conrad's analysis in "Autocracy and War" intensifies his long-held despairing view, epitomised in his early letter (1885) to Spiridion Kiliszczewski: that "whatever may be the changes in the fortunes of living nations, for the dead there is no hope and no salvation" (*CL1* 13), and then in his letter to Cunninghame Graham fourteen years later, "I look at the future from the depths of a very dark past, and I find I am allowed nothing but fidelity to an absolutely lost cause, to an idea without a future" (*CL2* 161).

I

"The Heroic Age" is in fact some 3,850 words long and though it is divided into four unequal parts, the essay splits into two equal halves; the first two parts (XLVI-XLVII), as befits Conrad's brief on this most patriotic of celebrations, dwell on England's greatest hero, and parts XLVIII-XLIX contrast the very different conditions of the modern naval man in an age of steam as opposed to sail, which is, of course, a central theme of *The Mirror of the Sea*, and then the differences between the heroic age of 1805 and the distinctly unheroic age of 1905. The essay, surprisingly, does not begin as one might expect with an expatiation on the heroic and peculiarly English qualities of Nelson's life; rather it opens dramatically with the only recorded words of a young obscure naval officer: "A fellow has no chance of promotion unless he jumps into the muzzle of a gun and crawls out of the touchhole" (*MS* 183).[3] The "strength" of this worthy ancestor's "graphic expression" embodies for Conrad "the spirit of the epoch," and its jaunty hyperbole that does not hide "the uneasiness of his heart" (183), seems to inspire Conrad's wry and sympathetic assessment of its "price ... significance, and ... lesson" (184). The "price" for all "whose way was so arduous" is, of course, that death or serious injury might well precede promotion and "many," Conrad concludes in deadpan fashion, "must have felt that particular inconvenience of a heroic age." The young officer's "significance" is also representative: "He belongs to the great array of the unknown – who are great, indeed, by the sum total of the devoted effort put out, and the colossal scale of success attained by their insatiable and steadfast ambition"

[3] The quotation is from the *Letters and Papers of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Thomas Byam Martin*, (MDCCCIII), Vol. I: 66. (Hereafter, *Letters and Papers*). Martin, of course, does not notice the young officer's uneasiness of heart.

(184). Conrad's threefold play on "great" demands careful scrutiny. "The great array of the unknown" always attract his "sympathetic imagination": they include "obscure" and "voiceless" sailors; black men in Utopo in the Belgian Congo who can see no end to the "very awful and mysterious" punishments inflicted on them (*CL3* 96); women like Winnie Verloc "rich in suffering but indigent in words" (*SA* 223); or the "tens of thousands of decaying bodies tainting the air of the Manchurian plains" and "the hundreds of thousands of survivors" who are "even more tragic in being left alive by fate to the wretched exhaustion of their pitiful toil" so powerfully evoked in the opening paragraphs of "Autocracy and War" (*NLL* 72). Conrad's sympathies for the great array of Russian serfs were fuelled by his (tendentious) beliefs that they were cut off "from air, from light, from all knowledge of themselves and of the world" (73) by a brutal Autocracy and that, therefore, they died with "the horror-struck consciousness of having mysteriously become the plaything of a black and merciless fate"; whereas the Japanese army "stands on the high ground of conscious assent, shouldering deliberately the burden of a long-tried faithfulness" (74). But Conrad also knew that the great array of his Polish forebears who died *pro Patria* had been "great" through "the sum total of the devoted effort put out"; and the difference between them and the French at Trafalgar as against the men Nelson led – their "colossal scale of success" – was as he repeatedly asserts in the essay a matter of "good" as against "evil fortune" (194). Finally, the lesson derived from "our worthy ancestor" reprises Martin's understated appreciation that "he was never backwards on occasions of desperate service" (184; *Letters and Papers* I 66).

For Nelson's life as a "Great Masterpiece" "on this day" of commemoration Conrad turns again to Sir T. B. Martin, gravely described as "a distinguished seaman of Nelson's time," whose assessment of the price, significance, and lesson of "the spirit of the epoch" does indeed sound the note of "deep conviction": "Nelson's nobleness of mind was a prominent and beautiful part of his character" and he insists that Nelson's

> splendid and matchless achievements will be remembered with admiration while there is gratitude in the hearts of Britons, or while a ship floats upon the ocean; he whose example on the breaking out of war gave so chivalrous an impulse to the younger men of the service that all rushed into rivalry of daring which disdained every warning of prudence and led to acts of heroic enterprise which tended greatly to exalt the glory of the nation. (185; *Letters and Papers* I 73, 65)

"Deep conviction" of this sort is absent from both Conrad's earlier assessment and his commentary on Martin's encomium – "Those are his words and they are true" and " 'Exalted' he wrote and not 'augmented'. And therein his feelings and pen captured the very truth" – is as stilted and forced as his repeated assurances that Martin is "a man of sound judgement" and then of "consummate judgement" (184-85). Similarly, Conrad's assurance that Martin, "the good and trusted servant

of his country under two kings and a queen, had felt correctly Nelson's influence, and expressed himself with precision out of the fullness of his seaman's heart" (185) has a faintly hollow ring given Conrad's own less exalted assessment of "the price."

Conrad's unease at such moments registers, perhaps, his habitual scepticism before (say) Kurtz's "burning noble words" or the "accents of irresistible heroism" encapsulated in Marcus Aurelius's "solemn admonition: 'Let all thy words have the accent of heroic truth'." "This is very fine" continues Conrad in "A Familiar Preface" to *A Personal Record*, but "Most of the working truths on this earth are humble, not heroic; and there have been times in the history of mankind when the accents of heroic truth have moved it to nothing but derision": and he quietly resists Martin's heroic accent because like Marcus Aurelius's "counsels" it is "more fit for the moralist than the artist."[4] At such moments, too, we are aware that Conrad is not a Briton but a Pole, and Poles as he sharply reminded Garnett in October 1907 "have been used to go to battle without illusions. It's you Britishers that 'go in to win' only. We have been 'going in' these last hundred years repeatedly, to be knocked on the head only – as was visible to any calm intellect" (*CL3* 492). Nelson, supremely of all "Britishers," went into win: thus Southey noted in *The Life of Nelson*, at Trafalgar "mere victory was not what he looked to – he wanted to annihilate the enemy's fleet" (248); Columb acknowledged Nelson's "awful singleness of destructive purpose"; and Lord Roseberry said he is "the war hero of our country" because "In him the pugnacious British instinct was incarnate; with Nelson to see the foe was to fight him; he only found himself in the fury of battle."[5]

Apollo Korzeniowski's life, like Nelson's, was replete with "acts of heroic enterprise," but he and his fellow patriots were knocked on the head, and they were inspired by, and in turn inspired very different myths of national glory from those that inspired Nelson. Indeed, famously, in later life when his name "was known as widely as that of England itself," Nelson proudly fashioned his patriotism as a form of religious conversion. Thus when he was only eighteen on his return from the East Indies, "broken down by sickness, and spirits which had sunk with his strength" he "recalled his suicidal despair that "I should never rise in my profession" and how "a sudden glow of patriotism was kindled within me, and presented by king and country as my patron. "Well then," I exclaimed, "I will be a hero! And,

[4] *The Mirror of the Sea* and *A Personal Record*: xii-xiii. In part XXXVII of *The Mirror of the Sea*, which Conrad called 'The Inland Sea' and completed on 6 October two weeks after finishing his Trafalgar essay, he sardonically notes that, 'Without the human propensity to murder and other sorts of unrighteousness there would have been no historical heroism' (149). This sequence was first published in *The Mirror of the Sea*, and its 'stirring thoughts' on the arms race and an impending European war reprise those of 'Autocracy and War' and 'The Heroic Age'.

[5] Phillip H. Columb, "Viscount Nelson": 444; Lord Roseberry, "Nelson": 18, 19.

confiding in Providence, I will brave every danger!" (Southey 11-12). Conrad, in marked contrast, as Polish scholars have taught us, was schooled from birth by his father to a hero, to "Be a *Pole*!," to be a patriot of a country that is "in her grave ... yet/ She is your faith, your palm of martyrdom. ... And no salvation without Her!" (*CUFE* 33). As Busza explains, Conrad inherited "two interrelated ideological myths: the '*Antemurale*' myth and its post-partition mutation, the Messianic doctrine." According to the first, which goes back at least to the seventeenth century, Poland became "an outpost of Western civilisation, shielding Europe" from the Ottoman Empire and then in "the new version ... developed by the Polish romantic writers, particularly after the November Rising of 1830" from the corruption and barbarism emanating out of Poland's despoiler, Russia ("The Rhetoric" 604). "Like the '*Antemurale*' myth, Messianism assigned to Poland a unique historical mission" enshrined in Adam Mickiewicz's *The Books of the Polish Nation from the Beginning of the World to the Martyrdom of the Polish Nation* (1832) which cast Poland as the Christ of Nations; though crucified by the "Satanic Trinity" of Russia, Prussia, and Austria who partitioned her in order to bury "freedom," Poland's soul, like her Redeemer's "shall return to the body and the Nation shall arise and free all the peoples of Europe from slavery," thereby ensuring "wars shall cease in all Christendom" ("The Rhetoric" 135-143).

Such "passions and prejudices" ("Author's Note" to *UWE* viii) inform Korzeniowski's diatribe, "Poland and Muscovy," and Conrad's and the old language teacher's case against Russia in "Autocracy and War" and *Under Western Eyes*, respectively.[6] Born an unwilling subject of the great Russian Empire Conrad knew from bitter personal and national experience that there was and is a huge chasm between might and right, between power and morality, that victories in war constitute a precarious and dubious foundation for both national and individual notions of superiority, pride, and identity. Thus Russia's victories against and successive subjugations of the Polish people were neither "acts of heroic enterprise" nor did they exalt the glory of Russia, or of her nation's God; rather as he witheringly observes in "Autocracy and War":

> The government of Holy Russia arrogating to itself the supreme power to torment and slaughter the bodies of its subjects like a God sent scourge has been most cruel to those whom it has allowed to live under the shadow of its dispensation. (*NLL* 82).

Conrad's flat endorsement of Martin's exaltation of "the glory of our nation" yields immediately in the second part of "The Heroic Age" (XVII) to a sombre, cautionary assessment of the British navy's successes:

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[6] Cf. Najder, "Introduction" to *CPB*; Busza, "Rhetoric and Ideology in *Under Western Eyes*" and Carabine, *The Life and the Art: A Study of Conrad's Under Western Eyes:* 84-91.

> The British navy may well have ceased to count its victories. It is rich beyond the wildest dreams of success and fame. It may well, rather, on a culminating day of its history, cast about for the memory of some reverses to appease the jealous fates which attend the prosperity and triumphs of a nation. It holds, indeed, the heaviest inheritance that has ever been entrusted to the courage and fidelity of armed men.
> ... In all the records of history there has never been a time when a victorious fortune has been so faithful to men making war upon the sea. (185-86)

There is no hint here or throughout the essay of "Britannia rule the waves" or of the fond belief that "the sea is the English element":[7] rather, as Conrad warned us earlier in *The Mirror of the Sea* in the marvellous sketch "Initiation," "the sea has never been friendly to man" and is "Faithful to no race" and recognises "no finality of dominion" (135). Moreover, Conrad's cautious insistence here, as throughout the essay, on the British navy's unprecedented "victorious fortune" and on Nelson's astonishing good fortune as "a lover of Fame... And she never betrayed the greatness of his trust!" (186), is informed once again by an "inwards voice" versed in the bitter knowledge that Poland's history since the end of the eighteenth century was a cycle of national and personal misfortune. Conrad's repeated stress on Britain's fortune in war also signals his characteristic rejection of the blending of religion and nationalism that inspired Nelson's (and his nation's) sense of his fame and his country's greatness.[8] Nelson always ascribed his own and his country's successes to Providence; and on the eve of Trafalgar, in full accordance with his heroic self-image and speaking in "the accent of heroic truth," he intoned: "Now ... I can do no more. We must trust to the Great Disposer of all events, and the justice of our cause. I thank God for this great opportunity of doing my duty" (Southey 254). Readers of Conrad are familiar with the sea's duplicity, his rejection of Christianity, and of his scorn for all discourses – such as his father's and Nelson's and the varieties of Russian messianism scrutinised in *Under Western Eyes* – that highjack God and Providence for the Nation or the Revolution: but the apocalyptic invocation of "a culminating day" in a commemorative essay devoted to Nelson and Trafalgar is truly startling: and as we shall see, it merits careful contextualisation.

I begin with the straightforward observation that it reprises an even grimmer "stirring" thought in "Autocracy and War":

[7] Lord Roseberry, *Miscellanies* Vol. II:19; R.L. Stevenson, a generation earlier, had gently mocked this idea in "The English Admirals" (July 1878).

[8] Typical of such jingoistic fusion is "The Battle of Trafalgar" included by Newbolt in his "Garland" of patriotic verse that concludes *The Year of Trafalgar*. "Brave Nelson to his men did say/The Lord will prosper us this day./Give them a broadside, fire away,/My true British boys": 211. Conrad told Newbolt that he had read his book twice (*CL3* 277).

> It has been observed that in the course of earthly greatness a day of culminating triumph is often paid for by a morrow of sudden extinction. Let us hope it is so. … War is with us now; and whether this one ends soon or late, war will be with us again. (*NLL* 90)

The sudden extinction of the Old Polish Commonwealth may inform Conrad's grim truism. However, "Let us hope it is so" registers, I think, Conrad's "inwards voice" evident in "Autocracy and War" in his terrible anger and almost unimaginable despair as he contemplates the inevitability of a huge European war, an "inwards voice" that seeps into Conrad's assessment of Nelson. Conrad's perspective in "Autocracy and War" is that of a Pole, aware that a shift in the balance of power will have profound consequences for the future of Europe in general and for all submerged, mittel-European nations in particular. The essay is suffused with dread because Conrad recognises (and prophesies) that the continuing and inevitable collapse of Autocracy presaged in "the distant war" now taking place "beyond the Amur or beyond the Oxus" has brought about "a change in the condition of the West with which Europe is not well prepared to deal" (91) and which, he warns, will lead to war much closer to home. Conrad's fears are fuelled by his dismal sense that "The German Empire" is now "a great and dreadful legacy left to the world by the ill-omened phantom of Russia's might" (79). He barely contains his indignation at Germany's part in the partitions of Poland and its perennial role of "evil counsellor of Russia on all questions of her Polish problem" always "urging the adoption of the most repressive measures with a perfectly logical duplicity" (80). Now that the collapse of Russia is imminent either of two possible futures for the Polish provinces are inimical to Germany: "a frank reconciliation with a humanised Russia" brings "the weight of homogenous loyalty to within a few score of miles from Berlin," (thereby threatening her Eastern borders), and "the possibility of serious internal disturbances destroying the sort of order autocracy has kept in Russia," particularly "a revolutionary outbreak provoked by socialists" would provide the perfect "pretext of armed intervention" in Russian Poland (80). The collapse of Autocracy and the rise of "Pangermanism" and "Weltpolitik" threatens the security of the West, but Conrad despairs because he feels that since the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 "*Il n'y a plus d'Europe*" – there is only an armed and trading continent, the home of slowly maturing economical contests for life and death and of loudly-proclaimed world-wide ambitions" (92). Great Britain is of course part of this armed continent and her vast Empire is involved in this "life and death" struggle, but, as ever, he is reluctant to openly criticise his adopted homeland. Instead, fuelled by Poland's political helplessness, he focuses on Germany's policy of Weltpolitik, of "aggrandisement of territory and influence with no regard to right and justice either in the East or in the West" that "proves that no peace for Earth can be found in the expansion of material interests which she seems to have adopted exclusively as her only aim, ideal and watchword" (92-93).

Europe's other "watchwords" are even grimmer: "Never before has war received so much homage at the lips of men, and reigned with less disputed sway in their minds. It has harnessed science to its gun carriages. ... Indeed war has made peace altogether its own. ... A martial, over-bearing war-lord sort of peace ... eloquent with allusions to glorious feats of arms" and its "apostles," terribly, preach "the gospel of the mystic sanctity of its sacrifices and the regenerating power of spilt blood to the poor in mind – whose name is legion" (90). And, tragically, the full enormity of war – the terrible sufferings endured in the Manchurian plains "of tens of thousands decaying bodies... of maimed bodies groaning in ditches" (72) – is beyond the grasp of Europeans, ensuring that "war will be with us again" on "our doorsteps" (90).[9]

Throughout the English press, inevitably, "Nelson's Year" and Trafalgar Day inspired numerous celebrations of Nelson's "glorious feats of arms" and his exemplary status as "the highest expression of the fighting spirit of his race"; and they occasioned numerous martial reflections on how his career afforded "an unforgettable lesson in the sound conduct of war," namely the necessity of annihilating opponents and of retaining superiority of weapons and man-power in the arms race with Germany.[10] For Conrad in "Autocracy and War," such "homage to war" contributes to "the din" that deafens Europe to the terrible reality of the Russo-Japanese war currently devouring "the first youth of whole generations" (90). Such lessons resurface in "The Heroic Age" when after citing Nelson's "faith in a crushing superiority of fire as the only means of victory and the only aim of sound tactics ... putting his faith into practice against very risk," Conrad observes grimly, "in that exclusive faith Lord Nelson appears to us as the first of the moderns" (190). A "modern" because though his defence of England from foreign invasion was just – unlike "the appetite for aggrandisement" of Germany in 1905 (*NLL* 86) – his faith in superior firepower anticipated modern Europe's sanctioning of "the

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[9] Conrad's reflections on, and description of, the sheer horror of war's assault on the bodies of loved ones, driven by his aesthetic commitment to a "Direct vision of the fact" to open sleepy eyes, are, I think, among the most powerful he ever penned. Interestingly, Adam Gopnik in his fine review article of recent books on the First World War, unwittingly reprises both Conrad's argument and his humane urge to shock his readers with the bloody details, concluding that they demand we "recall that any justification for a war has to be a justification for this reality," "The Big One: Historians Rethink the War to End all Wars," *The New Yorker* (23 Aug., 2004): 84.

[10] The refrain of "Nelson's Year" by Alfred Noyes is "God gave this year to England," but the speaker still fatuously yearns for "Love and brotherhood .... Between the striving nations/ And speed the union of mankind in one divine desire," *Blackwood's*, no. MLXXII (Feb., 1905): 175-78. Cf. "The Nelson Touch," *The Spectator* (Oct., 21, 1905): 602, and "The Legacy of Trafalgar": 597-98. The German threat, proposals to strengthen the army and to introduce military conscription, to build on the *Entente Cordiale* with France, and to foster good relations with Russia and Japan dominated the media.

magazine rifle of the latest pattern" and harnessing of "science to its gun carriages" (90) that so horrified Conrad in "Autocracy and War." Hence Conrad's admonition that the British navy should "cast about for the memory of some reverses" because "the heaviest inheritance" of "victorious fortune" is that defeat is unimaginable and that the horrors of war can be taken lightly: as indeed it was nine years later when it was widely trumpeted that the war that became the "First *World* War" would be over in six weeks. Hence, also, his troubled, awed tribute to Nelson in part three (XLVIII): he "revolutionized ... the very conception of victory itself ... He brought heroism into the line of duty. Verily he is a terrible ancestor" (187). As Jacques Berthoud pointed out to me, Conrad "redefined the distinction between what you have to do (face the possibility of your own death) and what you want to do (intensify your sense of life) – with the clear implication that the two are interdependent." (And, clearly, heroism can never be brought into the line of duty for the "vast heaps of mangled corpses" (*NLL* 82) benighted and enslaved by an inhuman Autocracy). Berthoud's point is finely observed; nonetheless, Nelson is a terrible ancestor precisely because such ardour may be presumed and called on again soon, and such "worthy ancestors" as the young naval officer will rise to the challenge; but this time, because of the huge increase in the destructive power of "improved armaments"(150) tens of thousands of his ilk will be sacrificed in an ignoble war involving the "armed and trading continent" of Europe. And this time, terribly, Conrad fears, "the jealous fates" may indeed be appeased.

II

The opening of the last part of the essay (XLIX) begins with a testimony to Nelson's ability to breathe into the navy's "soul his own passion of honour and fame" and then immediately takes a surprising turn:

> It was a fortunate navy. ... It was fortunate in its adversaries. I say adversaries, for on recalling such proud memories we should avoid the word "enemies," whose hostile sound perpetuates the antagonisms and strife of nations so irremediable, perhaps, so fateful – and also so vain. War is one of the gifts of life; but alas! no war appears so very necessary when time has laid its soothing hand upon the passionate misunderstandings and the passionate desires of great peoples. ... He fosters the spirit of concord and justice, in whose work there is as much glory to be reaped as in the deeds of arms. (192-93)

Given both Conrad's brief and his audience, these are brave and stirring thoughts that do indeed "spring from deep conviction." He speaks as a Francophile, of course, but more importantly his critique of jingoism, his appeal for tolerance and fear of (another) European war are fostered by "the spirit of concord and justice" that marks him as a committed European. Conrad's appeal to, and praise of "the spirit of concord and justice" reprise his anguish in the great opening para-

graphs of "Autocracy and War" that "In this age of knowledge our sympathetic imagination, to which alone we can look for the ultimate triumph of Concord and Justice, remains strangely impervious to information, however correctly and even picturesquely conveyed" (*NLL* 71-72). Conrad despairs in "Autocracy and War" because

> The common ground of concord, good faith and justice is not sufficient to build an action upon; since the conscience of but very few men amongst us and of no single Western nation as yet, will brook the restraint of abstract ideas as against the fascination of material advantage. (91)

Moreover, he regrets that "The trouble of the civilized world is the want of a common conservative principle abstract enough to give the impulse practical enough to form the rallying point of international action tending towards the restraint of particular ambitions," and that all past "plausible imitations" of that principle "disappeared long ago before the doctrine of national aspirations" (91-92).

Great Britain is, of course, also one of the Western nations with unrestrained material ambitions and a faint conscience; and, therefore, in both essays, Conrad works on behalf of the abstract ideas of "concord, good faith and justice."[11] His "sympathetic imagination" – manifest in his compassion for the Russian army which is "the plaything of a black and merciless fate" (74), and for "the ill-starred fortune" of the gallant French and Spanish fleets – bespeaks a great European, rather than an English, commentator and novelist. Thus, implicit in Conrad's appeal in "The Heroic Age" to the spirit of concord and justice is his long-term, idealistic solution for Europe's terrible plight that provides the only ray of hope in "Autocracy and War":

> In Europe the old monarchical principle stands justified in its historical struggle with the growth of political liberty by the evolution of the idea of nationality as we see it concreted at the present time, by the inception of that wider solidarity grouping together around the standard of monarchical power these larger agglomerations of mankind. This service of unification, creating close-knit communities possessing the ability, the will and the power to pursue a common ideal, has prepared the ground for the advent of a still larger understanding: for the solidarity of Europeanism which must be the next step towards the advent of Concord and Justice; an advent that, however delayed still by fatal worship of force and the errors of national selfishness, has been and remains the only possible goal of our progress. (81)

Conrad has in mind the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but his belief in "that wider solidarity" and "This service of unification" and what he goes on to call a "larger patriotism" reveal his "fidelity" to "an idea without a future," namely that enshrined in the Polish romantic celebratory version of the history and values of the

[11] In the letter to Roger Casement, 21 December (1903) cited earlier Conrad avers that "as a matter of fact England had in her keeping the conscience of Europe" because it led the struggle to abolish the slave trade; but now he laments "we are ... too much involved in great affairs [commercial interests] to take up cudgels for humanity, decency and justice" (*CL3* 96).

Old Polish Commonwealth whose dominant class the *szlachta*, "the Polish nation of the gentry," claimed like his father to speak for the needs and aspirations of "the larger agglomerations of mankind" who were all the members of the Old Commonwealth irrespective of their ethnic background, native language, or religious beliefs.[12] One hundred years later, after two terrible world wars, after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and of the German Reich (which submitted to "the fatal worship of force"), and the Soviet Empire which proclaimed and destroyed the dreams of "International fraternity"; after, or better, during the bitter manifestation of "the errors of national selfishness" in south-eastern Europe, and despite the opposition of national selfishness in all its member states, including unfortunately my own, we are gathered today in Cracow when Poland and the other states of Central Europe are once more a part of a European Union that "remains," as Conrad foresaw, "the only possible goal of our progress."[13] And, as this of all audiences, would both avow and confirm, Conrad was a great European because he was Polish. He knew that Poland could only have a viable political future as part of the wider solidarity of an agglomerated Europe, free from the malign designs of both Russia and Germany.[14]

Conrad's formulations at the beginning of the last section justify his change of title from "Trafalgar" to "The Heroic Age" because they initiate his persistent contrast between the heroic age of 1805 when Europe was at war and the mediocre age of 1905 when, as he warns us in "Autocracy and War": "More or less consciously Europe is preparing herself for a spectacle of much violence" (83). The basic difference is that in 1905 Europe is threatened by Pangermanism which "is a powerful and voracious organism full of unscrupulous self-confidence, whose appetite for aggrandisement will only be limited by the power of helping itself to the severed members of its friends and neighbours" (87), such as Poland; whereas in 1805, fortunately, Napoleon's "appetite" was restrained because his navy was "disorganised by revolutionary changes" ("The Heroic Age" 193), which ensured the French fleet always had the odds against them. Moreover, the defeat of France at the hands of Prussia in 1870 fed Conrad's fears in 1905 that "*Il n'y a plus d'Europe*," and that, therefore, future European wars will be fought "with an increased bitterness and the savage tooth and claw obstinacy of a struggle for existence" with few "signs of generous greatness" (*NLL* 83). In 1805, however, the opposing fleets shared a chivalrous code and a mutual respect. These differences sustain Conrad's

[12] Cf. Andrzej Busza, "The Rhetoric of Conrad's Non-Fictional Discourse" (1978).

[13] In contemporary terminology, as Najder recently observed, Conrad seems to envisage a " '*Europe des patries*' " ("Conrad's Europe" 14).

[14] And, indeed, as he wrote both essays the English press reported the riots and strikes throughout Poland against Russian mobilisation of Poles to fight in the Far East.

case in "The Heroic Age" that though "Deprived by an ill-starred fortune of that self-confidence which strengthens the hands of an armed host" and "attended by nothing but the disturbing memories of reverses" the adversaries' fleets "presented to our approach a determined front, on which Captain Blackwood, in a knightly spirit, congratulated his Admiral" (193-94).[15] Hence, Conrad generously concludes, "By the exertions of their valour our adversaries have but added a greater lustre to our arms" (194); and both their weaknesses and their bravery should be considered when we acknowledge that "The old navy in its last days earned a fame that no belittling malevolence dare cavil at" because "this supreme favour they owe to their adversaries alone" (193). Praise for the gallantry of the opposing fleets is a commonplace in the literature on Trafalgar; but both Conrad's pity for Britain's adversaries, who in 1805 shared Poland's "ill-starred fortune," and his case that the weakness of the adversaries was "a supreme favour" are, as far as I'm aware, unique.

The penultimate paragraph begins with the melancholy observation that those "who sank together in their repose in the cool depths of the ocean would not understand the watchwords, would gaze with amazed eyes at the engines of our strife" (194), recalling in shorthand his gloomy view of Europe in 1905. He continues:

> In this ceaseless rush of shadows and shades, that, like the fantastic forms of clouds cast darkly upon waters on a windy day, fly past us to fall headlong below the hard edge of an implacable horizon, we must turn to the national spirit, which superior in its force and continuity to good and evil fortune, can alone give us the feeling of an enduring existence and of an invincible power against the fates. (194)

"Fall headlong before an implacable horizon" recalls the apocalyptic note of "a culminating day" in Britain's history that tempers his celebration of Trafalgar and that resounds in the stirring thoughts of "Autocracy and War." Similarly, his appeal to "the national spirit" and talk "of good and evil fortune" and of "the fates" eschew the heroic accent that Britain's colossal successes easily inspired in favour of the dying fall that seems more appropriate to the survival of the national spirit as a sustaining force in the traditions of "dead nations" such as Poland. Thus at precisely the moment when he could be said (as in the sketches that make up the *Mirror of the Sea*) to insert himself into English national life, Conrad's "we" and "us," while speaking of the victorious fortunes of Great Britain, is inflected with the possibility of a future catastrophe and with the defeats and misfortunes of Poland and "of great peoples" such as the French. As a committed European who recoils before the "watchwords" of his day that engender "the animosities of peoples"

[15] "Nelson certain of a triumphant issue to the day, asked Blackwood what he should consider a victory. That officer answered, that, considering the handsome way in which battle was offered by the enemy, their apparent determination for a fair trial of strength, ... he thought it a glorious result if fourteen were captured. He replied; 'I shall not be satisfied with less than twenty' " (Southey 254).

and of nations, Conrad refuses to contribute on the anniversary of Britain's most famous naval victory to the "din" of war-talk. Hence, in a soft-focused final paragraph "the national spirit" is said to preserve from "the decay and forgetfulness of death the greatness of our great men, and amongst them the passionate and gentle greatness of Nelson, the nature of whose genius was, on the faith of a … distinguished Admiral, such as to 'Exalt the glory of our nation'." (194). Thus the Nelson Conrad finally dwells on is not "the first of the moderns," and his career is used neither to provoke "the animosity of peoples" nor to provide a lesson in the sound conduct of a modern war. Instead, fostering "the spirit of concord and justice," Conrad divests Nelson (and Trafalgar Day) of all taint of either jingoism, chauvinism, or bellicosity; and "surrounded by the warm devotion of a band of brothers" (187), presents him – in an essay shot through with his awareness of the imminence and cost of war and of the dangers of exalting glory – as the incarnation of a chivalrous national spirit typical of both Britain's and of *Europe's* Heroic Age.

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CONRAD AND EUROPEAN POLITICS

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After I had offered to deal at this conference on "Conrad and Europe" with "Conrad and European politics," the first thing I discovered, when I began to get to grips with my theme, was that I could not treat it at all adequately without having reread, or at least reperused, all Conrad's works and the whole of his known correspondence, lest I should inadvertently omit some significant statement. I went through that process, and that, for a few months, was a most exhilarating experience. By the end of my rereadings or reperusals, I found myself with a huge mass of material, better adapted to the writing of a book than to the composition of a paper. I shall in fact concentrate on what appear to me to be the essential points of this vast topic.

To compound my fault, I must add another preliminary, by confessing that my understanding of the word 'politics' is rather broader than the field usually covered by that term. Politics, as I see it, being essentially concerned with the struggle for power, operates in many contexts, some of which are far less extensive than countries or continents. In any community of human beings where authority must or may be exerted, politics exists. That is fairly obviously the case with a university, with churches, or with ships, as Conrad well knew and showed more than once. Politics exists even, it seems to me, in families, and that is also often to be observed in Conrad's fiction; think of the Fyne ménage, or the Verloc couple, for instance. My conviction that politics obtains within the home circle rests on the solid basis of reading Charles Dickens. In *Great Expectations*, the central figure and narrator, Pip, an orphan, lives with his sister and brother-in-law; the husband, Joe Gargery, is a blacksmith and a strong man, and a delightful person; his wife, Pip's sister, is far from being a delightful person, but there is no doubt as to who wields authority in that home, who has won the struggle for power. When Joe Gargery tries to explain that situation to little Pip, he uses the – to me, memorable – phrase: "Your sister is given to government" (ch.VI). He later elucidates the meaning of

that phrase: "which I meantersay the government of you and myself." In short, Mrs Gargery is addicted to having things her own way and imposing her will on others. The fact that some people are more "given to government" than others plays its part in Conrad's fiction, as it does in ordinary life, and in nearly every novel, inevitably.

I must not forget that what I have committed myself to discussing is Conrad and European politics, a sufficiently large topic. Joseph Conrad, and before him Konrad Korzeniowski, was congenitally destined to feel concerned by the fate of Europe and to become keenly interested in European politics. The three countries that contributed most to the formation and development of his personality and of his ideas, Poland, France and the United Kingdom, were part of Europe. Edward Said spoke of Conrad's "passionate Europeanism" (qtd in Najder, "Conrad's Europe" 217), and, as Najder says, "if the European Union were to award literary prizes, Joseph Conrad would be a perfect candidate" ("Conrad's Europe" 5). Conrad the writer used the name and the idea of Europe readily enough, though after the First World War, Najder tells us (9), he tended to replace "Europe" by "the West," meaning mainly England and France. Jacques Darras seems to attach great importance to this fact, since he entitles his book *Joseph Conrad and the West*, but he also mentions Conrad's attitudes to Europe and the Europeans repeatedly. A more systematic study on similar lines, but from a different standpoint, is Christopher GoGwilt's *The Invention of the West. Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire* (1995). In this interesting book, GoGwilt aims at studying the ways in which Conrad's writings react to "the invention of the term 'the West' used as an abbreviated rhetorical claim of coherence for a whole set of incommensurable ideas" (1). GoGwilt reminds us that at the beginning of *The Rescue*, Conrad had used the phrase "the Western race" (72); I for one had forgotten it; yet it is striking, and even astounding. Of course, when "Westerners" and "Westernism" are mentioned in a Russian context, the meaning becomes different and the word concerns a political attitude opposed to "Slavonism" (which could not be appreciated by Conrad, always eager to repudiate the notion that, as a Pole, he was a Slav). But his consciousness of the existence of a Western world and of his own belonging to it could not have been demonstrated more blatantly than by the title of his most politically European or most Europeanly political novel, *Under Western Eyes*, a book defined by its author (in a letter to Pinker – see *JCC* 70) as "a reading of the Russian character," which determines Russia's politics.

There is hardly one of Conrad's narratives that does not stage representatives of at least two European nations: the fact is obvious in cases like *Under Western Eyes*, *The Arrow of Gold*, *The Rover*, *Suspense*, but it is true also of *The Nigger*, *Lord Jim*, and many others. *Heart of Darkness* is extremely significant: it criticizes Belgian and French colonialism. Conrad presents striking and even terrible images of chained

"criminals" and of the "grove of death," and there can be no doubt of his utter contempt for the European colonizers, yet he still glibly speaks of the Africans as "savages." The passage I find most embarrassing occurs when Marlow speaks in one breath of "the white men and ... the black fellows" (102). But that does not involve any kind of judgment; just a manner of speaking, a little thoughtlessly, perhaps. Conrad's view of the politics of colonization and colonialism is clearer when he deals with Africa than, for instance, in "Karain," where after an interesting study of conflicts for power and of betrayal, a certain sense creeps in by the end that Karain belongs to "the lesser breed," whose naïveté makes him an obvious butt of slightly contemptuous pity and trickery. Conrad's real *Tale of Two Cities* is undoubtedly *Under Western Eyes*, which begins in Petersburg and ends in Geneva. It displays an international network of revolutionists. The cause for which Victor Haldin works and kills (and compromises Razumov) is a national one, but no large-scale political ideal and action can remain purely national.

Through his fiction Conrad appears to have paid only limited and intermittent attention to politics, with the exception of the events and trends that affected the shaping of Europe and the place in it of his native country. In the bulk of his correspondence, politics is spectacularly absent from his letters to most of his epistolary relations; he seldom or never discussed politics with Pinker, for instance, or with John Galsworthy or Edward Garnett. The few correspondents who elicited political comments from him did so for specific reasons. His fellowcountrymen from Poland appealed to his patriotism and his anxiety about the fate of their motherland. Cunninghame Graham, probably because of his very left-wing attitudes, led him to coin statements that concern politics. Later, John Quinn, because of his keen concern with Ireland, extracted from Conrad opinions of some value on this theme. I think Conrad's letters demonstrate that, in spite of his impressive intelligence and forceful personality, he behaved on the whole as a chameleon-like letter-writer; I mean that he adapted himself to each specific correspondent, and took some different colouring from each of them.

The Secret Agent is a political novel in two ways; in the usual sense, by dealing with the workings of government in Britain, but also because of its treatment of anarchism, which has to be international. What *The Secret Agent* tells us about European politics is, under its marvellously ironical surface, something serious enough: that the various European countries do not really join their forces to fight against anarchism and terrorism; diplomatic rivalries and egoisms interfere with efficient collaboration between nations. In the field of family politics, there is no place for doubt as to who wields power in the Verloc couple: Winnie does, and like Mrs Gargery is "given to government." As in national and international politics, much depends on who trusts whom or, who is justified in trusting whom. Winnie trusted

Verloc, and she was wrong. Verloc defers to Winnie's authority to the point of letting her keep all his money... and the fatal knife.

The Arrow of Gold is directly concerned with European politics, since it stages a conspiracy organized in France (by a motley international group) to help the Carlist attempt in Spain; the conspiracy and the attempt fail. In *The Rescue* Mr Travers is a politician (interested in three subjects: "commerce, administration, and politics" 123) and a European, though he does not travel for political purposes but for pleasure (of which he gets mighty little). His philosophy is summed up in the memorable sentence: "if the inferior race must perish it is a gain, a step towards the perfecting of society which is the aim of progress" (148); which sounds like a polite version of Kurtz's postcript: "Exterminate all the brutes." Travers, as a proud Briton, sweepingly dismisses foreign things, as congenitally inferior. There is a good deal of Dickens's Mr Podsnap in the man who says to his wife "You can't expect from me all those foreign affectations" (271).

The main body of Conrad's political writing consists of a few essays, and among those, "Autocracy and War" must have pride of place. Conrad intended at first to call it "The Concord of Europe" and described it to Pinker as "a sort of historical survey of international politics from 1815 (the Vienna Congress) – with remarks and conclusions tending to demonstrate the present precarious state of that concord and bringing the guilt of that precariousness to the door of Germany or rather of Prussia" (*CL3* 218-219). The essay will have to be analysed and discussed at some length later.

Let us now list what appear to have been Conrad's main ideas in the field we are trying to explore. In the political field as elsewhere, one inevitably encounters Conrad's general tendency to scepticism and pessimism, or to what Eloise Hay called his "unmitigated fatalism" (179). There can be no doubt that Conrad was on the whole hostile to democracy and socialism. He was not the first writer to use the word "democracy" mainly as a term of disparagement. The most unambiguous statement on this theme occurs in a letter to Graham, in 1899:

> I am not a peace man, not a democrat (I don't know what the word means really) ... L'idée démocratique est un très beau phantôme, and to run after it may be fine sport, but I confess I do not see what evils it is destined to remedy. (*CL2* 158-159)

As for socialism, in spite of his friendship with Cunninghame Graham and his enthusiastic admiration for Anatole France, both of whom advocated socialist ideas, Conrad's animosity was often expressed, usually in the form of ironical comments. Irony came later, but his most extravagantly violent tirade came as early as December 1885, after a General Election in Great Britain, in a long letter to Spiridion Kliszczewski:

> where's the man to stop the rush of social-democratic ideas? ... Socialism must inevitably end in Caesarism ... the whole herd of idiotic humanity are moving in that direction at the bidding of unscrupulous rascals and a few sincere, but dangerous lunatics. These things must be. It is fatality. (*CL1* 15-17)

Conrad had the born aristocrat's instinctive distrust of the mobs, especially as thinkers and perhaps as voters. Democracy was to him at best a lesser evil. There is one exception to his apparent indifference to protesters against the established order. He appears to have been fascinated by one kind of violent political action against people in power: he deals with anarchism in *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* and in at least one story. While he did not approve of terrorist acts or other deeds inspired by anarchist ideals, Conrad was not blind to the contemptible weaknesses of the decadent bourgeois society the anarchists aimed at combating. In any case, Conrad did not blindly advocate the exertion of power by the powerful. In the colonial field, for instance, he showed more than once that he disliked oppression and exploitation. He hated colonialism; mostly when it was practised by the Dutch and the Belgians, while he seemed to consider British colonial power as less tyrannical and thus less objectionable. The case of Belgian, or Leopoldian, colonialism in the Congo is presented by Conrad with unmitigated hostility. His letters to Roger Casement in December 1903 are full of unambiguous statements; Casement was launching a campaign against King Leopold II: Conrad criticizes the apathy of Europe – and especially Britain – before the horrors of colonization in the Congo, which he defines with remarkable accuracy (*CL3* 97). He writes: "In the old days England had in her keeping the conscience of Europe. The initiative came from here. But now I suppose we are busy with other things; too much involved in great affairs to take up cudgels for humanity, decency and justice" (*CL3* 96). In the sequel of that correspondence, however, Conrad seems to shift the burden of helping Casement from his own shoulders on to those of Cunninghame Graham. Conrad's own part in the fight consists in writing *Heart of Darkness* and depicting Kurtz as an extremist who goes so far as to encourage and reinforce the worst habits and tendencies of the local people in order to gain their love and their support in the conquest of unprecedented quantities of ivory. Kurtz emancipates himself from the European ideals of conduct that ought to keep the whites respectable and efficient. Conrad appears to have felt more sympathy for Rajah Brooke, who in Sarawak sided more or less with the natives against the Dutch and thus practised an acceptable form of colonization. Lingard and Jim are supposed to belong to the same type as Brooke.

Conrad did not idealize the native populations which the European colonists attempted to colonize or conquer. Almayer's wife, being a Malay, sells her daughter to Dain Maroola. Elsewhere in the same novel, the narrator blandly asserts that "There are some situations where the barbarian and the, so-called, civilized man meet upon the same ground" (*AF* 91). The "civilized man" is prudentially dubbed

"so-called," but the barbarian is not, and it is made clear that Mrs. Almayer is a barbarian. Even Lakamba, a great man, "the ruler of Sambir," makes no bones about ordering Babalatchi to kill Almayer (118). Lingard boasts repeatedly of his power, but he is wrong and lives under illusions and delusions. He will be defeated by Lakamba and his henchman Babalatchi, "Malay adventurers, ambitious men of that place and time; the Bohemians of their race" (50). There is not much to choose between Babalatchi, "a vagabond of the sea" (51-52) or Aïssa, called by Lingard "a damned savage woman" (91), and Lingard's pitiful European protégés, of whom the narrator writes that "Those two specimens of the superior race glared at each other savagely for a minute" (63). The Malays depicted in those early novels are Muslims. Aïssa exasperates Willems by veiling herself against his commands; she may exasperate Conrad also, since we are told that "she looked like an animated package of cheap cotton goods!" (128). And Babalatchi, usually termed "the statesman of Sambir," can be called "the savage statesman" (137, 213, 215). Outside Europe, savagery is everywhere.

In great part, no doubt, because of the circumstances of his childhood, Conrad detested Russia throughout his life; he found other, more rational reasons to justify such an attitude later, as we shall see, but it never varied and was deeply ingrained in him. When Salisbury was trying to improve Britain's relations with Russia in April 1898, Conrad's comment ran thus:

> I am simply sick to see the blind and timorous bungling at the head of affairs. This is this country's very last chance to assert itself in the face of Russia and indeed of the whole Europe. I am convinced that at this moment all the chances would be in favour of England and after a first success there would be no lack of friends and allies. But there! What's the use of talking; I am not Foreign Minister. (*CL2* 54)

I am tempted to exclaim: 'Thank God!' for he seems to be blandly suggesting that Britain should go to war against Russia and score some initial success in order to enlist allies in her crusade. Yet Conrad did not like war in general; he disapproved of the Boer war, and wrote about it to Graham, speaking of "this idiotic war" (*CL2* 206-207).

Conrad sings another tune when writing to Cunninghame Graham in May 1898 about the war between Spain and the United States: "By all means viva l'Espana!!!! [sic!] I would be the first to throw up my old hat at the news of the slightest success" (*CL2* 60). Yet a month later he writes to Cora Crane after the Spanish fleets have been defeated by the American naval forces: "My congratulation ... on the success of American arms ... Magnificent" (*CL2* 73). Graham undoubtedly is the correspondent who elicits from Conrad the most amazing outbursts, down to the sweeping statement: "tout se tient. Voilà pourquoi je respecte les extrêmes anarchistes. – 'Je souhaite l'extermination générale' " (*CL2* 159); not wholly unlike Kurtz. Expressions of hostility to Russia occur in letters to *The Times*, Marguerite

Poradowska and Garnett: "As to discussing Russia it's the most chimeric of enterprises since it is there for anyone to look at. 'La Russie, c'est le néant' ... Anybody can see it" (*CL4* 489). As late as March 1917, in the first stages of the Revolution that was to put an end to tsarism though not to autocracy, Conrad wrote to John Quinn:

> I must be excused from joining in the extacies about the Russian Revolution ... Russia was an untrustworthy ally before – and it remains so still. The immediate result is to eliminate it as an active factor from the war. It counted for little – and now it counts for nothing. (*CL6* 86)

Again, in short, le néant. Of course, from a man who hated both Russia and revolutions, a Russian revolution was bound to get short shrift.

He appears to have felt an almost equal dislike of Germany, based on the share taken by that country in the partition of Poland; that position came to be reinforced by his newborn British patriotism.

If the past of Poland commanded Conrad's views of several European countries, the future of Poland was one of his major preoccupations. He wholeheartedly aspired to the restoration of an independent Polish nation. Apollo Korzeniowski asserted that he wished to bring up his son "not as a democrat, aristocrat, demagogue, republican, monarchist ... but only as a Pole" (*JCC* 3). So, Conrad had every reason in the world for feeling Polish. In the political field, I think his Polishness determined his thinking throughout his life: he viewed European politics largely from the standpoint of a Pole, even after he had become a British citizen and the head of a British family. His nationalism was strongly expressed in a letter to Cunninghame Graham in 1899, together with its hopelessness: "Moi je regarde l'avenir du fond d'un passé très noir et je trouve que rien ne m'est permis hors la fidélité à une cause absolument perdue" (*CL2* 159-160). Conrad, once he had become a British citizen and an English writer, still aspired to Polish independence, though until the war revived his hopes, he apparently refused to work on its behalf, and even to appear in public as one of its supporters. At the beginning of the war, however, because he had revisited Poland, the novelist pronounced himself in favour of "the Austrian solution to the Polish question and called for the reconstruction of Poland as a semi-autonomous state of the Austro-Hungarian Empire" (Fleishman 16). And that restored state would have been monarchical, not democratic. But, of course, that position could not be adhered to when the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Germany's ally, collapsed. Meanwhile, Russia on the one hand, and the German-Austrian alliance on the other, proclaimed their intention of reconstituting a semi-autonomous Poland under their respective protection in the event of victory. Then Conrad made a proposal to the Foreign Office, urged by Józef Retinger, that England and France might guarantee a Polish state with a semi-colonial status; that was far from satisfactory (and the events of 1939 were to show how impractical it was to rely on French and British guarantees to protect

Poland from Germany), but at any rate, it was a step towards democracy in Poland. Conrad's final position about Poland at the end of WWI is expressed in "The Crime of Partition." In that essay, he becomes more intransigently nationalist, and rejects the idea that Poland owes anything to England and France. Later, he expressed concern about the war of 1920 between Soviet Russia and the Polish forces under Piłsudski. His comments on this event (in a letter to John Quinn) are for once enthusiastic, almost grandiloquent: "I confess to some little gratification at the thought that the unbroken Polish front keeps Bolshevism off and that apparently the reborn state has one heart and one soul, one indomitable will" (*GJA2* 237). That was when he defined Poland as "that outpost of Western civilization, once overwhelmed by but never surrendered to the forces representing what they themselves most detest: inhumanity, tyranny and moral lawlessness" (see Najder ed., *Congo Diary* 94).

His Polishness, however, did not prevent him from acquiring a sense of also belonging to the British nation; he displayed spectacular loyalty to England during WWI. The few letters of 1903 to a Polish correspondent (Kazimierz Waliszewski) analyze his position interestingly: "Both at sea and on land my point of view is English, from which the conclusion should not be drawn that I have become an Englishman. That is not the case. Homo duplex has in my case more than one meaning" (*CL3* 89). One of the most surprising attitudes voiced by Conrad during the war was his hostility to any United States share in it. After claiming that there was no need for American forces to help win the war, he recognized that their coming in was "an enormous piece of luck for the Western Powers" (to Quinn, *CL6* 86). His distrust concerned the right it would give the United States to interfere with the problems of peace "extremely complicated, purely European, involving deep-seated feelings, aspirations and convictions absolutely foreign to American mentality and even to American emotions" (to Eugene Saxton, *CL5* 568-569). He claimed that he expressed such views "as a true friend of the United States," but his friendship did not prevent him from cautioning his son Borys against the superficiality of "hearty" American speeches, "saying (what I do believe) that five words from an Englishman are worth five thousand from an American, any time" (*CL6* 103). Conrad, a recognized master of language, obviously distrusted words spoken by politicians, and especially by American statesmen.

On the basis of the general ideas and attitudes I have just listed, what are we to think of Conrad's pronouncements concerning the past, the present, and the future of the European countries? As regards the present, or the period in which Conrad was writing, a close look at "Autocracy and War" provides the essential data of the answer; but that essay is also about the past and the future. And what we find is that in Conrad (as in most people) there was a mixture, or an alternation, of foresight and partial blindness, due in part to prejudice. The events of the European

past that Conrad discussed more often and more willingly than any others were the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era that followed upon it. Napoleon himself elicited from Conrad a curious mixture of attraction and repulsion. He was fully aware of Napoleon's excessive ambition, of his desire to rule over the whole of Europe, of the destruction and innumerable casualties that resulted from his campaigning all over the European continent, all of which Conrad could not intellectually approve. Certainly Conrad realized that, to return to the Dickensian phrase, if ever a human being was, even more than Mrs Gargery, "given to government," that human being was Napoleon Bonaparte. Yet Conrad also unquestionably felt the fascination of that powerful, in part mysterious personality; he was struck by the intelligence of the man, the genius of the general, the way he elicited respect from the citizens of France (and not of France only) and the love of his soldiers, however implacably he treated them. But that fascination, which turned into an obsession, had other causes and effects. From a relatively early point in his literary career, his great ambition was to write the "Napoleonic" novel that would crown his work, put the finishing touch to it, and make him sure of leaving his mark in the history of literature, and in the literature of history. Napoleon, who had been for a time the Master of Europe, remained a domineering figure in Conrad's life and writings, to the very end. His work often concerns itself with a sense that the traditional European aristocracy of the old régimes underwent a decline which began with the French Revolution and Napoleon's Empire, but went on and became accelerated by the end of the XIXth century. Aristocrats, however personally likable in Conrad's fiction, always appear more or less as anachronisms. The aristocratic ideal is exhaled, one might say, with the last breath of the warrior's soul. Nevertheless Conrad's rejection of the Revolution was at least as wholehearted as his contempt for the decadent aristocracies.

Apart from the fiction, as we saw, Conrad's most spectacular and most systematic treatment of European politics is to be found in the longish essay "Autocracy and War." Some of his other essays are of unquestionable relevance. For instance the piece called "The Future of Constantinople," which I have no time to summarize, puts forward mostly unrealistic suggestions. "Autocracy and War" remains his most serious contribution to the understanding of European politics. Not that its purport is at all clear, or even quite coherent. But it is interesting in several ways. The bulk of it was written while the Conrads were staying in Capri: so we have here an English writer born in Poland writing in Italy about Russia and Prussia. What could be more broadly and genuinely European? Oddly enough, the impetus to compose this essay originated in an event which concerned Europe only marginally, and whose consequences Conrad to a certain extent misread: the defeat of the Russian army by the Japanese at an early stage of a conflict that came to an end only in September 1905, long after Conrad's essay had been published. He foresaw

the inevitability of revolution in Russia, where, because of the lack of any rational political tradition, no revolution can establish peace and order (and in any case he believed that revolutions everywhere are bound to degenerate). But in the body of the essay the writer does concentrate on European problems, such as the future of the Russian autocracy and the evolution of Germany. In "Autocracy and War" Conrad advocates solidarity instead of nationalities. He goes so far as to contemplate a time when there will be no frontiers (*NLL* 86). His main purpose in "Autocracy and War" is to warn his readers against the perils of expansionist nationalisms on the European Continent, and particularly that of Prussia. Conrad thinks there will be no more wars based on ideas like nationalism, though conflicts will arise from commercial rivalries. He seems to distrust democracy because it serves the interests of capitalism and industrialism. Conrad expresses greater esteem for the Japanese than for the Russians; he praises the former for having destroyed the hateful Russian autocracy and for "the innate gentleness of their character" (74). His belief being that Russia must not influence Europe, the Japanese victory, which makes such a thing unthinkable, is to him a good thing. He approves of Bismarck's assertion that "La Russie, c'est le néant" without introducing any reservations as to the simplifying and excessive nature of that statement; he even adds to it his certainty that Russia "can do nothing because it does not exist. It has vanished for ever at last" (76). Apart from the Russo-Japanese War and the annihilation of Russia, "Autocracy and War" contains a large number of memorable pronouncements. For instance, he declares the French Revolution was "in essentials a mediocre phenomenon" (73), and that the wars of the XIXth century resulted from "a corrupted revolution." It also appears that Conrad does not like Germany much better than Russia. He evinces some readiness to defend "the old monarchical principle." Conrad reverts to what he now describes as Russian despotism, which he regards as particularly hateful, and which has existed from the very first moment in the life of that benighted country. He, clear-sightedly enough, says that this despotism clamours for revolution. He goes on to correct Bismarck. Russia, to him, is not exactly nothingness, "le néant," it is so to speak positively negative, it is "the negation of everything worth living for" (96). But because of the German victory over France in 1870, he concludes, surprisingly, that there no longer exists such a thing as Europe: "Il n'y a plus d'Europe." One incidental statement in "Autocracy and War" may provide amusement for a few seconds; Conrad refers to "the amiable Busch" (87), with a c between the s and the h, who was, he tells us, "the Chancellor's pet 'reptile' of the Press." Conrad, then, again with some shrewdness, mentions Africa as a convenient outlet for the enmities between European countries. He concludes his essay by quoting with approval Gambetta's statement to the effect that "Le prussianisme, voilà l'ennemi !" Prussia, not Russia, has become the foe to be combated energetically.

The clearest impression that emerges from all this, on the whole, is that Conrad's political thinking about Europe was decisively influenced by his Polish past, and by the latent conflict within himself between his different nationalities, or national loyalties. It was during the later years of the First World War that by becoming an all-out British patriot, Conrad went through the least European phase of his political thinking. Thinking of any kind, in fact, was in abeyance during that period, when his single wish was to serve, to help, to belong. Hence his attitude to Ireland, explained at some length in a letter to John Quinn, one month before the Armistice; Quinn was a sympathizer with the Irish nationalist cause; Conrad was not, but he alluded to some resemblances between Ireland and Poland. The cause of Poland itself, however, could not be forgotten. So, Conrad did react unfavourably, or at any rate sceptically, to the 1917 Russian Revolution. One of his most elaborate statements, in a letter of February 1918 to John Quinn, shows Conrad sticking to his old guns and expressing genuine anguish:

> Whatever happens Russia is out of the war now. The great thing is to keep the Russian infection, its decomposing power, from the social organism of the rest of the world. In this Poland will have to play its part on whatever lines her future may have to be laid ... Fine words have been given to [Poland] before. And the finer the words the greater was always the deception.[1] (*CL6* 180-181)

On November 11, 1918, Conrad was by no means ecstatic; he wrote to Hugh Walpole: "I can not confess to an easy mind. Great and very blind forces are set free catastrophically all over the world" (*CL6* 302). A couple of months later, in a letter to another Hugh (Clifford), he returns to his familiar themes and gives as one of the reasons for his anxiety his distrust of Americans:

> The intervention of the United States was a great piece of luck for the Western Powers, but ... American influence on European affairs cannot possibly be good on account of these people's crudeness and ignorance backed by great material strength and an awakened sense of their power. Luckily there is a sort of futility about them which will probably make them less dangerous than they might be. (*CL6* 348)

After the "true friend of the United States" has voiced such global criticisms, Conrad reverts to the two nations dearest to him:

> Of course my concern is for England, which engages all my affection and all my thoughts. I look at all the problems and incertitudes of the day from that point of view and no other. As to Poland, I have never had any illusions and I must render the Poles the justice to say that they too had very few. (*CL6* 348-349)

Both Poland's history and her geography made her profoundly European, made her almost the European nation par excellence. One thing it is possible to assert nowadays, with the a posteriori wisdom of the living when they discuss the dead, is that Conrad's situation and his experiences, both national and personal, made him

[1] by "deception" Conrad obviously means *déception*, that is, "disappointment."

attentive to European politics, and made him what would be called nowadays a good European, a staunch supporter of the European union, a man who advocated "the solidarity of Europeanism which must be the next step towards the advent of Concord and Justice" (*NLL* 97). Probably, as Najder has shown, he might have advocated the views of the people dubbed 'souverainistes', those who aim at creating and reinforcing a union of independent nations, as against those who long for a federation of European states. To quote Najder once more, Conrad "saw the European tradition as consisting of a chorus of national traditions" ("Conrad's Europe" 225). In 1924, in a letter to St. Loe Strachey, Conrad refused to yield to pessimism about Europe: "Europe collectively may be dead but the nations composing it don't give me that impression" (*GJA2* 343). Perhaps, in 2004, now that it has become felicitously, and I hope definitively impossible to claim that "il n'y a plus d'Europe," that Europe no longer exists, Conrad appears to us as a great European rather because of his Polish roots than of his adopted British nationality. Yet, by saying that, I may be simply betraying my own preferences, whereas, as a Conrad scholar, my duty is to look at Conrad objectively. And I would like to close with a quotation from *A Personal Record*, where Conrad speaks of "human affairs" in general, but that is a field so wide that it inevitably includes the politics of Europe: "The sight of human affairs deserves admiration and pity. They are worthy of respect, too. And he is not insensible who pays them the undemonstrative tribute of a sigh which is not a sob, and of a smile which is not a grin" (XIX).

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THE WRETCHED GANG: CONRAD'S GROTESQUES AS A MIRROR OF EUROPEAN POLITICAL EVOLUTION

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> "No, I belong to the wrecthed gang. We all belong to it. We are born initiated, and succeeding generations clutch the inheritance of fear and brutality without a thought, without a doubt, without compunction – in the name of God."
>
> Letter to Cunninghame Graham Sunday, January 23, 1898 (*CL2* 25)

Conrad's epistle to R.B. Cunnninghame Graham assessed the human condition in a world which pretended to make a virtue of progress; he portrayed instead a warped universe inhabited by succeeding generations who repeated the senseless mistakes of the past. In this letter and in others to Cunninghame Graham, for whom the expression "the white man's mission" signified "the stock exchange militant" (Watts 20). Conrad noted the brutality and hypocrisy of the world's marred civilisations, marred languages and marred imagination. Conrad's concept of belonging to a wretched gang was an attempt to define the implications of evil and to create an esthetic for it, very much as Baudelaire had done before him in *Les fleurs du mal (1857)* and as Wallace Stevens did after him in *Esthétique du Mal* (1944). Like the incisive metaphor of the wretched gang, the grotesque forms Conrad conceived used a series of rapid sketches, incomplete and unfinished in nature, but which became all the more personal and all the more terrifying when completed by the reader's imagination.

Because Conrad did not consider himself to be the horrified spectator of evil perpetrated by others, his esthetic vision changed: "But will you persuade humanity to throw away sword and shield? Can you persuade even me – No, I belong to the wretched gang. We all belong to it" (*CL2 25*). The foundations of the narrative gave rise to new forms in Conrad's fiction because the fictional centre gravity had

changed. He began to chart a new course for political fiction at the century's end. For a writer to extract himself from the maelstrom of good and evil was an impossible feat, for evil was not without but within, not only within oneself but within one's language. Conrad's extreme lucidity with regard to the role he played as a writer is the source of the compelling tragic force of his political *œuvre*, which was not structured on the standard literary dichotomy pitting good against evil, black against white. Such an artificial construction suited neither his conception of civilisation, nor of language nor of the imagination. As Conrad explained his conception of the wretched gang to Cunninghame Graham, "Fraternity means nothing unless the Cain-Abel business" (Watts 36).

The privileged form Conrad's realization of his brotherhood not only with Abel but with Cain took in his fiction was the grotesque, a deformation of the human form, soul and spirit as ancient as the world itself. The willful and often comic deformation of human forms allows an author to ridicule the inevitable horrors of existence by giving them an unexpected shape and often new meanings as well. What reaction other than the grotesque could have been more suitable to hold up to the destruction of life, to the inexorable "knitting machine" another metaphor for human social organisation which Conrad described in a letter to Cunninghame Graham (December 20, 1897) as mindlessly disposing of mankind with its indestructible, ruthless, energy: "It knits us in and it knits us out. It has knitted time, space, pain, death, corruption, despair and all the illusions–and nothing matters. I'll admit however that to look at the remorseless process is sometimes amusing" (*CL1* 425).

In our discussion of European political grotesques, we will begin with Conrad's attitude, unusual in its time, toward language.

Edward Said felt that it was not possible to consider Conrad's "peculiar genius in narrative," his different technical innovations, without taking into consideration his conception of language, which he believed was cyclical. That is to say, one that had no reference to a definite origin. Edward Said saw one "utterance in Conrad as leading inevitably to another, without recourse to a single originating or privileged first fact" (75).

In his attempt to define an *esthéthique du mal* during the exchange of letters with R.B. Cunninghame Graham, Conrad questioned the essential validity of language: "Half the words we use have no meaning whatever." He disclaimed belief in any priviledged or originating first fact insofar as language was concerned:

> Faith is a myth and beliefs shift like mists on the shore; yesterday is as shadowy as the hope of tomorrow – only the string of my platitudes seems to have no end. As our peasants say: "Pray brother, forgive me for the love of God." And we don't know what forgiveness is, nor what is love, nor where God is. Assez. (January 14, 1898; *CL2* 17)

In essence, Conrad's conception of language formed a parallel with his conception of political evolution, for both envisioned a seemingly endless cycle of repeti-

tions. The unknowable present is an endless repetition of the unknowable past for which our discourse is inadequate:

> Life knows us not and we know not life – we don't know even our own thoughts. Half of the words we use have no meaning whatever and of the other half each man understands each word after the fashion of his own folly and conceit. (*CL2* 17)

Edward Said believed that Conrad's contemporary Frederich Nietzsche also believed that language was not inherently creative but rather "the interpretation of a prior utterance, an interpretation of an interpretation which no longer serves" (71). Said felt that both Conrad and Nietzsche accepted the "difficult paradox that language was both excess and poverty" (74). Conrad's attitude toward language as both exceeding the limits of significant discourse and revealing the depth of linguistic deprivation is essential to an understanding of the role he contributed to grotesques in his portrayal of political decline in Western civilisation.

Marred Civiliations

The Secret Agent is marked by the poverty of its language as well as by the covert silences which divide the members of the wretched gang in the political drama, Verloc, the anarchists, the police officials, who recycle without thinking the clichés of their age in what seems to be a society secure from upheaval. The grotesque mirror of European civilisation shatters horrendously, however, when Winnie Verloc attempts to imagine the death of her mentally handicapped brother Stevie. The identity of the person who had been blown up with the bomb at the Greenwich Observatory had been kept from her by her husband, who knew the depth of her attachment to Stevie. When Chief Inspector Heath finally breaks the truth to her, she remembers what she had heard, that they had to gather up the dead terrorist with a shovel. In her mind's eye, she imagines a fireworks display with Stevie's body parts strewn throughout and his decapitated head suspended above:

> Mrs. Verloc closed her eyes desperately throwing upon the vision of the night her eyelids, where after a rainlike fall of mangled limbs the decapitated head of Stevie lingerd suspended alone, and fading out slowly like the last star of a pyrotechnic display. Mrs. Verloc opened her eyes. (*SA* 260)

The monstruous and yet compelling grotesque form of the brightest moment of a fireworks display streaked with bits of face and flesh slowly fading away seems to indicate in a moment of measured eloquence and supreme terror, the ultimate dislocation of the society of progress. The political grotesque seems to reach its zenith in Stevie's dismembrement, but Conrad has only begun to embroider his terrible vision of the cataclysmic downward spiral of political organisation with its inevitable return to a barbaric past.

The moment Mrs. Verloc silently takes a knife in hand in order to carve up her husband rather than the dinner roast, she carries out an attack against a patriarch, against the supposed protector of women and children, against the consecrated pillar of the family on which the English nation had built its civilisation of progress: "Into that plunging blow, delivered over the side of the couch, Mrs. Verloc had put all the inheritance of her immemorial and obscure descent, the simple ferocity of the age of caverns and the unbalanced nervous fury of the age of bar-rooms" (*SA* 263).

The unexpected but fitting grotesque of a twentieth century woman unexpectedly returned to the age of the caverns, of a stone age woman quietly murdering her husband at dinner, images from which the age of progress thought they had been delivered long ago, is blended with another even more terrible one, that of the bar-rooms. Alcoholism, the brawls of bar-rooms and broken families were the bane of the industrial age. Both images are underlaid by Winnie's flawed inheritance, by her "immemorial and obscure descent" from past generations. Conrad reiterates in his twisted figures the conception he had described in his letter to Cunninghame Graham in 1898: "...succeeding generations clutch the inheritance of fear and brutality without a thought, without a doubt, without compunction..." (*CL2* 25). Composed of fearless connections of truths, the overwhelming impact of Conrad's grotesques often takes readers unawares. In their creation, Conrad finds the truest and most lasting expression of his pessimistic political vision. In order to overcome the crushing power of the past, Conrad sets the grotesque images of the marred civilisation within English borders and within English minds. And yet, he was not alone in thinking that the age of progress was a myth. He echoed the French poet Arthur Rimbaud's fine grotesques in *Une Saison en enfer (1873)* and *Illuminations (1886)*, who had written that "Humanity was fitting a shoe for that vast child Progress" ("L'Humanité chaussait le vaste enfant Progrès") (77).

Marred Languages

Nowhere is the language paradox of excess and poverty more evident than in *Under Western Eyes* in which perverted language becomes the mirror of political decline in both Eastern and Western Europe. Language is not only an imperfect and marred political tool. In *Under Western Eyes*, the well of language itself has been poisoned. The political tragedy springs from the mistrust generated by the effusion of deceit, double entendre and double dealing. Lured into a verbal duel with Sophia Antonovna which could cost him his life, Razumov finally breaks into laughter on the grounds of the somber Château Borel when he happens to remember with a certain desperate grimness "the epigrammatic saying that speech has been given to us for the purpose of concealing our thoughts" (*UWE* 261).

As a setting for a tragedy of deceit, the dilapidated, cobwebbed and uncurtained Château Borel is itself a magnificent grotesque, a Tower of Babel in proudly multilingual and politically neutral Geneva, which is sadly in need of refurbishing and repairs. The tenants of the rented château are two middle aged Russian writers who hope to persuade naive newcomers to participate in their games of revolution roulette. Garrulous political diatribes allow them to rank with some of Conrad's darkest comic figures. Although the presence of black comedy may come as a surprise, we should remember Conrad's remark to Cunninghame Graham about the knitting machine: "I'll admit, however that to look at the remorseless process is sometimes amusing" (*CL1* 425) Charles Baudelaire also believed that the comic or "comique absolu" as he termed it, was infinitely painful, depending as it did on human imperfections (254), an assertion echoed by Marlow in *Chance* while describing the upstanding civil servant, the solemn Mr. Fyne: "...the comic when it is human becomes quickly painful" (206).

The painful part of the story in *Under Western Eyes* is that, as Razumov tells Peter Ivanovitch, "There are starving young men in Russia who believe in you so much that it seems the only thing that keeps them alive in their misery" (227). Unfortunately for the young man, however, the supposedly true accounts of the advocate of progress and humanitarianism, are fictions. In his wandering tales, parodied by Conrad, artless repetition has been deprived of meaning; the codes of language can no longer be deciphered and no longer have any bearing upon the conduct of the well-known feminist. Aware of the Peter Ivanovitch's reputation as a defender of women, Miss Haldin is shocked to discover him berating Tekla aggressively for assumed misdemeanors (166). As both unpaid servant and unpaid secretary to "the heroic fugitive" (125-126), Tekla is forced to take hours of dictation daily. She is the witness to the officious outpourings of the revered author "the civilised man, the enthusiast of humanitarian ideals thirsting for the triumph of spiritual love and political liberty" (122). She tells Razumov that the great humanitarian is a despot and warns him to keep Miss Haldin away from the Château Borel: "I know Peter Ivanovitch sufficiently well. He is a great man. Great men are horrible ... this life here is worse than starving" (232-233).

The fact that such a deeply flawed figure in the European political drama should have control over Razumov's destiny revolts him "with its fantastic absurdity" (220). In Razumov's eyes, the tenants of the rented château appear to be characters out of "a tale from Hoffman" (215). Wearing a black silk top hat and dark glasses, Peter Ivanovitch resembles nothing so much at first in the eyes of Razumov as an obliging magician. When asked by Madame de S__ for "*les gâteaux*" during Razumov's visit to the Château Borel, Peter Ivanovitch seems to "extract them from the interior his hat" (217). During what turns out to be a kind of Mad Hatter's Tea Party, Tekla nearly drops "her hissing burden, a samovar obviously too heavy for

her," which "she manages, however, to land on the table" (217). The comic grotesque quickly takes on sombre overtones, however. Although Peter Ivanovitch's dark glasses seem to be simply incongruous at first – Geneva is not known for its bright sunlight – they soon come to represent the monstrous aspects of his personality and of the political game that is being played out in the chateau.

As for Madame de S__, the "witch in Parisian clothes" (215), she is perfectly serious when she assures Razumov that "in matters of politics, I am a supernaturalist" (222), but when she attempts to give Razumov the demonstration of her political powers, she reveals her demonic fury at being cheated out of a large inheritance, which may be the real reason for her revolutionary fervor: "...her rigidity was frightful; like the rigour of a corpse galvanized into harsh speech and glittering stare by the force of murderous hatred" (222).

The Teacher of Languages describes the failed attempt of Madame de S__ to transform her supernaturalist vision into a satisfactory piece of political prose as "a little book from the pen of Madame de S__ published in Paris, a mystically bad-tempered, declamatory and frightfully disconnected piece of writing" (163). In her mystic disrespect for the truth and her abuse of human discourse, Madame de S__ is the most gothic grotesque in the novel. Conrad deforms her face, her mouth and the speech organs which give her the "rattling laugh... and hoarse, wailing, croaking voice with more than a suspicion of hysteria" in it (216). Yet she, too, provokes laughter in her failed attempt to attain the etheral regions of the politically supernatural: "...even her eyes, whose unwinking stare plunged into his own, though shining, were lifeless, as though they were as artificial as her teeth" (225).

The ironic demasking of the double language of the political figures in *Under Western Eyes* takes on the unexpected forms and shapes which Conrad's pessimistic political vision inspired. They have the aptness, the finesse, the succinctness and the unfinished quality which John Ruskin defined in *Modern Painters* as the essence of the grotesque:

> A fine grotesque is the expression, in a moment, by a series of symbols thrown together, in bold and fearless connection of truths which it would have taken a long time to express in any verbal way and of which the connection is left for the beholder to work out for himself. The gaps left or overleaped by the haste of the imagination, forming the grotesque character. (II, 91)

The unfinished quality of the grotesques does not mean that the political figures are minor characters. Their twisted tongues and pens pour out the disreputable political discourse which Conrad intended to put at the center of his novel. Even more important is the failure of their discourse to transcend human experience and thus renew human utterance.

Language is both the target and the source of the grotesque in *Under Western Eyes*, for the poisoning of the well is to continue. Both Razumov and Nathalie Haldin are to be recruited to write about revolutionary justice: "We must educate,

educate everybody, develop the great thought of absolute liberty and of revolutionary justice … Write in Russian. We'll have it translated. There can be no difficulty. Why, without seeking further, there is Miss Haldin" (287). A genteel form of outdated verbosity is the defining trait of the Teacher of Languages, while the notable exception to the overwhelming torrent of verbal *ennui* is the impoverished discourse of the exiled student Razumov. The constant effort he makes to subvert language in order to stay alive has deprived him of coherent speech and made his voice almost inaudible. Razumov is systematically portrayed by Conrad as being lost for words. His state of nervous apprehension has made his voice almost inaudible just as if he were being strangled and were choking on his words: "…if his voice had not been practically extinct, dried up in his throat, the rustling effort of his speech too painful to give real offence. …his voice had no more resonance than a dry rag or a piece of tinder" (184-185). The dry rag and the piece of tinder are two inert but highly inflammable substances. Even though Razumov has been reduced by the grotesque to minute shreds, the inevitable ignition takes place. He follows the injunction of Julius Laspara to write about political justice, appears with his confession at the Haldins' apartment and later confronts the revolutionaries. At the moment of confrontation his barely audible discourse of deceit is transformed into tongues of fire: "... to-day I made myself free from falsehood, from remorse – independent of every single human being on this earth" (368). Razumov's punishment is immediate and irrevocable. Deafened by the double agent Nikita, broken and bruised by the tramway in the pitch darkness, he is a grotesque remnant of truth and revolutionary justice, forever deprived of language.

The creation of political grotesques in *Under Western Eyes* allowed Conrad to go beyond a language which he had told Cunninghame Graham had lost its meaning. The gaps in the grotesque images forced readers to use their imaginations as John Ruskin had insisted they must do and created a perception of political reality so alarming that readers were unprepared for it. And yet, a predictable political reality was portrayed on the pages of the novel, a prophecy of political evolution which would be fulfilled within less than a decade of its publication. All the signs had been pointing to it. Edward Said's comment on what originality meant for Nietzsche in *Le Gai Savoir* is appropriate with regard to Conrad's conception of the political grotesque: it "constituted the artist's rendering of that for which there is as yet no name although its existence stares you in the face" (75).

Marred Imaginations

The most far-reaching and terrible effects of marred civilisations and languages are on the mind. The polyglot Teacher of Languages in *Under Western Eyes,* is the failed representative of the modern imagination in both Eastern and Western

Europe. When he translates Razumov's Russian journal into English for western readers, he insists that he is unable to imagine a transition for Razumov's transfer of location from Russia to Geneva. Morever, he explains that he has no wish to create a work of the imagination:

> But this is not a work of the imagination. I have no talent; my excuse for this undertaking lies not in its art but in its artlessness. Aware of my limitations and strong in the sincerity of my purpose, I would not try (were I able) to invent anything. I push my scruples so far that I would not even invent a transition. (100)

As a grotesque icon of a truncated literary and political imagination, the Teacher of Languages had a parallel in Marlow's audience in *Lord Jim*, who with one possible exception, refused to see beyond the level of a documentary just as The Teacher of Languages refused to write beyond that level.

Conrad was writing *Lord Jim* at the time of his correspondence with Cunninghame Graham about the inherently non-creative function of language. Before beginning the narration of Jim's life in Patusan, Marlow felt obliged to address an eloquent exhortation to his after dinner listeners in their comfortable chairs on the veranda of the Malibar Hotel urging them to hone their imaginations in order to forget their fear of being deluded, to drown out the deafening cycle of political stereotypes and hackneyed phrases in order to apprehend the intensity of life:

> Frankly, it is not my words that I mistrust, but your minds. I could be eloquent were I not afraid that you fellows had starved your imaginations to feed your bodies. I do not mean to be offensive. It is respectable to have no illusions – and safe – and profitable – and dull. Yet, you, too, in your time must have known the intensity of life...as amazing as the glow of sparks struck from a cold stone – and as short lived. Alas. (*LJ* 125)

Conrad had good reason to worry about the fact that his political fiction, which was skeptical of the ultimate goals of the empire of progress, might be misunderstood. *Lord Jim* ends with Marlow's letter to the privileged reader – the only one to whom Marlow entrusts the final details of the story – with its injunction to reconsider Jim's case. The complex narrative structure indicates Conrad's degree of doubt as to the reception of the novel as well as his conviction that imaginations needed to be rekindled. One of *Lord Jim*'s most successful grotesques, with its alternating intonations of certitude and questioning and alternating use of present and past tenses, the leitmotif "one of us" is also to be found in *Under Western Eyes*.

In *Victory*, Axel Heyst believes that the imagination must be silenced because of the illusions and desires it creates. He had been told by his father, seemingly a disciple of Schopenhauer, to eliminate the imagination, which was a cause of action and suffering:

> His son buried the silenced destroyer of systems, of hopes, of beliefs. He observed that the death of that bitter condemner of life did not trouble the flow of life's stream where men and women go

> by as thick as dust, revolving and jostling one another like figures cut out of cork and weighted with lead just sufficiently to keep their proudly upright posture. (175)

The jostling and bobbing cork figures in the stream of life, like some of the humorous grotesques to be found in the margins of medieval manuscripts, are foils to the rigidly unimaginative Heyst: "And now Heyst felt acutely that he was alone on the bank of the stream. In his pride he determined not to enter it" (*V* 175-176). Because he was obedient to the paternal injunction to close his imagination to the outside world, Heyst became a poor player in the game of the empire. He did not have enough imagination to possess the typical European faith in what Edward Said defined as the "trajectory of westering [which] customarily saw the Orient as ceding its historical preeminence to the world spirit moving westward away from Asia and toward Europe" ("Orientalism Reconsidered" 203).

Axel Heyst, the man of no illusions and no desires, lacks vision: "he had not the gift of intuition which is fostered in the days of youth by dreams and visions, exercises of the heart fitting it for the encounters of a world" (*V* 222). The fact that the man of no substance has inherited furniture is the first sign of human aspirations, but one which provokes laughter among his contemporaries: "We had all known Heyst flitting from tree to tree in a wilderness ... It was like a bird owning real property" (31). The figure of the homeless bird unable to settle is not only a caricature of the detached Heyst but of the waning political vision of many aimless wanderers who like Heyst had failed in their enterprise and had remained behind without purpose. Heyst's refusal to use his imagination creates a form of mental paralysis which makes him unable to cope with crisis. He cannot imagine the possibility of being loved, nor the degree of evil of which his enemies are capable – nor even the fact that he may have enemies – all of the elements which set the tragedy of Samburan in motion. Lacking real subtance, a man without roots or passions, Heyst is terrifying dehumanized creature, a modern monster of skepticism and doubt.

When desires, illusions, transcendence and the sublime are erased from fiction, when the human essence becomes a neutral, passionless one, the grotesque becomes essential. For the critic Bernard McElroy, the grotesque genre, if it is to succeed, must remain human: "For Ruskin, the source of the terror of the grotesque is not a specific situation but the human condition itself" (3).

As a child in exile, Conrad had read his father's translation of Victor Hugo's long prose poem *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*. The French master of the grotesque felt that "deformity predominates in life, for all the lines are broken, in the waves, in the leaves, upon the rocks, so that we can only guess what parodies are enacted there" (65).

Like Victor Hugo, Conrad understood that the surprising shapes and shadows of grotesque allow the imagination to confront the chaos of a warped universe and

to perceive what is hidden by it: "The grotesque touches upon the celestial" (Hugo 65) and thus constitutes an opening toward the sublime. The gaps in the grotesque, its deepest fractures and its gravest dislocations, permit a glimpse of the first origins of both life and language, for "there is a remainder of chaos in creation" (Hugo 65). Fully aware of the necessity of creating an "esthétique du mal" Conrad's attitude toward the grotesque was in harmony with that of contemporary European artists who believed that an understanding of the grotesque made bearable the loss of first origins and gave the modern its last possible access to the sublime.

The novel's grotesques are marked by "a blatant openness and new forms of expression" as well as by "a carnavalesque spirit of freedom and twentieth century familiarity," terms which Mikhail Bakhtin used to the describe spirit of carnival in modern literature.[1]

In his attempt cross the barriers of skepticism and to open the minds of his readers to the possibility of transcendence beyond the documentary, Conrad conceived a triumph of the grotesque imagination in *Victory* which has long been misunderstood and is, sadly enough, often considered to be the failure of his own imagination. A trio of roaming bandits, each one a dark parody of a prevailing stereotype – one pretends to be a dandy after the manner of Oscar Wilde, the second to be a gentleman's gentleman, while the third does not have to pretend to be a degenerate noble savage – makes its way across the East, discrediting the last remnants of the gospel of progress as well as the ideal of the responsible gentleman colonist. Their arrival announces a political tragedy, the deformation of a gentlemanly code which until then had been the cornerstone of colonial empires: "A gentleman ain't accountable to nobody, any more than a tramp on the roads. He ain't got to keep time" (*V* 150-151). The popular imagination had effectively replaced the old ideal of responsibility with one of unlimited leisure – the epoch of westering had ended, trampled in the dust of uncertain grammar.

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[1] Bakhtin believed that carnavalesque figures were also the harbingers of tragedy because they were intimately associated with the wish for both death and life: "...that same atmosphere elicits a wish for death and the wish for life... the ancient ambivalence of the death wish which also sounds like a wish for renewal and rebirth: die and live again" (244-249).

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SPECTRAL NATIONALISM IN CONRAD'S LAST NOVELS

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I

No descriptive phenomenology of Europe would be complete without an account of its regional antagonisms and national rivalries. Indeed, one might argue that these conflicts have shaped and defined the essence of Europe just as significantly as the unifying (or quasi-unifying) forces of Greek philosophy, Roman imperialism, Christianity, the Enlightenment, or indeed any ideology which might be claimed to have created or, if you prefer, invented the West. There are plenty of national hatreds to choose from, and the antagonism of the French and the English is surely as resilient as any. I thought it might be an appropriate way of marking the 100th anniversary of the *entente cordiale* to celebrate this *amour violent*, this historical rivalry so intense that it comfortably survives being on the same side in two world wars – and to see how this rivalry is reflected in the work of the Polish writer who became an English novelist with a "French face."[1]

The title I originally submitted to this conference was " '*Moi j'aime les Anglais*': English-French antagonism in *The Rover* and *Suspense*." The quotation is, of course, taken from the song Peyrol sings as he goes out to sacrifice his life in combat against the English:

> *Quoique leur chapeaux sont biens laid*
> *God-dam! Moi, j'aime les Anglais*
> *Ils ont un si bon caractère!* (*Rov* 239)
>
> (Although their hats are very ugly,
> God-damn! I like the English
> They have such a good character!)

[1] Cf. Yves Hervouet, *The French Face of Joseph Conrad* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990).

It was chosen to capture the irony, reluctant admiration and strange fellowship which reveals itself in the conflict between these two European nations:[2] my original project was simply to analyse Conrad's presentation of this conflict and of the national stereotypes which arise therein, and to argue that in Conrad's last novels an opposition of English steadiness and French slipperiness is both asserted and, to an extent, subverted. My new title is the result of the wish to carry the argument one stage further by exploring the relations between what I would call Conrad's problematic, indeed aporetic, presentation of European national identities and the *spectral* atmosphere of these farewell novels.

II

The Rover and *Suspense* are both novels of the Napoleonic period, so one's initial expectations might well be for tales along the lines of Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey-Maturin novels, in which English-French antagonism generally takes its most basic form of deadly emnity. However, even on the level of plot, this is far from being the case: in both novels personal and political motivations lead to more complex entanglements. In both novels French royalists support and are supported by the English. In *Suspense*, the Latham family shelters and forms close personal ties with the d'Armand refugees, and Cosmo is, it appears, drawn by chance into the Napoleonic cause. In *The Rover*, Peyrol finds himself drawn to protect an English former Brother of the Coast against a French "wearer of epaulettes" (134) and identifies with the seamanship of the English Captain Vincent (266), who, in his turn, will show his admiration for his adversary by letting the tartane go down with its colours flying, and indeed providing the French flag for this purpose (280). Yet all this chivalry, humanism and sheer confusion does not prevent national stereotypes from being very much with us, both in the comments of characters and in a less straightforward fashion in Conrad's narrative voice and choice of images.

Englishness, at least the kind of Englishness that is found abroad in Europe,[3] is above all associated with independence, autonomy, resistance, non-conformity and steadiness of purpose. On his first meeting with the mysterious figure in the tasselled cap, Cosmo, the son of a man of "unconventional individuality" (*Sus* 17), is himself characterised by Attilio as someone behaving as "Nobody but an Englishman would behave" (*Sus* 3), as the member of an "eccentric people" (*Sus* 3) and a "lordly nation" (*Sus* 5). Strangely enough, it is his very Englishness which makes

[2] One might even argue that the language is a kind of *franglais*, given the insertion of English words and the anglicised grammar of '*sont*' rather than '*soient*'.

[3] Dr. Cairney's paper in this volume develops this point through a discussion of the "Byronic" wanderer of Europe.

Cosmo seem trustworthy to Attilio, who says: " 'to give the devil his due, men of your nation don't consort with spies or love tyranny either' " (*Sus* 11). This seems to be the same view of the Englishman which Wordsworth, in *The Prelude*, claims to have found in revolutionary France,[4] and it is an image which persists throughout the tale.

Towards the end of the narrative as we have it, the Italian *sbirri* who capture Cosmo comment: "Look at his hat. That's an Englishman." (This is presumably one of the really ugly hats mentioned in Peyrol's song, and there is, of course, a great deal of circumstantial irony in the fact that they look *at* the hat rather than *under* it, where they would have found secret documents concealed.) They then continue: "So much the worse. They are very troublesome. Authority is nothing to them ... An Inglese ... Those foreigners have plenty of money and are impatient of restraint" (*Sus* 235).

Indeed, both Cosmo and Dr Martel, English wanderers who know their way around, have a talent for avoiding restraint, a *savoir faire* which allows them to extricate themselves from threats not only to their lives, but to their freedom or honour;[5] and a talent for acquiring local knowledge without actually integrating. Cosmo has, we are told, "an inborn faculty of orientation in strange surroundings" (*Sus* 17); Martel describes himself as "an old Italian myself. Not that I love them, but I have acquired many of their tastes" (*Sus* 63). However, these free-wheeling capacities also seem to depend on a secure and solid background, on a sense of fixedness, whether it be Martel's faith in his medical skill and excellent constitution – he glories that he survived poisoning by a sausage which would certainly have finished off Napoleon! (*Sus* 179) – or Cosmo's position as an heir of the landed gentry. The Countess de Montevesso says to Cosmo: "You were a young Latham, as rooted in your native soil as the old trees in your park" (*Sus* 130).

On the other hand, to be French is to stand on slippery ground, like that on the cliffs of Escampobar (*Rov* 67); it is to be the hapless victim of contingency. Sir Charles says of Adèle's marriage: "Austerlitz has done it."[6] As he makes this observation, which is cryptic to his own children, he is reflecting that

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[4] Wordsworth claims that he and his companions on his Continental walking tour of 1790 "bore a name/Honoured in France, the name of Englishmen,/And hospitably did they give us Hail/As their forerunners in a glorious course" (Book VI, ll. 409-412, Gill, 460) and that even French royalists tolerated him as "An Englishman,/Born in a Land, the name of which appeared/To license some unruliness of mind" (Book IX, ll. 191-3, Gill 513).

[5] This is, of course, presuming that we accept Martel's account of himself; anyone disposed to doubt Stein's tales might doubt Martel's account of an attempted ambush, which is very close to Stein's.

[6] Prof. Lothe's paper in this volume convinces me that Sebold must have had this quote in mind!

> This was the disadvantage of having been born French or indeed belonging to any other nation of the continent. There were forces there that pushed people to rash or unseemly actions; actions that seemed dictated by despair and therefore wore an immoral aspect. (*Sus* 36)

This is also true of the "revolutionary" characters in *The Rover*, Scevola and Arlette. They differ not only from the English, but from the Russian revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries of *Under Western Eyes*, in having much less conscious control over their actions. It seems to me that Conrad's Russian characters have blood on their *hands* in the style of Shakespearean tragedy. Whether they resemble Brutus, Macbeth or Iago, that is, idealist, tortured victim of ambition or gleefully self-conscious villain (I am thinking of Haldin, Razumov and Nikita respectively), their crimes are the results of considered decisions, however base some of the impulses these rationalise. The French characters, however, have blood on their *feet*, they have *slipped* into violence. Arlette's "little feet had run ankle-deep through the terrors of death" (*Rov* 260) and she has, in Catherine's words, "death in the folds of her skirts and blood about her feet" (*Rov* 225). Guilty in an unspecified fashion, victim of contingency and of maenad frenzy, she is as if stained by a menstrual accident rather than a planned and executed crime. Scevola, though an ideologue and more deliberately guilty than Arlette, is so obviously controlled by his personal lusts and irrational resentments that his political life is no more than the analogue of his blundering around and slipping over with the pitchfork under the "motive force of a fixed idea" (*Rov* 193). Slipping over, literally and metaphorically, is something the French do: even the stately Catherine ruined her life because, in Peyrol's words, she let herself be "struck all of a heap" and was too hard on herself afterwards (*Rov* 236).

The French are also slippery in the sense of being slippery customers, and this manifests itself through the carefully executed deceptions of Peyrol and the low cunning of Scevola. Even as Lord Nelson concedes the existence of French courage and resolve, he confesses that what he fears most is the possibility of "that Toulon fleet" giving him "the slip" (*Rov* 275). However, slipperiness and steadiness are not simply opposites in the novels; they are always about to pass into each other, and the necessity of keeping steady arises out of the need to resist slippery conditions. One naturalistic detail which can be given symbolic significance is that Scevola, despite his abject cowardice on the tartane's final voyage, reveals himself to have "good sea-legs" (*Rov* 253). Perhaps he acquired this steadiness from running through the slipperiness of blood.

In the same way, the opposition of French slipperiness and English steadiness is disturbed by characters being shown to have some qualities contrary to national stereotype. For example, there is a very real sense in which the supposedly rooted Cosmo is not only a wanderer, but a drifter. We are told: "He had never made any real friends, he had nothing to do; and he did not seem to know what to think of

anything in the world" (*Sus* 175-6). This lack of relations is something he shares with Lieutenant Réal (*Rov* 209), someone who had seemed "a slippery customer" to Peyrol, but who "on the contrary, ... looked rather immovably established" when Peyrol wishes to get rid of him (104). The world of *The Rover* is one where what seemed steady turns out to be slippery, and what seemed slippery may be steady after all. Peyrol says of the English:

> ...Don't you know what an Englishman is? One day easy and casual, the next day ready to pounce on you like a tiger. Hard in the morning, careless in the afternoon, and only reliable in a fight, whether with or against you, but for the rest perfectly fantastic. You might think a little touched in the head, and there again it would not do to trust to that notion either. (110)

It is fitting that in the same paradoxical fashion, the real English razor-blade with which Peyrol shaves himself, an image of English firmness, symbol of his bond with and antagonism towards the English from whom it was looted, is both described as "unwearable" (38) and by the end of the novel, as "worn out" (233).

There are two moments in *The Rover* in which the dialectic between steadiness and slipperiness is especially foregrounded, both moments which are, albeit in very different ways, collisions of the French and the English. The first and most obvious is the climax of the novel, the death of Peyrol at the moment of the near collision between the English corvette *Amelia* and the tartane. This is a moment of great instability:

> His plaything was knocking about terribly under him, with her tiller flying madly to and fro just clear of his head, and solid lumps of water coming on board over his prostrate body ... Peyrol, sinking back on the deck in another heavy lurch of his craft, saw for an instant the whole of the English corvette swing up into the clouds as if she meant to fling herself upon his breast. (269)

Yet within this upheaval, there is "a smooth interval, a silence of the waters," during which Peyrol, who had previously given up hope of hearing any human voice again, dies smilingly with the sound of the familiar English word "Steady!" ringing in his ears (*Rov* 269).

The second moment is the lovers' meeting of the previous night between Arlette and Réal, in which "they stood like a pair of enchanted lovers bewitched into immobility"(*Sus* 223). The English-French meeting here, I contend, takes place on the level of intertextuality. Given the novel's epigraph from Spenser, it is not fanciful to suggest that Conrad possibly had in mind the cancelled ending to Book III of *The Faerie Queene*, in which the reunited lovers Scudamour and Amoret, characters with quasi-French names wandering through an English national epic, are as if turned to stone in the ecstasy of reunion.[7]

[7] "No word they spake, nor earthly thing they felt,/But like two senceles stocks in long embracement dwelt" (*The Faerie Queene*, Book III, 1590 version, Canto XII, 45, ll. 8-9; Roche, 562).

Amoret's story is, of course, also Arlette's – we can say both have been liberated from imprisonment by vile enchanters to whom they refused to yield the pleasure of their bodies.[8] But the moment in Spenser also gives extra resonance to that in Conrad because of the way it brings together extreme steadiness and slipperiness: the immobility of the frozen lovers is cancelled by a revised version in which Scudamour slips by and misses Amoret,[9] leaving their union perpetually deferred since, sadly, Spenser never lived to finish his epic. In the same way, the union of Arlette and Réal is compromised by Réal's knowledge that he is to slip away on the morrow. When Arlette laughs, thinking of "all the days to come," stability passes into slipperiness: "Réal faltered, like a man stabbed to the heart,[10] holding the door half open. And he was glad to have something to hold on to" (*Rov* 223). Arlette then "slipped out with a rustle of her silk skirt" (*Rov* 224).

In a short while, this slipperiness passes into the spectral, and also into an uncanny steadiness: Réal finds at the foot of his bed "a figure in dark garments with a dark shawl over its head, with a fleshless predatory face and dark hollows for its eyes, silent, expectant, implacable. ... 'Is this death?' he asked himself, staring at it terrified. It resembled Catherine ... He would not look at that thing, whatever it was, spectre or old woman ..." (*Rov* 225).

III

This movement from slipperiness to spectrality is very characteristic of *The Rover*, where the figure of Arlette in particular slips in and out as a ghostly presence, but I think it can also be seen as an attribute of Conrad's writing in general: an attribute which is also steady and implacable even as it focuses on the slippery and elusive. For an author who emphatically declared his disbelief in supernatural ghosts, (Author's Note to *SL*, xxxvii-xl) Conrad is excessively attached to the language of ghostliness, an attachment which brings to mind the "concepts" of "hauntology" and "spectrographic tone" made fashionable by Derrida. There is a sense, however, in which Conrad's spectrography is more penetrating than that of Derrida, at least that of Derrida in his late period. Derrida in *Specters of Marx* asserts that a ghost or *revenant* should be the ghost of a "dead human" (Derrida) or at least

[8] Cf. Spenser's 'A Letter of the Authors', Roche, 17-18. Scevola's incompetence with the pitchfork is also paralleled by Busirane's incompetent attempt to stab Britomart (*The Faerie Queene*, Book III, Canto XII, stanzas 32-34; Roche, 558).

[9] *The Faerie Queene*, Book III, 1596 version, Canto XII, stanzas 44-45; Roche, 561.

[10] Possibly another reference to Spenser's Scudamour/Amoret episode, where it is, however, Amoret's heart which is transfixed by Busirane. (*The Faerie Queene*, Book III, Canto XII, stanzas 21, 31; Roche, 555, 557).

of an animal, a *who* not a *what*, a persona not a brute empirical fact.[11] Conrad, however, is more generous in the scope of his spectrography. He gives us not only the shade of Flaubert or the ghost of a blonde, but the ghosts of abstract and material things. Jim is haunted by the "ghost of a fact"(*LJ* 142) as well as by "all the extravagant ghosts and austere shades that were the disastrous familiars of his youth" (*LJ* 113). The lack of a standard of conduct is, in *Lord Jim*, a ghost which should be laid, Stein's corpses of butterflies are ghostly, and the *Patna* is sunk by the ghost of a boat, "a kind of maritime ghoul on the prowl to kill ships in the dark" (*LJ* 115).

The idea of the ghost-boat is taken up again at the beginning of *Suspense*, in a passage which reads like a meditation on Derrida's definition of a ghost as a "dead human." Here Cosmo remarks that the boat which collected the secret message from Attilio "might have been the ghost of a boat," but adds: "Ghosts are of no account. Could there be anything more futile than the ghost of a boat?" To this the old man replies:

> You are one of the strong-minded, signore. Ghosts are the concern of the ignorant – yet, who knows? But it does sound funny to talk of the ghost of a boat, a thing of brute matter. For wouldn't a ghost be a thing of spirit, a man's soul itself made restless by grief or love, or remorse, or anger? Such are the stories that one hears. (*Sus* 14)

For Conrad it is a short step from the concept of the ship to the concept of the nation. Though at the beginning of *Heart of Darkness*, the seamen's country is said to be the *sea* and his ship his *home* (*HD* 8), the ties of allegiance and morality which bind shipmates to one another can be taken as a model for the ties which bind fellow-countrymen. Therefore, we should not be too surprised if, alongside spectral ships, Conrad confronts us with spectral nationalism. Indeed, in *Lord Jim*, the call of nationality or race has already been presented as spectral. Jewel wonders what it is that makes white men leave their lovers, as her father abandoned her mother, and comes close to imagining it as something ghostly suspended between life and death, presence and absence:

> You all remember something. You all go back to it. What is it? You tell me! What is this thing? Is it alive? – is it dead? I hate it. It is cruel. Has it got a face and a voice – this calamity? Will he see it – will he hear it? In his sleep perhaps when he cannot see me – and then arise and go. ...Will it be a sign – a call ... (*LJ* 229)

Marlow's comment makes explicit the equation of the call of nationality with the spectral:

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[11] This distinguishes the spectre from the earlier "concept" of the trace or the supplement, and it is this assertion which Leonard Lawlor in his 2002 book *Derrida and Husserl* sees as marking the "turn" in Derrida's work.

> Thus a poor mortal seduced by the charm of an apparition might have tried to wring from another ghost the tremendous secret of the claim the other world holds over a disembodied soul astray among the passions of this earth. (230)

And he wonders: "How do you shoot a spectre through the heart, slash off its spectral head, take it by its spectral throat?" (230).

In Conrad's last novels we can say that this spectral nationalism returns with a vengeance, as an unlaid ghost. Nationalist sentiment is repeatedly associated with the ghostly. The opening scene of *Suspense* moves from a description of mysterious national ensigns shrouded in the dusk to raise the possibility, however humorously touched upon, that Atillio has, like Byron's Manfred, gone to the top of a tower for the purpose of conjuring the spirits of the dead. At the beginning of *The Rover*, Arlette, during her first encounter with Peyrol, not only slips in and out like a ghost herself, but looks about the room as though Peyrol "had come in attended by a mob of Shades" before abruptly asking him "Are you a patriot?" (*Sus* 21).

Peyrol is, of course, a patriot in his own fashion, not in the fashion of Scevola and the *sans culottes*. But it is not only the patriotism of the drinker of blood which carries shades in its train. A note to the World's Classics edition of *The Rover* points out that Peyrol first appears in the colours of the tricolour, that is, as a national hero in the making (*Rov* 288). It does not, however, mention that, along with his red, white and blue, Peyrol is wearing a *black* hat. It is as if the colour of death, absence and mourning has quietly taken up its place alongside the insignia of the patriot.

There is more to this than the truism that nationalism frequently leads to war and death; it is also the case that Peyrol's is a spectral nationalism which, like a ghost, is both steady and slippery at the same time; it has the uncanny persistence of an unlaid ghost, but it does not know quite where it comes from or where it is going. To return to Derrida: in Derridean spectrality the spectre is a *revenant*, a returnee. But as Nicholas Royle points out, *chez* Derrida it is never possible to distinguish between the *revenant* and the *arrivant* – the *arrivant*, as presented in *Aporias* (34-5), being etymologically the figure who *comes to shore* as in the old French *a-river* – and also the herald of a future which can only be monstrous because unknown, also the figure which makes possible all things to which we would reduce it, including all forms of belonging, *including nationalisms* (Royle 111).

The endings of Conrad's last novels can be read in terms of this uncanny conflation of *revenant* and *arrivant*. Both Cosmo and the rover are in different ways *revenants*. Cosmo, although on his first trip to Italy, is a spectral returnee in the sense that he is following in the footsteps of his father, retracing his Italian journey and falling in love with the daughter of the woman he loved. The rover, on the other hand, is returning in his own person, but returning to a homeland he scarcely knows and a fatherland in which he was fatherless – his case is even more extreme than that of Razumov in that he does not even know his father's name. Both are

also *arrivants*, who reach the shore only to leave it again, at a sign from history, to play a role in bringing the future into being: like the future they themselves never arrive – Peyrol dies at sea, as does the old oarsman in *Suspense* – Cosmo never returns because Conrad's own death leaves the text unfinished.

But what are the consequences of their answering this call? Marlow remarked, in an attempt to cut spectrality down to size, that the world Jewel fears will call Jim back is actually too big to miss him. Likewise, the world of the Napoleonic wars can swallow up acts of individual heroism, rendering them futile. Dr Martel remarks in *Suspense*: "Yes, no end of history ... And yet, tell me, what does it all amount to?" (62). We may ask with Southey's little Peterkin, what good came of it at last? Or with Conrad's Karain: "What for?" (*Selected Short Stories* 60). Napoleon is going to be defeated and exiled to St Helena for all the sacrifice of the old oarsmen of *Suspense*; Peyrol's final act of heroism will not alter the outcome of Trafalgar.

Yet futility does not lay spectrality. The *arrivant/revenant* figures continue to exercise their ghostly dominion over the last pages of the final novels. In doing so, they combine the characteristics of Frenchness and Englishness in that they are both steady and slippery at the moment of ultimate commitment: steady in their tenacity of purpose; slippery in terms of the elusive significance of their acts.

Significance is elusive both in terms of the consequences of action and its original source and motivation. *Suspense* ends with the *spectral consequentialism* of the *arrivant* in the person of "the old man whose last bit of work was to steer a boat, and strange to think perhaps it had been done for Italy" (*Sus* 274). The spectrographic tone might indeed be defined as the voice of the 'strange-to-think-perhaps' – a voice which also sounds at the end of *The Rover*, though what is here in question is the *spectral origin* of the *revenant* Peyrol. Réal says, in answer to his wife's enquiry, "What sort of man was he really, Eugène?", that "the only certain thing we can say of him was that he was not a bad Frenchman," and the case is closed with the cripple's statement, more aporetic than ironic: "Everything's in that" (*Rov* 286).

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THE IDEA OF EUROPE IN "KARAIN" AND *LORD JIM*

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In *The Invention of the West Joseph Conrad and the Double Mapping of Europe and Empire*, Christopher GoGwilt explores how Conrad's work registers the emergence of a technological, economic, political force, the West, in response to the crisis of modernity. Curiously enough, GoGwilt notes, this new entity eludes representation on the map and seems "to actively disavow the marks of race, nation, class and gender on which it is constructed" (105). "Disavow" is not an accidental word here since this mode of discourse which consists in simultaneously asserting and denying a reality, is at the very basis of fiction, more particularly of what Freud has called the "family romance": the ego invents a pleasant image of the self in order to patch up the wounds and contradictions of experience. For example Jim's Patusan offers itself as the projection screen for an assertion which would read like "I know that I am not a Lord, but all the same..." Or, on a collective level: "We know that Western culture is founded on class, gender and racial differences, but let's tell ourselves a story in which it is not..."

The view I would like to promote here is that Conrad's West as a transitory idea toward a possibly new idea of Europe is more complex than a simple compensation formation making up for the incoherence of Europe's cultural identity" (GoGwilt 1). If the plot and imagery of his novels do record the emergence of the West, they also register the cost to be paid: the worldwide shattering of cultural traditions which took place at the turn of the Twentieth Century, the dismantling of symbolic codes both East and West, under the pressure of scientific discourse progressing arm in arm with economic imperatives. The rise of this uneasy global perspective is clearly stated by the dramatised narrator-gunrunner in "Karain": "We

tried to enlighten him but our attempts to make clear the irresistible nature of the forces which he desired to arrest failed to discourage his eagerness to strike a blow for his own primitive ideas" (*TU 52*).

The constant effort of the modern writer will be less to enlighten than to find a style able to communicate – or perhaps more appropriately to transfer – the effect generated by these forces, for a public of readers situated, in Conrad's own words, "beyond the stage of fairy tales, realistic, romantic or even epic" ("John Galsworthy" 73).

The Old Order had to Die

When dealing with the French Revolution, Conrad speaks of the fate of ideas once they have lost the status of ideal, i.e; virtual values: "... the idea was elevated: but it is the bitter fate of any idea to lose its royal form and power, to lose its 'virtue' the moment it descends from its solitary throne to work its will among the people ..." ("Autocracy and War" *NLL* 73).

The "degradation of the ideas of freedom and justice" went on with Napoleon in whom Conrad sees a vulture preying upon the body politic of Europe (*NLL* 73), which actually was already quite weak at the end of the Eighteenth century: the "lurid blaze" of the French Revolution only exposed its "insufficiency ... the inferiority of minds, of military and administrative systems" (*NLL* 73).

Looking back from the standpoint of the Twenty-First Century, it actually seems that it has been the fate of the idea of Europe to be systematically reshaped by political bombs: the French revolution, the break up of Tsarist Russia, the splitting apart of the Habsburg House, the fall of the Soviet empire. In other words, Europe is a Protean idea which tries to respond to the highly symbolic question of borderlines which itself inevitably arouses political appetites and fears as the history of Poland amply shows – and more crucially in the Ukraine situated on the marches of Empire and whose name contains *kraina*, the land. It may not be accidental if the name Karain is an anagram of *kraina*, especially in a story subtitled "a memory."

For Conrad the degradation of the idea(l) was clearly the result of the collusion of material interests with science and warfare: War has "harnessed science to its gun carriages ... enriched a few respectable manufacturers" (*NLL* 90) and "*Il n'y a plus d'Europe* – there is only an armed and trading continent, the home of slowly maturing economical contests for life and death and of loudly proclaimed worldwide ambitions" (*NLL* 92).

This armed and trading continent is the West and it may not be irrelevant here to recall the unconscious associations of the word *occident*, more ancient than the imagining of a supranational identity: *occidere* means both to fall and to kill, as if the

two were inextricably bound up in the "epic" drive to conquer, to own and to know.

Be that as it may, the new idea of Europe for Conrad will have to be built "on less perishable foundations than those of material interests," it will be "a concord of Europe": the Concord of this Discord, a true symbolic fiction aiming toward a network of institutions: "the solidarity of Europeanism ... must be the next step towards the advent of Concord and Justice" (*NLL* 8). Solidarity, justice are two overdetermined words which any Conradian will relate to the declaration of artistic independence in the preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. For Conrad the artist the construction of the West will less be a matter of disavowal than of poetic justice being rendered to the modern affect whose name is fear: in words which are strikingly close to the preface, the white narrator of "Karain" evokes the eponymous character's power "to awaken in the beholders wonder, pain, pity, and a fearful near sense of things invisible, of things dark and mute, that surround the loneliness of mankind" (*TU* 58). In this respect Karain is clearly Jim's – and Kurtz's – prototype.

Uncanny Fathers

Slavoj Zizek has signalled the emergence in Conrad's fiction of the figure of the Father of Enjoyment:

> ... the obscene, uncanny, shadowy double of the Name of the Father...a kind of "master of enjoyment," a paternal figure which comes closest to the impossible representation of what Kant called "radical evil," evilness qua ethical attitude, qua pure spirituality. This father is distinguished by a series of features: he is all powerful and cruel to the utmost, an absolute Master for whom there are no limits; yet, simultaneously, he possesses an insight into the very kernel of our (subject's) being, our desire has no secret for him, he knows we are here to kill him and is resigned to it ... a knowledge of enjoyment, i.e., the knowledge which is by definition excluded from the Law in its universal-neutral guise: it pertains to the very status of the Law that it is "blind" to this knowledge. (158-59)

One thinks of Verloc in *The Secret Agent*, of the old captain wishing death to the whole crew in *The Shadow-Line*, and of course of Gentleman Brown. The apparition of such a figure is surely connected to the symptomatic fact that *Lord Jim* refuses to connect the title Lord with an English patronymic: the Name of the Father remains unpronounceable in this novel.

In *Lord Jim*, "who once gives way to temptation, in the very instant hazards his total depravity and everlasting ruin" (203) and the least that can be said is that the father's curse comes true: "... the work of his own hands had fallen in ruin upon his head"(246). A curse indeed hangs on Jim's head throughout, whether it comes from the Little England of his father's parsonage which leaves no chance to him who has betrayed once, or from the other father figure framing his pitiful epic:

Stein, whose extended hand and piercing eyes aimed at Marlow's breast (*LJ* 129) clearly anticipate the ferocious glitter in the eyes of Doramin shooting through Jim's chest. The German trader turned entomologist, the "specialist" in abstract philosophy and matters of the romantic imagination, offers the ambivalent "cure" which Marlow wants for his protégé. And the "impalpable poesy" of the spectral scene at his commercial House (129) suggests that beyond the romantic aura, also lies a figure of Welt-Politik which "picks up coins behind the severe and disdainful figure of science whose giant strides have widened for us the horizon of the universe by some few inches" (*NLL* 88).

Which leads us to one of the fundamental questions raised by *Lord Jim:* what is the difference between an idea(l) and commercial industrialism? An idea(l) is the abstract object of desire whose possession/enjoyment is rendered inaccessible by some symbolic network. The classic example is courtly love – a socially symbolic code born from a literary genre – which erects a barrier of restraint between the lover and the inaccessible lady-thing. In short, the ideal generates a code to "protect" the unattainable thing. If we translate this in terms of modern theory, and of subject/object relations mediated by language, the Name of the Father is the symbolic structure which places a bar on enjoyment (desire for or from a mother figure) and throws the subject into the mesh of human intercourse. This structural pattern can easily be transposed into the field of political fathers and economic mothers, which inextricably links up psychoanalysis to politics. It is quite striking that the words used by Prince Adam Czartoryski, recorded in Z. Najder's essay on the idea of Europe, exactly fit in this paradigm: "If we wish to progress, we must have an object we have not yet attained. And in order to be always in progress we must be capable of conceiving an object which will never be attained" (M. Kukiel, *Czartoryski and the European Community: 1770-1861*, qtd in "Conrad's Europe" 225).

Unlike the order of ideas and symbolic codes, science and trade, animated by the "passion of the Real,"[1] aim at reducing the distance, at tearing materials from the substance of the thing itself for the sake of unmediated (visual) enjoyment: ivory tusks, silver, butterflies and beetles in show cases painted in gold letters – the most accomplished example being Kurtz and the ivory, a perfect erstatz of the Lacanian "objet a":

> We filled the steam-boat with it, and had to pile a lot on the deck. Thus he could see and enjoy as long as he could see, because the appreciation of this favour had remained with him to the last. You should have heard him say, "My ivory." Oh, yes, I heard him. "My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my —" everything belonged to him. (*HD* 227)

The difference between the ideal and trade, then, corresponds with the two logics entailed by the two meanings of economy: one which is regulated by symbolic

[1] S. Zizek's recent *Welcome to the Desert of the Real.* London: Verso, 2002.

law and privileges restraint/containment for the sake of preserving *desire*, and the other privileging full *enjoyment*/possession and consumption. Kurtz's embrace with the maternal body of the wilderness clearly points to the prominence of an oral fantasy whose correlate is the growing inconsistency of the Symbolic Other. The old codes are still there, but their value of mere semblance is crudely exposed by the dialectical contradiction between the philanthropic rhetoric of Kurtz's report and the footnote inviting to general extermination: one may note in passing that "Exterminate all the brutes" may equally involve Kurtz and his likes.

In *Lord Jim* the underlying patriarchal assumptions are clearly displaced by the emergence of the new logic whereby the object of trade overthrows the ideal, with anxiety as a result. The text subtly plays on the resonances of the word *sovereign* – the ideal values related to monarchy, and the coin-object bearing the monarch's effigy – to call into question the value of the code as fetish: Jim, the figure incarnating "the doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct" (*LJ* 35) looks like "a genuine new sovereign" (32) just as Kurtz has become an ivory ball. As rightly noted by GoGwilt, the hierarchy of the British merchant sailing ship is already "a mirage" on the *Patna* (93), before its good name is more explicitly put on trial through two figures: the French lieutenant and Brierly who seems to consider himself superior to anyone, had they been "Emperor of East and West" (*LJ* 38).

But what has Jim's *faux-pas* revealed that was unbearable to Brierly? That the code is pure semblance, the rag of a pretty fiction thrown on the new economic force. Here we simply need to follow the logic of the signifier: if Brierly leaps at his own chosen *spot* in the sea (39) it may well be to cover the blot which has appeared in the social mirror at the very place where the fetish has fallen. This place is exactly situated where the real bites into the fabric of the symbolic, where the name "decency" turns out to be simple trading reason. It is no accident either if the French Lieutenant, entitled by his origin and profession to pronounce on matters of the code, is associated with one of Marlow's moments of vision (87), a true spot of time in which Marlow glimpses "the blight of futility that lies in wait for men's speeches" (91), the shabbiness behind the man of honour.

To this should be immediately added, however, that it is precisely "the soft spot, the place of decay" (12) in Jim which attracts Marlow at the trial; and if we want to grasp more clearly why the "fixed standard" becomes a "shadowy ideal" we need to turn to the gallery of feminine figures which rule Patusan.

Empresses of Enjoyment

Like Karain's "spot of land," Patusan is the stage of a parodic ritual of economic affiliation: it is in the name of Queen Victoria's commercial interests that Stein is

introduced as the "spiritual son" of an old Scotsman "with a patriarchal white beard" (124) to another strong-willed female ruler, the Wajo Queen.

These two feminine figures also loom in the background of "Karain," which ends on another strange symbolic ritual. One of the white gunrunners, Hollis, looks for "a charm, a cure" to soothe Karain's anxiety (*TU* 79) – just like Marlow for Jim. In his box of personal things he finds a gilt sovereign, one of those innumerable *bric-à-brac* produced by the British Empire to celebrate Victoria's jubilee. In order to give a more personal turn to his rather grotesque present he inserts the coin in a piece of leather: "I'll give him something that I shall really miss … I shall make him a thing like those Italian peasants wear, you know" (84). He then passes it around Karain's neck who is thus "named" a citizen of the Empire of Trinkets. If it is true that Hollis has "invented the West" here (GoGwilt 60), we must not overlook the caustic treatment of the scene which undergoes a strange visual and virtual distortion: it is as if Victoria's effigy were a hologram changing shape according to the angle of vision.

Why is the cure effective for Karain? Not for the commercial value of the coin but because the image of the Great Queen calls up the memory of another figure, the idealized woman of his dreams who spoke "in the language of [his] people in the silence of foreign countries" (69). The superposition of the two images therefore suggests that the lost mother has been replaced by a globalized imperative to enjoy issued from a more prosaic economic mother and her shower of trivial objects. If for Karain the white man's fetish operates as a saving fiction against the anxiety of being thrown in global space, the invention of the West is exposed for what it is, a cheap compensation formation, a disguise staged by Her Majesty's economic ambassadors. After all, the British sailor is but another agent of commercial industrialism, just like Jim in Patusan.

The inquiry on the *Patna* affair actually serves as the progressive revelation of the truth about the whole shipping business. In terms of economy (which concerns the regulation of flows) and material interests, the mass of pilgrims has been treated just like the abandoned bark of pitch-pine, another cargo of raw material in which the *Patna* is supposed to have collided. Conrad's writing, however, is careful to give a different treatment to that crowd. We are told that it is "at the call of an idea" that the pilgrims left their remote countries:

> … passing through suffering, meeting strange sights, beset by strange fears, upheld by one desire … they had left their forests, their clearings, the protection of their rulers, their prosperity, their poverty, the surroundings of their youth and the graves of their fathers. (*LJ* 14)

And the novel's gaze does not hesitate to dive into the human cargo, to stop for a close-up isolating a father and son figure, or a throat "bared and stretched, as if offering itself to a knife" (*LJ* 16) – as if indeed about to be sacrificed.

The shadow of sacrifice inevitably calls up the horror of Jewel's mother's story: a story of women's experience, which, however minimally treated by the novel, reveals the orientation of Jim's desire obeying the call of another idea, the appeal of his "Eastern bride": the idea of death which as Wallace Steven says, is "the mother of beauty" (355). The grave of Jewel's mother dominates the whole scenery of Patusan and it is her memory, we are told, that Jim has espoused (165): a shadow, not an effigy on a gilt coin.

The Poetical Unconscious

It is now time to return to another most ambivalent scene in "Karain," where a woman's desire is at stake. After wandering for two years in the company of Pata Matara who wants to murder his sister – she has betrayed the tribal code of honour by eloping with a Dutch trader – the final act has come. Karain is supposed to shoot the Dutchman but instead he kills his brother in arms, Pata Matara: why should Conrad suddenly subvert the revenge plot? I would suggest that this is because Karain's *acte manqué* both betrays and tells the truth about an unconscious preference for the feminine figure of his dreams over the tribal code of honour. Incarnated by Pata Matara (a name which unmistakably bears resonances of *Pater* and *Mater)*, the code demanded no less than the death of the young woman who had dared defy the customs of her community.

In other words, even though by his very gesture he loses the object of his dreams, Karain has saved the young woman from what is called a crime of honour quite common in patriarchal cultures. This strange fable, then, clearly concerns the problem of birth into an alien world cut off from cultural ties. Like Saint Julien l'Hospitalier, his Flaubertian cousin who gave himself up to the enjoyment of killing first the beasts of creation and then his own father and mother, Karain has sacrificed culture and genealogy on the altar of modernity.[2] He leaves behind the mythic past even though by stepping on the white gunrunner's ship he opts for another kind of protection, this time economic. In other words: Karain bears on his shoulders the unrest and burden of modernity, correlative of women's liberation from traditional culture and the opening of a new political and poetical space.

If we now look at *Lord Jim*, it appears that similar forces are at stake. The story of Jewel's mother surely prefigures Jewel's own reduction from a living woman to a living dead in Stein's house. The young woman's resistance to the mourning of Jim points to one thing: she knows only too well that she has been sacrificed on the altar of his family romance with the Eastern bride, that the espousal of the

[2] See in this respect J.Paccaud-Huguet, "Gaze, voice and the will to style in 'Karain'." *L'Époque Conradienne* no.29 (2003): 11-27.

mother's memory means the return to the womb and the tomb. Can we seriously believe in the "strange uneasy romance" (*LJ* 169) of Jim with his Jewel/gem when we read that the story of the enormous emerald/gem is contemporary with the white man's arrival – i.e. a fictional construct where romance goes hand in hand with commercial exploitation? Patusan in this respect is old Europe dis-oriented, a projection space for the European mind's desires and fears, and a twilight fantasy on the edge of decomposition – like some sort of Far East Venice[3] where Jim, unlike Karain this time, makes the choice of the mythic past.

Which leads us to one question: why should Dain Waris, the local chief's son, be gifted with a "European mind" defined by "a tenacity of purpose, a touch of altruism" (157)? Does not Jim betray this very tenacity and altruism when he says to Jewel that there is nothing to fight for and abandons his fellow fighters? Why does he finally deliver himself into the hands of Doramin the patriarch if not to acquire a brand new fame by means of another "crime of honour," as if finally to restore the revenge Plot of tragedy? It is at this stage that we encounter one *shadowy* limit of the sovereign power of a *fixed* standard of conduct. It may be that the sacrificial love for the lost mother's shadow and the love of one's idealised, fixed self-image are two sides of the same coin, and certainly poles apart from the European turn of mind praised in the figure of Dain Waris.

But what is it that makes of Jim or Karain the truly Conradian figures around which so much ink has been shed – in Jim's case at least – if not their surrender to unconscious bodily impulses, their permeability to the modern affect which is fear? Unlike Conrad the man who may have felt still bound to the code by the circumstances of his life, Conrad the writer privileges the affect over the code; his true concern is with the anxiety arising when a silent blind spot contaminates the social mirror. His tales blow up structuring binarities like East/West, Europe/the Orient until the hollow kernel is glimpsed. If it is true that Conrad's fiction anticipates the globalization in which we live today, it is with the awareness that we cannot go back to the old order and that we have to invent new symbolic bonds to contain the invasion of the force of self-serving enjoyment: constructing some new-born idea of Europe may be the politician's task, whereas for the artist the whole endeavour will be to enhance human solidarity through the power of the written word: to open the vistas of the poetical unconscious by awakening the memory of the language.

The hub of the Conradian galaxy is, as is well known, a black hole: an enigmatic spot – a stain of fear and uneasy enjoyment. Why does Jim want to return "to the very spot" of the Patna's wreckage, why does he want "to see," Marlow wonders? Because

[3] "... an odd assortment of lost traditions, empty epic gestures, crass repetition of stereotypes and grotesque effects of diminished affiliative schemes" (GoGwilt 102).

> his soul knew the accumulated savour of all the fear, all the horror, all the despair of eight hundred human beings pounced upon in the night by a sudden and violent death ... It was one of those bizarre and exciting glimpses through the fog. It was an extraordinary disclosure. He let it out as the most natural thing one could say. He fought down that impulse and then he became conscious of the silence. (*LJ* 71)

The whole novel revolves around that horrid thing like a luminous halo seen in a "lurid light,"[4] compelling the Western eye, "so often concerned with mere surfaces" (*LJ* 157) to turn and return, to overturn those surfaces. In *Lord Jim* as in "Karain," Conrad produces a tale which "turns its popular material against the assumptions of the genre" (GoGwilt 44), breaking through the polished surfaces, letting some black, shapeless, pulsating substance appear through the interstices, producing the constant revolutions of the material of language and codes on which the West is constructed.

Several critics have noted the strange detail of the "torrent [which] wound about like a dropped thread" in the picture postcard of Karain's stage (*TU* 40). This dropped thread is like a shadow-line "indicating an incompleteness in the description and an anxiety about the composition of the whole" (GoGwilt 48), something which does not fit in the epic texture and proportions of a prose otherwise so strongly reminiscent of *Salambô*. The dropped thread followed by the "flash of darkness" made by the breeze on the smooth water (40) undermines the imperial adventure story, just like the white piece of worsted which Marlow glimpses around the neck of the dying African in the grove of death. The black or white spot in the field of the visible splinters the Western perspective: it gazes at you, it concerns you and anticipates the atomization of the surface. These strange poetic alterations affect the values of black, white, East, West, reason, madness and so on. Along similar lines the rhetoric of excess which applies to gender and racial differences[5] comes as another case of insistence of the letter which betrays the artificiality of the stereotype.[6]

The vacillation is also manifest in the confusion of symbolic places at the moment of "heroic" action, a true symptom which is manifest in the shifting rhetoric of pronouns – the linguistic place binding the political and the poetical unconscious. As Karain aims at Pata Matara he cries out "Return!", a most ambivalent cry indeed since its addressee could be either the young woman, or Pata Matara with of course consequences going in opposite directions. This confusion betrays the instability of language which throws Karain out of his safe world: his exile be-

[4] "I wanted to obtain a sort of lurid light out of the very events" (to Edward Garnett, 12 Nov 1900; *CL2* 302).

[5] Like "Such beings open to the Western Eye, so often concerned with mere surfaces, the hidden possibilities of races and lands over which hangs the mystery of unrecorded ages" (*LJ* 157)

[6] The use of the "long-established stereotype of the Malay 'running amok' " (50) is not Karain's privilege since it most notably applies to Kayerts in the well-named *Tales of Unrest.*

gins, he enters like Dante a "very sombre and very sad" forest (*TU* 76). Similarly Jim's *acte manqué* is based on a linguistic *quiproquo*: he jumps in the safety boat instead of George, the dead man called by the crew – and from the moment he has joined them "his saved life was over" (*LJ* 69), he has become a living dead. In *Under Western Eyes*, Razumov's saved life is also over when Haldin mistakes him for whom he is not. Nostromo is killed for the robber which he is/is not. In "An Outpost of Progress," for a brief point in space and time, Kayerts believes he has been shot while it is the reverse that has happened. The insistence of such scenes involves more than mistaken identity: they unlock the symbolic rivets of social cohesion, the very same rivets which Marlow desperately looks for in *Heart of Darkness*.

Where fear is concerned it appears that the cultural mapping of differences has little to say. "Karain" and *Lord Jim* subtly shift the Near East of Flaubert's Orientalist fantasies to the Far East, producing a dizzying *chassé-croisé* of compass points. The young moon shines low in the West as the *Patna* glides on the surface of the Red Sea in the Near East which is itself West of Patusan, itself an Oriental melting-pot of Western fantasies. As Jim leaves for his spot of land untouched by history, he appears "detached upon the light of the westering sun" to Marlow who looks at him from an Eastern position (*LJ* 146), later confirmed by his buddhist affiliations in *Heart of Darkness*. At another moment of parting, as the East Coast turns black and the Western horizon "one great blaze of gold and crimson" (199), Marlow looks at Jim on the beach watching the schooner fall off. It seems therefore that no fixed standpoint is possible[7] in this novel which is less Eurocentric or Euro-eccentric than a European novel that vacillates, constantly reversing figure against ground.[8]

"Books," Conrad wrote, are based "on beliefs and theories that, indestructible in themselves, always change their form – often in the lifetime of one fleeting generation" ("Books," *NLL* 11). It is certainly the case for Conrad's idea of Europe, omnipresent and manifold in his books, hesitating between the seductions of the West and the need of a code of restraint: a value both economic and literary.

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[7] Should these poetic alterations be interpreted as an escape from the contingencies of history, "to create a readership that can overlook the embarrassment of class, nation and race" (GoGwilt 100)? I do not think so: the text exposes them for what they are: unstable constructs for deceptive and often deadly identifications, set up against a hollow gaze or voice in the place of former values.

[8] See for example the visual shock produced by the extraordinary perspectival shift at the closure of "Karain" which "turns the charm of an imperial adventure story into the horrified response to metropolitan, mass produced malaise" (GoGwilt 52).

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NARRATIVE, IDENTITY, SOLIDARITY: CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS* AND *LORD JIM*

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In the summer of 1939, a young Czech Jewish boy is helped onto a so-called *Kindertransport* which, enabling him to escape the Nazis, brings him to safety in Wales. In the mid-1960s a German citizen decides to leave his country, he too moving westward and settling in Britain. The first of these persons is a fictional character whose name is Austerlitz. The last one is the German-British author Max Sebald, who was born in Bavaria in 1944 and who tragically died in a traffic accident in Britain in 2001. Sebald's final book, published in 2001 and entitled *Austerlitz*, is an engrossing narrative which – combining the genres of the novel, the memoir, the fragment, and travel narrative – tells, or rather attempts to tell, the story of Austerlitz.

On the title page of *Austerlitz* there is a photograph of a young boy. When we start reading the book we cannot, of course, know that this is a picture of the novel's protagonist as a child. Yet on page 258 the same photo is reproduced, in smaller format, accompanied by the sentence, "Yes, and the small boy in the other photograph, said Věra after a while, this is you, Jacquot, in February 1939, about six months before you left Prague" (Sebald, *Austerlitz* 258-259).[1] Thus the photo on the book's cover is both an introduction to, and a visualized representation of, the novel's protagonist; moreover, it is also a reflection of, and on, its title. As indicated already, we cannot know this when we start reading. There is a covert yet important link between this kind of ignorance on the part of the reader and that experienced by Austerlitz himself. He recognizes the unusual hairline running over

[1] Hereinafter referred to as *Au*. A helpful study of Sebald is Mark R. McCulloh, *Understanding W. G. Sebald* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003).

the forehead, "but otherwise all memory was extinguished in me by an overwhelming sense of the long years that had passed" (*Au* 259).

Like the titles of the two novels I will be discussing in this essay, *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, *Austerlitz* is, as Theodor W. Adorno puts it in his *Notes to Literature*, "the microcosm of the work" (4). Not just identifying the protagonist's name, *Austerlitz* also refers to the Gare d'Austerlitz, which is the location of the final meeting between Austerlitz and the frame narrator. This train station in Paris is named after Austerlitz, or Czech *Slakov*, the place in the Czech Republic where Napoleon defeated the Austrian and Russian armies in the battle of 2 December 1805. As a pupil in the village school in Wales, where he lives with his step-parents, Austerlitz has a history teacher who is fascinated by Napoleon, and who takes a particular interest in the battle of Austerlitz. To these three aspects of the novel's title I add a fourth. In the textual fabric of Sebald's *Austerlitz* it is hardly coincidental that the title's first three and last three letters are identical with those of another name: Auschwitz – the place where Austerlitz's father, a father figure the whole narrative appears to be searching for, probably ends his life.

I refer to *Austerlitz* not just because of the important thematic links between this text by Sebald and two by Conrad written almost exactly a hundred years earlier. The main reason why *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* are two of the strongest intertexts in *Austerlitz* is that these thematic links, which include variants on a search for European origin and identity formation, are supported by structural and narrative ones. I have already mentioned that Sebald uses a frame narrator, as does Conrad in both *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. Like Conrad, Sebald makes his frame narrator meet a character who also becomes a narrator – and whose story, imparted to the frame narrator as narratee, is then passed on by him to the reader.

One should of course be wary of comparing writers as different as Conrad and Sebald too directly. Yet Sebald is a particularly interesting example of an author who, searching for his own identity as a German and a European at the turn of the twenty-first century, looks to Conrad for inspiration – partly perhaps because of a sense of similar destiny, revolving (in both cases) round an uneasy combination of voluntary and involuntary exile. In his wonderful essay on Conrad in the essay collection *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald stresses the importance of Conrad's Polish background. Thus Sebald is an illustrative example not only of Conrad's continuing significance for contemporary writers but also of how, as Ian Watt puts it in his Epilogue to *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, "Conrad may be said to have inherited much of his modernity – perhaps his post-modernity – from his Polish past" (359).

Before turning to my first textual example from *Heart of Darkness*, I want to make a few comments on the significance of narrative for identity and identity formation. Here as always, it is helpful to historicize. In its early, overtly structuralist phase, narrative theory tended to separate the literary text from its author, focusing

instead on the interplay of linguistic and structural elements in the text itself in an attempt to discover an underlying "narrative grammar." My study of Conrad's narrative method from 1989 was indebted to this kind of narrative theory.[2] And yet, looking back I can now see more clearly that, for instance by making use of the concept of the author, it is also inspired by new ideas of narrative that started to be developed in the 1980s. A significant contribution to what is now commonly referred to as the second phase of narrative theory is the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur's three-volume study *Time and Narrative*. Drawing on the whole European philosophical tradition, Ricoeur's valuable study provides a comprehensive account of the connection between narrative and identity.[3] As narrative and narrativity became the focus of various studies in the humanities and the social sciences in the 1980s and 90s, narrative was no longer seen as an exclusively literary phenomenon but as a conceptual tool, a mode of knowing, a structuring framework for all human experience. Donald E. Polkinghorne's *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (1988) is an illustrative example of these developments. Polkinghorne argues that narrative meaning – which can be produced both orally, visually, and through verbal prose – is a cognitive process, organizing human experience into temporally meaningful episodes: "In summary, narrative is a meaning structure that organizes events and human actions into a whole, thereby attributing significance to individual actions and events according to their effect on the whole" (18). Narrative, in short, is a powerful mode of explanation – and this can be said of both historical and fictional narratives. Narrative serves to generate both meaning and a sense of identity. It is connected with the production of knowledge, and thus for both tellers and listeners with the effects of power, desire, and memory (which are of course related to our understanding of "knowledge").

Turning now to Conrad, I posit that the four textual passages to be briefly considered here illustrate how aspects of identity – and, more specifically, European identity – are being constituted, problematized, and reconstituted – thus forming, to borrow a phrase from Terence Cave's discussion of identity, "a *locus* of tension and unease" (118). I am, of course, aware that the problems to which the concept of identity refer are intrinsically very complex. Moreover, there is a significant difference between fictional identities and those grounded in, and referring to, a human being's experience of physical reality. For example, when Primo Levi ends his preface to *If This is a Man* (1958) by stating that "It seems to me unnecessary to add that none of the facts are invented" (16), he highlights his role as a witness. (Even though, as Paul Celan remarked, no one can bear witness for the witness, there is a sense in which *Austerlitz* aims to do just that.) Levi's autobiographical ac-

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[2] *Conrad's Narrative Method.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

[3] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, I-III. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1884, 1985, 1988.

count of the Holocaust is of course markedly different from Conrad's fictional discourse in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. And yet I believe that, as Aristotle puts it, literature relates "the kinds of things that might occur" (59). And fiction can, as Adorno has observed, serve as a form of subconscious writing of history – it can show us how human beings have experienced, and been formed by, what has happened down through the ages.[4] Arguably, the textual fragments under consideration here illustrate both these points.

My first textual passage is deservedly famous:

> The sun set; the dusk fell on the stream, and lights began to appear along the shore. The Chapman lighthouse, a three-legged thing erect on a mud-flat, shone strongly. Lights of ships moved in the fairway – a great stir of lights going up and going down. And farther west on the upper reaches the place of the monstrous town was still marked ominously on the sky, a brooding gloom in sunshine, a lurid glare under the stars.
>
> "And this also," said Marlow suddenly, "has been one of the dark places of the earth." (*HD* 105)

Marlow's opening remark is one of the best known and most widely discussed sentences in Conrad's fiction. And rightly so, for Marlow's comment exposes the frame narrator's relative naïvety and limited insight as it prefigures the sombre implications of the tale he is about to tell. Anticipating his reflections on the arrival of the Romans in Britain, "nineteen hundred years ago – the other day" (105), Marlow's words are a prolepsis of "darkness," the text's central metaphor which (like ivory) becomes a powerful symbol in the novella.

There is no doubt that this transition is very significant, and I still regard the symbol of darkness as the most important one in *Heart of Darkness*. And yet the narrative impact of Marlow's opening comment is so great that we may tend to inadvertently reduce the significance of the preceding paragraph. Given the extraordinary structural, metaphorical and thematic density of Conrad's novella, this may come as no surprise, but I would like to focus on one word, "light," which occurs in all four sentences uttered by the frame narrator in the quoted passage. Now in one sense, these repetitions of "light" are necessary in order to enhance the contrast between "light" and its opposite, "dark" – the adjective mentioned by Marlow (and reported by the frame narrator) at the beginning of the following paragraph. Yet the semantic variation and suggestiveness of the repetitions of the word "light" indicate a thematic import extending far beyond the function of providing the basis for a contrastive narrative utterance.

Let us briefly identify these instances of light. In the first sentence, the frame narrator notices lights along the shore; in the second he mentions the Chapman lighthouse; and in the third he notes the lights of ships going up and down the river. Significantly, all these instances of light can be noticed because it is starting

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[4] Cf. Jakob Lothe, *Narrative in Fiction and Film: An Introduction.* Oxford: OUP, 2000: 5.

to get dark. Dusk is a magic time of narration both in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. In a manner which not only furthers narration but also prompts interpretation of what is narrated, dusk is composed of both light and darkness. This characteristically double quality of dusk is evoked in the fourth sentence, where the references are to a different kind of light. While in the preceding sentences light is produced by man in order to cope with the problems and danger of darkness, in the last sentence the frame narrator refers to the strong light of the sun and the much weaker light of the stars. But both are related to London, his basic point of orientation.

A word or statement that is repeated in a work of fiction may not necessarily be true, but it is likely to prove important. The way in which Conrad makes his frame narrator repeat the word "light," thus charging it with meaning and yet not reducing the effective contrast between this paragraph and the following one, is just one example of the narrative brilliance of *Heart of Darkness*. Proceeding to relate this passage to the issue of European identity, I want to make two points.

First, one essential reason why "light" becomes more important when repeated is that the repetitions invite the reader to activate the word's metaphorical potential. Light is no ordinary metaphor, however. For a European reader it is also a rich symbol – a symbol of European, and more broadly Western, religion, culture and civilization. This symbolic use of the word is illustrated by, for instance, the motto of the University of California, where I was a student in the late 1970s. The words of the motto "Let there be light" refer not just to Genesis, and thus to the Christian tradition of the West; they are also closely related to ideas of enlightenment, research, and knowledge. For people of Conrad's generation – for the narratees addressed by Marlow aboard the *Nellie* – light symbolized positive values with which they wanted to be identified, and which they regarded as constituent aspects of their own identity. If we link this conventional understanding of the light symbol to the passage from *Heart of Darkness*, it is striking how strongly the frame narrator, and Conrad behind him, retards or temporarily suspends the symbolic qualities of light by focusing on its physical presence, its materiality as observable in the fictional world of which the narrator is an integral part. Moreover, in the last sentence before Marlow intervenes, the quality of the light – and thus what it symbolically represents – is no longer unproblematically positive. This narrative modulation is linked to a subtle perspectival shift from the source of light (the sun and the stars) to what is reflected by it. This reflection, caused by the town and the millions who inhabit it, is peculiarly ominous and disturbing. As a consequence of this play on light, the frame narrator's identity is not just (unsurprisingly) affirmed in this passage; surprisingly, it also seems to be threatened or challenged.

Second, the narrative situation is crucially important here. The frame narrator and Marlow are key narrators, two indispensable narrative instruments Conrad uses in order to construct *Heart of Darkness* as a piece of prose fiction. As Wayne

Booth reminds us in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, one of the strongest conventions of fiction is that as readers we trust the narrator, until or unless the narrative discourse signals that he or she is unreliable (4). Since, at least according to some critics, Marlow's reliability is questionable, it becomes crucially important to trust the frame narrator. His conventionality, which is linked to his sense of identity as a British citizen, makes it easier for us to do so. As the frame narrator becomes fascinated by Marlow's story, this facet of his identity contributes to the tale's peculiarly tentacular effect – his narratees are also British.[5] As a corollary, this passage brings out the affinity between Marlow's motivation to narrate and the narratees' (including the frame narrator's) motivation to listen, indeed to remain listening for a long while. "It is plausible to assume," notes Ross Chambers in *Story and Situation*,

> that at bottom the narrator's motivation is like that of the narratee and rests on the assumption of exchanging a gain for a loss. Where the narratee offers attention in exchange for information, the narrator sacrifices the information for some form of attention. Consequently, there is a sense in which the maintenance of narrative authority implies an act of seduction, and a certain transfer of interest (on the narratee's part) from the information content to the narrating instance itself. (51)

Both the frame narrator's story and Marlow's can be described as identity-stories, and the telling of identity-stories is necessarily a reciprocal activity. As Alistair MacIntyre puts it in *After Virtue*, "we are never more (and sometimes less) than the co-authors of our own narratives" (213). Reporting Marlow's narrative to the reader, the frame narrator becomes a co-author of Marlow's story (and Marlow of the frame narrator's); and some of the narrative's complexity, and its impact on the frame narrator as co-author, is hinted at in this sentence – the sentence preceding Marlow's first comment.

If the narrative situation in *Heart of Darkness* provides a necessary basis for the continuous narrative construction of identity, it also makes identity problematic. This kind of complication, which is not just narrative but also thematic and character-oriented, is indicated by the narrative situations incorporated into Marlow's narration. For although several of these seem to have considerable narrative potential, they suggest possibilities of narrative that are not, or cannot, be realized in the form of a completed narrative act.

If they were, the reader is led to believe that such a narrative would have been very different from that actually presented. One aborted narrative situation is that of Marlow and Kurtz aboard the steamer; another, which I will briefly comment on here, is Marlow's impression of the older of the two women knitting black wool:

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[5] See Cedric Watts, *Conrad's "Heart of Darkness": A Critical and Contextual Discussion* (Milan: Mursia, 1977), 22-47.

> She seemed to know all about them and about me too. An eerie feeling came over me. She seemed uncanny and fateful. Often far away there I thought of these two, guarding the door of Darkness, knitting black wool as for a warm pall, one introducing, introducing continuously to the unknown, the other scrutinising the cheery and foolish faces with unconcerned old eyes. *Ave!* Old knitter of black wool. *Morituri te salutant.* Not many of those she looked at ever saw her again – not half, by a long way. (*HD* 111)

The meaning of the Latin words Conrad makes Marlow employ here is highly significant. "Hail! [Emperor] Those about to die salute you." Such was the gladiators' greeting on entering the arena of combat in imperial Rome, the Rome of emperors such as Caesar or Augustus, to whom Virgil read passages from *The Aeneid* in year 23 BC. The Latin phrase which Marlow incorporates into his first-person narrative, then, originates from a time approximately nineteen hundred years before his own act of narration. Thus a link is established to Marlow's opening reference to the Romans: "I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago – the other day. ..." (105). As vastly different temporal planes are intertextually welded together, Conrad makes the reader appreciate the affinities of his own novella and Virgil's epic.[6] Inviting us to extend our temporal perspective, he also asks us to compare the historical formations and the identity-formations within which these two texts appeared. The older woman plays a key role here. Like the guard in Franz Kafka's story "Before the Law," she sits at the door of entrance to something that is alluring because it is unknown. Although she is employed by the company and thus by no means innocent as regards the use and possible misuse of power, she is peculiarly distanced from the mechanics of the Belgian empire. The old woman is a kind of emblem (from Greek *emblema*, which means an "inserted or incorporated piece of work"), which contributes to the gradual development of the symbols of light and darkness in *Heart of Darkness*. She is associated with darkness and with death, but she also seems to represent an insight which, sadly, she is not in a position to make effective in the form of action or counter-action. Although, as already indicated, this insight is not or cannot be realized in the form of a narrative act, the intertextual references to Virgil and Dante suggest there is a significant link between the old woman's understanding of what Europe now does and her European identity which, drawing on and formed by the continent's rich literary tradition, makes such an understanding possible.

Marlow is not Conrad, nor is the Marlow of *Heart of Darkness* identical with that of *Lord Jim*. And yet Marlow can represent Conrad more adequately, and in more nuanced fashion, than any other narrator in the author's service. One reason why is

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[6] For further discussion of this point see Jakob Lothe, "Cumulative Intertextuality in *Heart of Darkness*: Virgil, Dante, and Goethe's Faust," in *Conrad at the Millennium*, ed. Attie de Lange and Gail Fincham. New York: Columbia UP, 2001: 177-96.

that although Marlow's identity and point of orientation are clearly British, these facets of his fictional identity are blended with those of other European nations and traditions. As Zdzisław Najder notes in his masterly biography of Conrad, Marlow was the embodiment of everything Conrad would wish to be if he were to become completely anglicized. And then Najder adds that

> since that was not the case, and since he did not quite share his hero's point of view, there was no need to identify himself with Marlow, either emotionally or intellectually. Thanks to Marlow's duality, Conrad could feel solidarity with, and a sense of belonging to, England by proxy, at the same time maintaining a distance such as one has toward a creation of one's imagination. Thus, Conrad, although he did not permanently resolve his search for a consistent consciousness of self-identity, found an integrating point of view that enabled him, at last, to break out of the worst crisis of his writing career. (*JCC* 231)

In the critical context of the present essay, what Najder calls "Marlow's duality" can be related to the ways in which his narrative acts are both aided and problematized by a series of fragmented narratives incorporated into his own. Overall, in Conrad's fiction identity-formation and identity-positioning are closely related to variants of narrative perspective. In *Heart of Darkness* Marlow's British perspective becomes more nuanced, and I would say more European, as a result of being linked not just to the old woman whose role I have briefly considered but also to that of Kurtz, whose story, albeit for different reasons, proves equally unnarratable. In *Lord Jim* Marlow's identity formation is interestingly linked to his ardent attempt to understand another Englishman, Jim, and yet precisely that attempt brings him into contact with characters like the French lieutenant and Stein – two fascinating narrator-characters whose identities are anchored in France and Germany rather than Britain.

I want to proceed by seeing two textual passages from *Lord Jim* in this light. The first one is from the novel's opening chapter:

> Afterwards, when his keen perception of the Intolerable drove him away for good from seaports and white men, even into the virgin forest, the Malays of the jungle village, where he had elected to conceal his deplorable faculty, added a word to the monosyllable of his incognito. They called him Tuan Jim: as one might say – Lord Jim.
>
> Originally he came from a parsonage. Many commanders of fine merchant-ships come from these abodes of piety and peace. ...The little church on a hill had the mossy greyness of a rock seen through a ragged screen of leaves. It had stood there for centuries ... (8)

On a first reading of the novel we cannot know, of course, that Jim's "deplorable faculty" alludes to his jump from the *Patna* and the sense of professional and personal failure that follows. As employed by the third-person narrator here, "deplorable faculty" constitutes an aspect of Jim's identity – a dubious aspect related to the irony observable in the name "Lord Jim." It is this kind of authoritative characterization and character identification Marlow's narrative is designed to extend, and also to problematize. Interestingly, however, in the following paragraph

the contrast between the third-person's criticism of Jim and Marlow's more understanding attitude seems to be momentarily suspended. While in the first part of the passage one aspect of Jim's professional identity is defined negatively, in the second his origin is described as an abode "of piety and peace." Jim's home as a child is associated with the stability and safety of the land rather than the changeability and perils of the sea. Although this is not necessarily a professional drawback, the location of Jim's childhood may have contributed to forming his dreams of the sea, and possible acts of heroism to be performed at sea. There is an interesting affinity between Conrad's use of the temporal adverb "originally" and the word "history" in the next passage, which I would like to juxtapose with this one:

> "So you see me – so," he said. His hand hovered over the case where a butterfly in solitary grandeur spread out dark bronze wings ... "Only one specimen like this they have in *your* London, and then – no more. To my small native town this my collection I shall bequeath. Something of me. The best."
>
> He bent forward in the chair and gazed intently, his chin over the front of the case. I stood at his back. "Marvellous," he whispered, and seemed to forget my presence. His history was curious. He had been born in Bavaria, and when a youth of twenty-two had taken an active part in the revolutionary movement of 1848. Heavily compromised, he managed to make his escape, and at first found refuge with a poor republican watchmaker in Trieste. From there he made his way to Tripoli with a stock of cheap watches to hawk about, – not a very great opening truly, but it turned out lucky enough, because it was there he came upon a Dutch traveller – a rather famous man, I believe, but I don't remember his name. It was that naturalist who, engaging him as a sort of assistant, took him to the East. (123–24)

Marlow's involvement in Jim's case takes the form of a search for extenuating circumstances. It leads him eventually to Stein, whose intuitive understanding of Jim curiously parallels Marlow's own. This passage is preceded by Marlow's wonderfully evocative introduction to Stein's house, and it is succeeded by Stein's famous diagnosis of Jim as "romantic" (128). We note the manner in which Conrad makes Stein emphasize Marlow's point of orientation by putting *your* in italics. This is an effective way of drawing attention to the contrast between Marlow's origin and Stein's, who "had been born in Bavaria," that is almost as far from the sea as you can get in Europe. This resemblance between Stein's and Jim's origins is reinforced by their outward movements – first to the sea and then to the east. (Incidentally, at the turn of the century Trieste was one of the busiest ports in Europe, the main port of the Austrian-Hungarian empire.)

Moreover, although Jim's tendency to dream cannot be unproblematically identified with the idea expressed by Stein later on in the same chapter – "to follow the dream – and so – *ewig – usque ad finem*" (130) – there does seem to be a connection between Stein's view of Jim as a dreamer and his diagnosis of Jim as "romantic." It is also important that, like Jim, at an early stage of his life Stein was also "heavily compromised" and, although it is not stated what he actually did or failed to do, like Jim he too started his eastward movement as a result.

The accounts of both Jim and Stein emphasize their origins and past experiences. Thus Conrad suggests that there is a significant link between our past and present identities, but this connection is typically indirect and frequently confusing. It is Marlow's narrative task to trace and, if possible, explain the connection between what we have done and experienced in the past and the question, as Stein puts it, of "how to be" (128). The narrative complexity of *Lord Jim* supports MacIntyre's notion of identity-stories as a characteristically reciprocal activity. Not only does Marlow appear to be thinking that Stein might have been Jim, and Jim might have been Stein; what he tells about them also colours his understanding of his own self.

In *Lord Jim* Conrad uses what Edward Said has aptly called narrative "presentation"[7] to establish a repetitive chain of impressions, of ways of seeing, that link Jim, Stein, Marlow, the frame narrator (who not only reports Jim's own thoughts but also Marlow story of Jim), and by implication also Conrad and the reader. This does not mean that the characters' identities collapse into one. But it does mean that in *Lord Jim* as in *Heart of Darkness*, the customary opposition between individual identity, group identity, and even national identity may be misleading. In Conrad it is *narrative* identity which is "primitive" and fundamental. Appropriating one of MacIntyre's key points, Cave finds that "identity is that which is contained in the narrative of the self, however incompatible its different elements and however uncomfortable their juxtaposition" (117). This generalized point bears a striking relevance to Conrad's fictional narratives.

Marlow's identity is formed, questioned, and reformed as his narrative about Jim develops. Marlow's identity is of course marked by his background, including his professional seamanship and British citizenship. But his identity also receives formative impulses from a French lieutenant and a German collector of butterflies. Thus, identity-formation in *Lord Jim* is closely associated with, and approximates to, a "European identity." Since this locution is, and needs to be, rather imprecise in order to be sufficiently inclusive, we may ask – in the case of Conrad, and with a view to *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* in particular – what are the most significant constituent aspects of his European identity. One of the best accounts of this issue is given by Najder in *Conrad in Perspective*. As Najder notes, "Conrad felt at home in several European national civilizations and raised in his work issues both characteristic of and relevant to them" (167). Moreover, as the narrative discourse of *Lord Jim* illustrates, Conrad uses his knowledge of various European traditions "to look at the described events from different angles. His European multiculturalism was ineluctably linked to his condition as an exile and with what Anne Luyat-Moore

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[7] Edward Said, "The Presentation of Narrative," chapter 4 of *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 81-95.

aptly calls 'la nécessaire étrangeté'; it made him particularly sensitive to cultural differences" (*CIP* 168, Luyat-Moore 118). Najder concludes that we may call Conrad

> a "European writer" in a least six senses: 1. a writer of three different European cultural spheres, spanning East–Central and Western Europe; 2. the author of books with action taking place in many European countries; 3. a writer versed in several major European literatures; 4. a writer grappling with the most important issues of European history of the past 150 years; 5. a thinker using the concept of a European political solidarity; 6. the author of novels on "European" themes. (*CIP* 171)

Although these six facets of Conrad as a European writer do not unproblematically constitute a European identity, they provide the basis for the processes of identity formation observable in his fiction. For instance, Conrad's concerns with cognition, with narrative communication, with artistic issues, and with reaching and relating to his audience were for him not just aesthetic but also moral and philosophical concerns. As they emerge in dramatized form in his fiction, these concerns are at once rooted in and prompted by the long tradition of European philosophy and culture. Even though Conrad was not a religious writer, he was acutely aware of Christianity's impact on the development of European culture and civilization; and he evidently believed that, as Najder puts it, "our consciousness transcends our bodily existence" (*CIP* 184). Seen in this light, the most significant constituent facet of Conrad's European identity is perhaps his notion of human solidarity as "not just a postulated and distant ideal, but something we can consciously affirm and which gives meaning to our existence" (*CIP* 183).

When it comes to Conrad's fiction, his European identity is not just variously affirmed and reaffirmed but also subjected to discussion and called into question. Conrad's fictional representation of identity is, to use Said's phrase once more, inseparable from his "presentation of narrative," and if we separate Conrad's sense of European identity from the dynamics of his fictional narratives we unavoidably simplify and distort it. In order to briefly illustrate this aspect of Conrad's fictional identity formation I return to the symbol of light in *Heart of Darkness*. As we have noted already, in this novella the symbols of light and darkness are repeatedly contrasted with each other; thus the suggestiveness and complexity of both are enhanced. But as we also have seen, in the narrative discourse of *Heart of Darkness* the light symbol is problematized even before Marlow's opening remark. A similarly complicating process of destabilization is associated with the symbol of darkness. If both the Christian and more secular versions ideas of light are problematized, darkness is presented as a quality closely related to Kurtz's development: although his knowledge of science and the arts are linked to light, his search for forbidden knowledge is associated with darkness.

Conrad's sustained attempt at identity-formation in *Lord Jim* assumes the form of two narrative lines that, in strangely alogical fashion, both cross each other and run parallel to each other. It is difficult to ascertain where these narrative lines begin

and end – problems of beginning, middle, ending, and repetition loom large throughout *Lord Jim*. While one narrative line is moving towards, or perhaps rather groping for, a centre, origin or ground, the other one complicates that movement by repeatedly turning up evidence of the world's irreducible pluralism. Marlow's reflection, in chapter five of *Lord Jim*, on "the doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct" (35) indicates how closely these two narrative lines are related to each other. The presence of the second, complicating narrative line does not eliminate the first, or make the first redundant. Since, in the narrative discourse of *Lord Jim*, they are linked to the extent of becoming mutually dependent on each other, they both contribute to the novel's, and Conrad's, identity-formation.[8]

As briefly indicated already, one significant aspect of this narrative presentation of European identity is solidarity, especially as it is manifested in action designed to help someone whom the narrator and/or character meets. At the centre of Conrad's narrative vision stands the human individual who, although he or she may repeatedly fail, aims to be a bearer of European culture, and who is linked to his or her fellow human beings in an act, to borrow a phrase from the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's discussion of identity, of "irreversible mutual dependency" (89). This kind of responsible human *Geist* was Goethe's ideal, and, although it may have become distorted beyond recognition, facets, or perhaps rather remnants, of it are hinted at in Marlow's comment, in *Heart of Darkness*, that what "redeems" the practice of colonial expansion is "the idea only" (107). Inadequately represented and imperfectly expressed by characters as dissimilar as the frame narrators in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, the two versions of Marlow in these two narratives, the old knitting woman, Kurtz, the French lieutenant, and Stein, Goethe's ideal is also Conrad's.

Sebald's *Austerlitz* incorporates a series of black-and-white photographs into its narrative discourse. The third of the four small photographs on page three reminds me strongly of Conrad. Significantly, however, this photo shows just a fragment of the person's face – his eyes. To me these eyes, looking at me from the pages of a book published in 2001, signal the continuing presence of an author who, for all his limitations of vision, produced fiction whose fractured narrative lines make us see more, and better, than we could without reading them.

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[8] As J. Hillis Miller has noted, narrative lines are closely related to repetition. See Miller's valuable study *Reading Narrative* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 47. Cf. Miller's discussion of repetition in *Lord Jim* in *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), 22-41, and Jakob Lothe, "Repetition in Conrad's *Lord Jim*," *L'Époque Conradienne* 30 (2004), 97-105.

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POLISHNESS, MODERNISM AND THE MANIPULATION OF TIME: CONRAD'S USE OF "NOW" IN *ALMAYER'S FOLLY*

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In recent years, a concern for the linguistic influence of Polish and French on Conrad's written English has been developing within Conradian criticism, and is perhaps most evident in the publication of Mary Morzinski's *Linguistic Influence of Polish on Joseph Conrad's Style* (1994) and Michael Lucas' *Aspects of Conrad's Literary Language* (2000). As these two volumes highlight, however, much of the commentary on linguistic interference from both Polish and French assumes an overriding negative influence: while Morzinski underscores three areas (aspect, voice and word order) in which Conrad's prose was affected by his Polish linguistic inheritance, Lucas habitually refers to the stylistic features under discussion in his work as "eccentricities." Morzinski's and Lucas' volumes both provide invaluable insights into, to borrow Lucas' title for a moment, aspects of Conrad's literary language, and there is no doubt justification for assuming some degree of negative linguistic interference with Conrad's English style. However, both Morzinski and Lucas adopt methodologies derived specifically from linguistics, considering Conrad's style in relation to various relevant linguistic theories and contributing to advances in the linguistic description of Conrad's prose. Indeed, in the tradition more of linguistics than literature, Lucas dedicates his efforts towards compiling a statistical account of Conrad's literary language. Thus, while both volumes reveal a wealth of localised information, such linguistics-focused approaches as these critics utilise necessarily limit the possibility of exploring the ambiguities inherent in Conrad's language use. Accordingly, their analyses are perhaps most usefully relied upon as foundations from which we might begin to consider these ambiguities, and hence make broader judgements, rather than simply offer information, about his use of literary language.

Indeed, the idea that Conrad's familiarity with both Polish and French impacted negatively on his written English can be found as early as the first reviews of *Almayer's Folly*; in particular, an anonymous reviewer for the *Bookman*, writing one of the first biographical sketches of the author, observed an "unfamiliar something in its tone," which, he claimed, "is explained by the fact that Mr. Conrad, for all his skilful adoption of our language, is not an Englishman" (41). Arguing against this critical trend, however, and drawing on the evidence of close stylistic scrutiny, this paper will assert that, as Zdzisław Najder has also written, the Polish and French influences on Conrad's prose were not "purely negative" (*CPB* 29). Through a look at the first chapter of *Almayer's Folly*, I will argue that Conrad's use of tense sequencing suggests an interesting combination of, on the one hand, his struggle with the English tense system, and, on the other, the way in which this struggle simultaneously allowed him to "make new" the language of English fiction. I propose that Conrad was far more self-conscious in his handling of even the very grammar of English than has previously been suggested, and thus establish the need to reconsider the appearance of Polonisms and Gallicisms in his fiction as self-conscious inclusions rather than errors or idiosyncrasies. Ultimately, this paper moves towards answering the question of whether the unfamiliarity that Conrad's contemporaries detected arose from a "modernist" impulse, or whether it was more specifically the result of Conrad's "foreignness."

The issue of tense – and, perhaps more broadly, of time – in Conrad's fiction is an intriguing one. Indeed, while this paper will focus on the impact of Polish on Conrad's manipulation of temporality in Chapter 1 of *Almayer's Folly*, there are in addition various philosophical questions to be considered. Perhaps most interesting in this regard is Henri Bergson's theory of duration, as put forward in *Time and Free Will* (*Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, 1889). We do not know whether Conrad read Bergson's text – which was not published in English until 1910 – and yet there is a striking similarity between Conrad's representation of time in his first novel and the French philosopher's argument for recognising the disparity between reality and the human perception of reality. Bergson used the example of the pendulum and the clock to illustrate his argument:

> When I follow with my eyes on the dial of a clock the movement of the hand which corresponds to the oscillations of the pendulum, I do not measure duration, as seems to be thought; I merely count simultaneities, which is very different. Outside me, in space, there is never more than a single position of the hand and the pendulum, for nothing is left of the past positions. ***Within myself a process of organisation or interpretation of conscious states is going on, which constitutes true duration.*** It is because I ***endure*** in this way that I picture to myself what I call the past oscillations of the pendulum at the same time as I perceive the present oscillation. Now, let us withdraw for a moment the ego which thinks these so-called successive oscillations: there will never be more than a single oscillation, and indeed only a single position of the pendulum, and hence no duration. Withdraw, on the other hand, the pendulum and its oscillations; there will no longer be anything but the heterogeneous duration of the ego, without moments external to one another, without relation to number.

> Thus, within our ego, there is succession without mutual externality; outside the ego, in pure space, mutual externality without succession: mutual externality, since the present oscillation is radically distinct from the previous oscillation, which no longer exists; but no succession exists solely for the conscious spectator who keeps the past in mind and sets the two oscillations or their symbols side by side in auxiliary space. (107-09)

We will see below that, in the first chapter of *Almayer's Folly*, Conrad repeatedly presents us with a new present moment in the reading experience; recurringly, he inserts into the text the word "now." With each "now," the present moment is seen to be disconnected from the previous "now" – even when the space between those "nows" constitutes only a matter of seconds or minutes of text time. Although I will argue below that this strange use of "now" is connected with Conrad's Polish linguistic heritage, it is equally the case that his experiments with time in this first novel relate to Henri Bergson's theory of time and duration. A recognition of this fact, however, only urges the belief that Conrad's manipulation of time in the novel was deliberate rather than solecistic, and that, as I will illustrate below, he consciously drew on his Polish past in order to imbue his fiction with something new.

Discussing Conrad's struggle with tense sequencing in relation to specific quotations from *Almayer's Folly*, Ian Watt writes that, in the text, "one could no doubt trace the equally complicated but much more definite rules for tense agreements in French, and the quite different but equally categorical rules in Polish" (47). Yet this struggle with tense sequencing to which Watt points is played out on a much larger scale throughout *Almayer's Folly* as a whole, and Conrad's manipulation of time, which is unmistakeable at story-level, is in addition mirrored in the microstructure of the tale. The first chapter of the novel begins and ends in the present but moves backwards in time to plot the main events of Almayer's early adult life. There is also some projection towards the future in the form of Almayer's dreams. The constant interaction between past, present, and future contrasts future dreams to past failings. Indeed, Allan Simmons has noted that these temporal movements, in his words, "contribute towards the sense of Almayer's being trapped in the present – between a past he wishes to escape and a dream future which appears increasingly unrealiseable." Simmons continues:

> For instance, we learn that Almayer's dream of wealth is itself based upon Lingard's *failed* dream of wealth; we learn that his vision of Europe is based upon his mother's memories of the "lost glories" of Amsterdam; and we learn how Almayer expects to blind people to Nina's skin colour when he himself was not blinded to his own prospective wife's skin colour by the promise of Lingard's wealth. (5-6)

Such time shifting as we find in *Almayer's Folly*, now recognised as a characteristic feature of modernism, is facilitated by an extensive use of temporal cohesion; yet the sequencing of events put forward by temporal markers is at times surprising.

Conrad's representation of temporality throughout the chapter and, indeed, in the work as a whole is worth a brief moment of consideration here. Gérard Genette has identified three major aspects of temporal manipulation in the transfer of story to text, which he entitles order, duration, and frequency. Of these, Conrad manipulates both order, with an external analepsis moving backwards in time to recount events that occurred prior to the opening of the text, and duration, since the text opens with a descriptive pause before recounting the events of Almayer's youth with relative speed. Interestingly, even within the recounting of these more condensed events (Almayer's departure from home, his induction into the warehouses of Hudig, his meeting with Lingard and his arrangement with him to marry his adopted daughter) there appear moments of descriptive pause, the best example of which is perhaps Conrad's description of Hudig's warehouses and all that takes place within them. It is perhaps from this rather dramatic manipulation of both order and duration that some of the obstacles to easy processing of the text arise, and the matter is not cleared up by Conrad's use of temporal cohesive markers.

Temporal cohesion, a sub-type of conjunction cohesion, is defined quite simply by Halliday and Hasan as "the relation of the theses of two successive sentences...by... sequence in time. One is subsequent to the other" (261), and it may be divided into two sub-types, external and internal, where the former is concerned with the events of the story, or the events being talked about, and the latter inheres within the communication process. Here, we will only be concerned with the first type, external temporal cohesion. This first type can be further sub-divided into various temporal relations, from sequential relations (such as "then...and then...") to simultaneous relations (for instance, "at the same time") and previous relations (such as "earlier"). There are a number of more complex external temporal relations, the labels of which I will not describe here since they are not relevant to the ensuing discussion. What is significant, however, is that, in all, sixty-one uses of temporal cohesion are employed by Conrad in this first chapter of his first novel, and, moreover, of the five sub-types of conjunction cohesion (additive, adversative, causal, temporal, and continuative), temporal cohesion is, with the exception of additive conjunction, by far the most extensively used. In particular, Conrad repeatedly inserts the temporal marker "now" into his prose, but its use is often unhelpful since the reader cannot always be clear to which "now" the marker refers. Is it the "now" of the present time or the "now" of some past time? If the latter, is it the "now" of Almayer's arrival on the dusty jetty of Macassar, the "now" of his time spent with Hudig, or the "now" of his time aboard the *Flash* with Lingard?

Interestingly, the cause of Conrad's repetitive use of "now" may inhere in his Polish linguistic unconscious. Although Polish does possess temporal adverbs ("now" in Polish, for instance, is *teraz*), already inherent at a deep level in Polish grammar is a distinction between complete and incomplete or durative action. That

is, for the most part, each Polish verb exists as one half of a pair. While both verbs in the pair have almost the same meaning (for instance, *przeczytać* and *czytać* both mean "to read"), one verb will form the perfective aspect (which denotes a finished action) while the other will form the imperfective (which denotes an unfinished action). Thus, in Polish, the presence of a verbal prefix limits the meaning of that verb to denote completion. Accordingly, I can explain to my supervisor:

Przeczytałam *Almayera* I have read (and finished) *Almayer's Folly*

Or, I might attempt to excuse myself thus:

Czytałam *Almayera* I was/have been reading *Almayer's Folly*...

So, if in Polish Conrad wished to explain that "now he could hear the paddles distinctly" (*AF* 11), he could use the imperfective (*Almayer słyszał*), which is literally translated as "Almayer was hearing," and would not need the compound verbal structure "could hear" that is required in English to suggest continuity (in English, "Almayer was hearing" is clearly an awkward construction). Although it is possible in Polish to use temporal adverbs alongside the imperfective – indeed, it might be desirable to insert one here, and thus to write *Teraz Almayer słyszał* ("Now Almayer was hearing") – they serve *in addition to the verbal prefix* to limit the meaning and thus they help to situate the process in time.

The following sentence from the opening chapter of *Almayer's Folly*, describing Almayer as he watches a tree drifting down-river, contains three temporal markers and merges sequential events with the here-and-now of the punctiliar temporal "now," forcing the reader to adjust her vision, and see events through the eyes of Almayer, the perceiver:

> It did; ***then*** he drew back, thinking that ***now*** its course was free down to the sea, and he envied the lot of that inanimate thing ***now*** growing small and indistinct in the deepening darkness. (6; emphasis added)

Conrad's use of the first temporal marker, "then" presents no problems to the reader who views Almayer's movements in sequence, from leaning over the balustrade of the verandah, lost in his dream, to drawing back to reflect on the course of nature. The first use of "now" is also relatively uncomplicated, and brings the sequence of events emphatically into the here-and-now of the present moment. Following the introduction of this emphatic present, however, it is unusual that another "now" should occur so rapidly, for it suggests that the narrative had been recounting events from the past immediately prior to its appearance – when, in fact, as the quotation shows, the narrative has explicitly been describing the present moment. The effect of piling up these punctiliars is to indicate a present time that marches forward swiftly and emphatically, from the "now" in which the tree's route "was free down to the sea," to the "now" in which it grows "small and indistinct in the deepening darkness." The two "nows" seem to indicate different pres-

ents; yet in reality, only a matter of seconds has passed between them. This effect is again created at a later stage in the narrative:

> Almayer descended the ladder carefully, ***now*** thoroughly recalled to the realities of life by the care necessary to prevent a fall on the uneven ground where the stones, decaying planks, and half-sawn beams were piled up in inextricable confusion... *Now* he could hear the paddles distinctly, and even a rapidly exchanged word in low tones, the heavy breathing of men fighting with the current, and hugging the bank on which he stood. (11; emphasis added)

Again, the sequencing of the "nows" provides the effect of a present time that marches forward without hesitation; the "now" of the time when Almayer descends the ladder is seen to be disconnected from the "now" in which he hears the paddles of a boat upon the Pantai river. This effect is further emphasised as the text moves forward and the frequency of this punctiliar marker increases:

> "Arabs, no doubt," muttered Almayer to himself, peering into the solid blackness. "What are they up to now? Some of Abdulla's business; curse him!"
> The boat was very close now.
> "Oh, ya! Man!" hailed Almayer.
> The sound of voices ceased, but the paddles worked as furiously as before. Then the bush in front of Almayer shook, and the sharp sound of the paddles falling into the canoe rang into the quiet night. They were holding onto the bush now; but Almayer could hardly make out an indistinct dark shape of a man's head and shoulders above the bank. (11-12; emphasis added)

As in the first example, the punctiliar markers are mingled with temporal markers of progression (while "as before" suggests the immediate past, "then" indicates the sequence of events), which has the effect of intensifying the force of the punctiliar temporals, making the "now" of the present time not only more immediate and explicit, but also more specific. Such specificity is further accentuated by the repeated use of "now," so that the first "now" represents an earlier time than the second, and the second an earlier time than the third. The use of repeated temporal punctiliars occurs again at the close of the chapter, where it is observed that the night is "*now* made more intense by a heavy thunder-cloud" and subsequently that "Almayer was in his hammock *now*, already half asleep" (16). Moreover, it is not only "now" which obscures the sense of time in the chapter; other temporal punctiliars – such as "as yet" in the following sentence – are equally confusing: "Bold, reckless, keen in business, not disinclined for a brush with the pirates that were to be found on many a coast *as yet*, making money fast, they used to have a general 'rendezvous' in the bay for purposes of trade and dissipation" (7; emphasis added).

Indeed, the very meaning of "as yet" is not entirely clear; we assume, perhaps, that Conrad wishes to imply "still" ("that were still to be found on many a coast"), although "as yet" actually suggests more specifically "at present" – and perhaps simply "yet", and a modified word order, would have been more appropriate: ("that were yet to be found on many a coast"). It is interesting that the Polish phrase *jak na razie*, which is literally translated into English as "as yet", might have

been appropriate in a Polish translation of this passage. In addition, the Polish word *jeszcze* is translated into English as meaning both "still" and "yet", and it is possible that this conflation of the two words in Polish was the source of Conrad's confusion over their use in English. Indeed, as Mary Morzinski has shown, non-native speakers frequently make errors such as these, for "a basic source of interference or transfer is where one language, either native or target, has morphosyntactic structures not present in the other" (24). In addition, Conrad recurrently made errors with word order in English, for, as Morzinski has likewise made clear, Polish allows for greater flexibility in its word order. To make matters more complicated, however, Conrad's use of "as yet" refers not to the here-and-now of the present time, but, rather to some twenty years previous. Yet this information can only be gathered from the preceding co-text in which appears the temporal specific "at that time." The use of a temporal punctiliar to indicate the here-and-now of some past time is, as this very description suggests, somewhat incongruous, and yet a similar occurrence appears again in Chapter Two of the novel, when Conrad writes, "It was currently believed at that time..." (21).

Ultimately, and although perhaps rather strange, Conrad's use of temporal markers in *Almayers' Folly* serves as a device to portray Almayer as a man eclipsed by an emphatic and sweeping sense of time. Indeed, the contrast provided by the constant acceleration and deceleration of pace, and the interchange of events between past and present offers the impression of Almayer trapped in a present he abhors between a past for which he grieves and a future about which he dreams. In addition, the effect created by the repetition of "now," of time marching on unwaveringly, contrasts sharply with Conrad's presentation of the plot of the tale – the events of just three days – over the course of the entire novel, and it is clear that the manipulation of order which is evident at story-level is mirrored at a micro-structural level in the text. While it is true that the repeated appearance of "now" and strange use of "as yet" muddy the reading process somewhat – the former perhaps unwittingly provides too great a sense of specificity, while the latter appears entirely mistaken – it also seems apparent that the disparity between the Polish and English means of expressing temporality suggested to the author a manner in which in English system might be exploited to create certain effects. Indeed, the constant use of time shifts in the tale provides an outlet through which Conrad may present his characters with irony; the structural parallelisms noted above, for example, allow Conrad to illustrate Almayer dreaming of a "splendid future" while in fact currently living that same splendid future – in reality an abhorrent existence – that he dreamed of so long ago. Such ambiguities and ironies that the time shifts in *Almayer's Folly* allow for, encourage, to quote Simmons again, "simultaneous and often contrasting readings. For Conrad, such contrasts were essential" (18).

In addition to providing an outlet for irony, the innovative juxtaposition of different temporal levels and the frequent re-establishment of a new present moment in the reading experience illustrate the influence on Conrad of contemporary philosophy. Indeed, it is this use of narrative techniques – informed by contemporary thought, and urged by his status as polyglot and as foreigner – which implicate Conrad in the modernist endeavour. Yet Conrad's contemporary critics, whose responses are generally characterised by a lack of critical objectivity – an issue which Susan Jones has also highlighted in relation to contemporary accounts of women in Conrad's fiction (18) – failed to detect his proto-modernism; moreover, they failed to identify his Polishness – and it is this Polishness which, I believe, lay at the crux of what was "unfamiliar" to them. Nevertheless, the critics perhaps came nearer to perceiving this Polishness than they themselves realised, for they repeatedly remarked on the "poetry" of Conrad's fiction (*Bookman* 41), referring to his "poetic power" (*Illustrated London News* 172) and "poetical description" (*New York Times* 96) – and the Polish Romantic tradition out of which Conrad himself was writing was itself a poetic one. Thus, although ignorant of Polish literary traditions, and despite being "influenced by a somewhat different literary tradition from that of his Polish Romantic heritage" (Jones 20-21), the English critics unknowingly alluded to Conrad's Polish past in their accounts of his "unfamiliar" English fiction. Indeed, in his 1914 interview with Marian Dąbrowski, Conrad himself both affirmed the fundamental importance of his Polish past to his English fiction and simultaneously observed that the British critics were ignorant of this Polishness within his writing. And thus I end with Conrad's own assertion of the centrality of his Polish past to his English fiction; he argued:

> The English critics – and indeed I am an English writer – when speaking of me always add that there is in my work something incomprehensible, unfathomable, elusive. Only you can grasp this elusiveness, understand the incomprehensible. It is Polishness. (*CPB* 28)

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COUNTER-IMAGES OF EUROPE IN THE UTTERANCES OF SELECTED CHARACTERS IN CONRAD'S AFRICAN FICTION

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In 1977 Chinua Achebe accused Conrad of not conferring, in his *Heart of Darkness,* the facility of language on the " 'rudimentary souls' of Africa." In place of speech the Africans in the novel make "a violent babble of uncouth sounds" (Achebe 115).[1] They speak intelligibly only twice. One of the instances is when Marlow approaches Kurtz's inner station. As the natives from the shore attack the ship, Marlow initiates a conversation with the black headman of his crew. For "good fellowship's sake," he says: "Aha!" The headman replies: "Catch 'im. Give 'im to us." Marlow asks: "To you, eh? What would you do with them?" The headman answers: "Eat 'im!" (*HD* 103). According to Achebe, the fact that, exceptionally, in this conversation the headman uses English constitutes one of Conrad's greatest racist assaults (115). Allegedly, Conrad makes the African speak English only to enable the Western reader to glimpse the barbarism or, as Achebe (paradoxically) puts it, "the *unspeakable* cravings of [the African] hearts" (ibid.; emphasis added). Peter Firchow has convincingly argued that, while defending a noble cause, Achebe ignores the broader context of Conrad's narrative. For example, he disregards Conrad's use of contrast. As a result, he overlooks many important details, for instance the reverse symmetry between the sick men crawling on all four in the grove of death, and Kurtz crawling on all four "out of his own choice" (cf. Firchow 39).

Indeed, the English utterances of the natives in *Heart of Darkness* seem to gain in significance when one considers them in the light of Conrad's employment of con-

[1] This phrase comes from "An Outpost of Progress": "They made an uncouth babbling noise when they spoke..." (92).

trast. Before exploring that significance, it may be worthwhile to juxtapose the utterances of Conrad's African characters to those appearing in other contemporary adventure novels. For example, in *King Solomon's Mines*, Haggard describes an encounter between the Englishman Quatermain and the Zulu Umbopa. Quatermain initiates a conversation by asking the Zulu patronizingly:

> "Well, ... what is your name?" A moment later he addresses Umbopa: "Why do you ask whither we go? What is it to thee?" The Zulu replies: "It is this, O white men, that if indeed you travel so far I would travel with you." (265)

Haggard does not inform the reader in what tongue the conversation takes place but nowhere in the narrative does he suggest that his English characters speak any African language.[2] Compared to the headman's "snaps" in broken English, Umbopa's utterances strike the reader as grammatically and stylistically elaborate. Considering that both men use a language foreign (non-native) to them, the headman's short, fractured sentences are more realistic than Umbopa's high-flown, rounded utterances. The outcomes of the two conversations are also strikingly different. The laconic communication of the headman makes Marlow reflect that the men of his crew are starving. On his part, Quatermain reminds the Zulu of his racial inferiority: "You forget yourself a little. ... That is not the way to speak" (265).

In *Heart of Darkness* Conrad employs precisely that contrast between the flowery language of the Europeans and the brief, awkward, fractured, and yet extremely precise and unambiguous utterances of his Africans. As if exemplifying Conrad's own oxymorons included in the description of the "immense forests ... [that] lay in the eloquent silence of mute greatness" ("An Outpost of Progress" 94), the semantic force and precision of the utterances of the characters in *Heart of Darkness* grow counter-proportionally to the volume and grandiosity of the language those characters use. The headman with whom Marlow speaks uses eight words altogether to convey both the message that he and his men are hungry and a solution to the problem. His utterance also suggests that his white "employers" have mistreated him and his men, which undermines Marlow's initial declaration of "good fellowship."

The second instance of the use of English by the Africans occurs when the manager's boy "puts his insolent black head in the doorway" and says "in a tone of scathing contempt": "Mistah Kurtz – he dead" (150). Despite the brevity and incompleteness of that sentence (it lacks the predicate), it conveys its message with superb precision. The non-verbal aspects of the boy's utterance his insolence and contempt contrast with Kurtz's seeming politeness and compassion, which in fact disguise *his* arrogance and contempt. Again, the most important aspect of the contrast between the utterances of the Africans and those of the whites is their em-

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[2] On another occasion Haggard mentions a Zulu (other than Umbopa) "who had the merit of speaking English perfectly" (264).

ployment of language. The narrative's insistence on presenting the lavishness and grandiosity of Kurtz's language is remarkable. Marlow's main aim in pursuing Kurtz is *talking* with him. Kurtz's "gift of expression" (113; 147) is playfully described as both "bewildering" and "illuminating," "the most exalted" and "the most contemptible" (113-4). As Bonney has observed, while describing Kurtz's use of language, Marlow "must invalidate the very act of defining in order to demonstrate through his own linguistic activity the supposed qualities of Kurtz's speech" (138). That speech is rendered paradoxically as either a "pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of impenetrable darkness" (113-14). Its very illumination turns it into darkness. Considering that "all Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" (117), the narrative locates the "heart of darkness" within Kurtz's mind as well as at the core of European discourse that he articulates. In Lord's words, *Heart of Darkness* "documents the transformation of civilized ideals into words that stand alone, divorced from a meaningful relation with their referent" (61). Kurtz's wordy, elaborate, moving, elegant, pretty and meaningless[3] utterances are the exact opposite of those of the Africans. To Kurtz, language "serves ... as a vehicle, metaphor, and paradigm of the pretences and deceptions of colonial expansion" (Lord 67); whereas the headman and the servant boy restore the straightforwardness of language in communicating needs and identifying facts. Characteristically, looking back, Marlow remembers Kurtz's and the other Europeans' utterances (including the utterances of Kurtz's Intended) as "one immense jabber, silly, atrocious, sordid, savage, or simply mean, without any kind of sense" (115). This stays in contrast with Marlow's lasting memory of characteristically non-verbal message conveyed to him by his dying helmsman: "the intimate profundity of [his] look ... remains to this day in my memory like a claim of distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment" (119).

As Peters observes, let loose in Africa Kurtz "finds nothing underlying [his] ideals and nothing to enforce them, and hence they have no power over his life" (56). Considering the manifest discrepancy between "words and their referent" in the Europeans' use of language, Lord asks: Does this mean that the ideals and values of European civilization, which those words pronounce, are merely nominal? Or are they substantial? (cf. 61). Conrad's employment of contrast in juxtaposing Kurtz's use of language with that of the Africans suggests a restoration of at least one value: sincerity of expression. Apparently, the Africans retain a value that the Europeans including Marlow, Conrad, and Conrad critics recognize as their own. For example, Andrea White argues that "it was possible for someone in Conrad's unique position to see ... the disparity between the [imperial] discourse and the ac-

[3] Written in "burning, noble words," Kurtz's report offers "no practical hints to interrupt the magic current of phrases" (118).

tuality of grabbing 'for the sake of what could be got' " (184). To be able to notice a disparity one must have a notion of a norm, in this case the norm of concurrence between sign (language) and referent (reality).[4] Consequently, *Heart of Darkness* reveals the moral bankruptcy of European civilization of which language is merely a mask, and therefore it is also bankrupt. On the other hand, as Lord argues, the novella reflects Conrad's struggle to save meaning.[5]

But is this norm of sincerity or straightforwardness a genuine value of African culture? Or does Conrad simply use the Africans to deal with his distinctively "European" frustrations? Do we learn anything about the Congolese from Conrad's African pieces or is Africa in both *Heart of Darkness* and "An Outpost of Progress" merely the "props for the break-up of a petty European mind," as Chinua Achebe has put it? (cf. 117). These questions evoke the fundamental problem of the possibility of knowing a different culture. A number of scholars took Conrad at his word regarding the "essential [and allegedly irreconcilable] difference of the races" (*CL2* 402). For example, Krajka argues that in *Heart of Darkness* "real interracial communication does not take place, as the culture of the black people is not explored in any depth" (245). Naipaul claims that "Karain" shows men as "prisoners of their cultures" (191). John Griffith has stressed Conrad's pessimism regarding the possibility of "cross-ethnic encounters." On the other hand, there are thinkers who observe that knowing a different culture is a necessary precondition to knowing one's own culture. For example, Bakhtin maintains that "it is only in the eyes of another *culture* that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly" and that a "meaning only reveals its depths once it has ... come into contact with another, foreign meaning" (7). Mary Louise Pratt helps to solve this paradox by proposing the idea of the "contact zone." She argues that even in the (frequent) case of cultures clashing in the conditions of a dominated-domineering relationship, the results of the clash are necessarily even if unintentionally reflected in both cultures, for example in the ethnographic texts of the conquerors as well as in the autoethnographic texts of the conquered.[6] Pratt has demonstrated that a colonialist describing alleged "barbarism" of the reluctant colonized, in his descriptions unwillingly includes his fears and thus his acknowledgment of the value of the oth-

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[4] This putting aside various linguistic quandaries that that relationship engenders.

[5] The critic argues that meaning lies in Conrad's actual *struggle* for it: "[Marlow's] willingness to tell a tale that undermines the values according to which he lives as well as the language in which he must speak suggests that the meaning lies in the effort" (124).

[6] Pratt defines ethnographic text as a text "in which European metropolitan subjects represent to themselves their others (usually their conquered others)"; and autoethnographic text as one "in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them." Thus, autoethnographic texts are "representations that the so-defined others construct in response to or in dialogue with" the ethnographic texts (35).

ers' systems of significance. On their side, the dominated may use the language of the domineering to "construct a parodic, oppositional representation of the conqueror's own speech" (35). In the non-fictional world, Chinua Achebe, Franz Fanon, and Adam Mickiewicz seem to be distinct examples of this.[7] With regard to *Heart of Darkness*, both Conrad and his creations, Marlow and Kurtz, have found themselves in a "contact zone."

If the question of language did not bother Haggard, who sacrificed probability in order to present his image of Africa in the allegedly inter-racial dialogues of his characters, for Conrad the language barrier was a fundamental issue. With the exception of Makola in "An Outpost of Progress," none of Conrad's Africans speak any European language sufficiently to give a substantial account of their culture. With the exception of Kurtz, none of his Europeans speak any African language sufficiently to learn about the local culture. Conrad's recognition of language barrier is multidirectional. If Marlow suspects that "there [is] a meaning" in the "passionate uproar" of the Africans, this situation becomes reversed in *An Outcast of the Islands*, where in a local tavern Chinamen grow tired at the "buzzing monotony of the unintelligible stream of words poured out by the white men" (6).[8] Conrad's frequent theme of unintelligible human voices reflects his authentic experience of a person not understanding the language of his environment. Anyone who has learned a foreign language knows that there is a world of difference between "knowing" a language and the actual encounter with native speakers using it. Conrad must have experienced that in England, in Indonesia, in Africa, and as a child in Russia. If, as many critics have argued, Conrad was preoccupied with seeing, hearing seems to have concerned him as well. For example, in *Almayer's Folly*, he describes a scene in which Babalatchi and Mrs. Almayer listen from a distance to the "confused but loud utterance coming in bursts of unequal strength, with unexpected pauses and noisy repetitions that made some words and sentences fall clear and distinct on their ears out of the meaningless jumble of excited shoutings" (136).[9] In *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* Conrad describes "the feverish and shrill babble of Eastern language" struggling "against the masterful tones of tipsy seamen" (4). When the *Narcissus* enters London, an "immense and lamentable murmur the

[7] Though not strictly "ethnographic," Fanon's study *The Wretched of the Earth*, Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*, and Mickiewicz's drama *Forefathers' Eve* articulate their authors' reactions to the conquerors' representations of their respective national or ethnic communities. To some extent, each work exposes and mocks the language and rhetoric of the conquerors. Fanon tackles the problem of representation at the theoretical level: "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it" (210).

[8] A leading speaker amongst those white men is the cocky and insincere Willems, who "must talk" and "expounds his theory of success over the little tables" (6).

[9] The scene takes place during the visit of the Dutch officers at Almayer's place.

murmur of millions of lips praying, cursing, sighing, jeering the undying murmur of folly, regret, and hope exhaled by the crowds of the anxious earth" comes from the city (163-4).

Heart of Darkness is a case study of the situation of being forced to perform the exasperating task of guessing a meaning in the flow of a foreign language. Marlow repeatedly stresses two aspects of such a situation: the lack of comprehension of, and the implied meaning in what he hears. He is immersed in two kinds of semantic systems: visual and aural, often working simultaneously. Both words ("symbols") and images ("icons") constitute important aspects of communication.[10] For example, as Jakobson suggests, every building is both a kind of a shelter and a kind of a message; clothes, besides having a strictly utilitarian purpose, display various semantic characteristics (cf. 61). Hence, "utterance" may include non-verbal aspects of communication, such as movement, apparel, make-up, etc. In his contact zone, Marlow registers symbols in what he hears as well as icons and also symbols in what he sees, for example:

> Along the river, three men, plastered with bright red earth from head to foot, strutted to and fro restlessly. ... They faced the river, stamped their feet, nodded their horned heads, swayed their scarlet bodies; they shook towards the fierce river-demon a bunch of black feathers ... ; they shouted periodically together strings of amazing words that resembled no sounds of human language. (145-6)

Impeded by his imperial preconceptions regarding Africa and its inhabitants, exposed to various systems of significance in the "contact zone," Marlow tries to understand his surroundings through his use of *imaginative comprehension*. For example, describing the scene in which a "loud cry of infinite desolation" is being heard from the thicket, he observes: "to me it seemed as though the mist itself had screamed, so suddenly, and apparently from all sides at once, did this tumultuous and mournful uproar arise" (102). Marlow first interprets the utterance as "mournful"; then, looking for clues, he carefully observes his surroundings:

> the whites ... had ... a curious look of being painfully shocked by such an outrageous row. The others had an alert, naturally interested expression ... Several exchanged short, grunting phrases, which seemed to settle the matter to their satisfaction. (103)

As this excerpt shows, Conrad not only "conferred the facility of speech" on his black characters, but also excluded his Europeans from comprehension of that speech. The contrast between the behavior of the Africans and that of the Europeans is magnified also by ridiculing the preconceptions of the latter. Without curios-

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[10] According to Jakobson, the "icons" prevail among the purely spatial visual signs; while "symbols" prevail among the purely temporal aural signs (65: "Przewaga znaków ikonicznych wśród czysto przestrzennych znaków wizualnych i przewaga symboli wśród czysto czasowych znaków słuchowych").

ity and imaginative comprehension, the Europeans are unable to learn anything; they are only "painfully shocked." Imaginative comprehension is a precondition to the Wordsworthian "imaginative sympathy," which Marlow occasionally displays. He looks at his native crew as "you would on any human being, with a curiosity of their impulses, motives, capacities, weaknesses" (105). Upon hearing the sound of African drums, he describes it as possibly having as "profound a meaning as the sound of bells in a Christian country" (71). This concession not only disclaims the alleged "barbarism" of African culture, but leaving room for its otherness acknowledges its depth and significance as equal to that of European culture. This excerpt also confirms Hampson's observation that Conrad "carefully situated the action [of his novels] in the material world" (101).[11] For example, with regard to African drums, Davidson observes: "A good African drummer can literally make his drum speak in words and sentences by varying the strength and placement of his tapping to reproduce the sounds of African speech" (149). During special occasions or religious rites, "dancers and drummers engage in a ritual dialogue, and both 'talk' continuously to the audience" (150). Marlow's imaginative comprehension allows him to perceive that the sounds of the African drums are also meaningful "utterances" even though he does not understand them.

Conrad's glimpses at African or Malay culture often bring the reader's attention back to Europe. A good example of this is Gobila in "An Outpost of Progress." Similarly to his treatment of the blacks in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad contrasts him to the white colonists and reverses stereotypes typically associated with inter-racial encounters between "civilized" and "savage." Gobila speaks a language that the Europeans do not understand. He regards the whites to be "indistinguishably alike" (95). The Europeans' behavior amuses him: "Carlier slapped him on the back, and recklessly struck off matches," while Kayerts "was always ready to let him have a sniff at the amonia bottle" (96). Although Gobila does not utter any sentences directly, Conrad's use of free indirect discourse enables the reader to know some of Gobila's reactions: "in short, the whites behaved just like that other white creature that had hidden itself in a hole in the ground" (ibid.). In Gobila's conduct towards Kayerts and Carlier, many Europeans can recognize characteristics of their own standard of civilized behavior. Gobila treats the whites with friendliness and natural curiosity. He offers them hospitality, which is a condition of their survival: "The women of Gobila's village [brought] every morning to the station, fowls, and sweet potatoes, and palm wine, and sometimes a goat" (96). On their part, Kayerts and Carlier regard Gobila with contempt and betray him by selling his people to slave dealers. Gobila refuses to follow the advise of his worriers

[11] Cf. also Berthoud's remark that Conrad's "attempt to integrate his fiction into the real world is astonisingly comprehensive, encompassing landscape, weather, plant and animal life, demography, material resources, commerce, politics, religion, architecture, dress, etc." (xi).

to take revenge through "burning and killing." He resolves that the whites "should be left alone" and simply terminates any further contacts with them (cf. 107). If Kayerts and Carlier represent "civilization," Gobila both represents and enacts civility, a virtue long valued by the Europeans.

Ultimately, Conrad's exposure to various "contact zones," his fidelity to the material, non-fictional world that he had seen, and his remarkable imaginative comprehension, enabled him to understand and tell the so-called civilized men of Europe that they could and still can learn from non-Europeans how to be civil.

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EUROPEANS IN CONRAD'S AFRICA

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As Marlow tells us in *Heart of Darkness*, "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz": "His mother was half-English, his father was half-French" (117). We are not told what the other halves were, but Kurtz's surname suggests a Germanic element on the father's side. If Kurtz was Belgian, this alone would suggest a complex mixture of linguistic and cultural elements; but whatever the exact mixture, Kurtz is presented in Conrad's novel as the epitome of European talents and values. He comes to represent for Marlow an ideal European, the embodiment of the redeeming "idea" underlying "the great cause of these high and just proceedings" (65) in which Marlow becomes involved. There are Swedes and Danes in the Congo, and Kurtz's retinue includes "an English half-caste clerk" (90) and a wandering Russian from Tambov. Marlow himself resembles "a Buddha preaching in European clothes" (50). The immaculate chief accountant who first mentions Kurtz's name tells Marlow that "He [Kurtz] will be a somebody in the Administration before long. They, above – the Council in Europe, you know – mean him to be" (70). Like the present-day Council of the European Union and the future Council of Europe,[1] the "Council" in question is located in Brussels, but the unnamed "sepulchral city" serves in the novella, as it does in today's news, as a metonym for Europe in general. The brickmaker at the Central Station also has a distinctly European perspective: he "alluded constantly to Europe" (78); he invokes "the cause intrusted to us by Europe" (79); and he assumes that Marlow has influence not with the company in Brussels, but "in Europe" (82).

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[1] Not to be confused with the European Council in Strasbourg; the meetings of the Council of Europe are currently held in whichever EU member country currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, but in 2000 it was agreed that in future half of the meetings (and eventually all of them) would be held in Brussels.

This emphasis on the European-ness of the great civilizing mission in central Africa is fully consistent with the foundation of the Congo Free State, which became King Leopold's private property thanks to the Berlin Act of 1885. There were fourteen signatories to the Berlin Act, all but one of which were European (the USA) – or all but two, if Turkey be excluded. In the words of the historian Thomas Pakenham, "In effect the self-styled philanthropic King had been chosen to act in Africa as a trustee for the whole of Europe" (254).

This emphasis on Europe has consequences for at least two commonly held ideas about *Heart of Darkness*. It is frequently argued that Marlow is an Anglophile who faults the colonial practices of other nations while praising the relatively "good work" done under the red flag; but England was also among the signatories of the Berlin Act, and Marlow is by no means the only Englishman working for King Leopold. Kurtz "had been partly educated in England" (117), and his famous last word is presumably uttered in English. Secondly, Conradians have a long tradition of seeking prototypes for Kurtz among the local perpetrators of various horrors, but as against these micro-models Kurtz is also at the macro level the symbolic embodiment of King Leopold himself, whose philanthropic mission in Africa represents an "idea" that unites and implicates the whole of Europe.

All the signatories of the Berlin Act expected King Leopold's humanitarian project to fail, but in the meantime, the center of Africa would be open to free trade and would provide its European sponsors with useful propaganda for the suppression of slavery and the promulgation of the "three C's' of civilization, Christianity, and commerce." Bismarck was adept in playing the British and the French off against each other, and when he was dismissed in January 1890 (the year of Conrad's Congo journey), the French and the English set about consolidating their colonial gains: the Belgian government floated a loan for the building of the railway up to Léopoldville, while the French envisioned a trans-Saharan railway linking the Mediterranean with the river Niger. Cecil Rhodes took the idea of a Cape-to-Cairo axis of British colonies as an excuse to send the "pioneers" into Mashonaland (future Southern Rhodesia) with a royal charter for the British South African Company.

The weak spot in the Cape-to-Cairo project remained the Upper Nile, which remained in the control of the Mahdists following Gordon's defeat at Khartoum in 1885. Leopold failed to convince Stanley to lead an expedition against Khartoum, but he sent Stanley to "rescue" Gordon's lieutenant, Emin Pasha, from the dervishes who stood for all the evils of un-Christian slavery. Emin Pasha was the governor of Equatoria, the southernmost region of what is today Sudan, who had been cut off from the outside world by the success of the Mahdist revolt. Although the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition was announced as a humanitarian rescue like the search for Dr. Livingston, the underlying motive for Leopold was to take advantage of British weakness in the area to establish a claim on the Upper Nile. In ac-

tual fact, neither Dr. Livingston nor Dr. Schnitzer[2] considered himself in need of rescue, and neither was in fact rescued; both Livingston and Emin Pasha chose to remain in Africa and died there. Nevertheless, the "rescue" was hailed in the press as a great success; in April 1890, shortly before Conrad left for the Congo, Stanley was given a hero's welcome in Brussels, and the Relief Expedition was among the models available to Conrad in developing Marlow's rescue of Kurtz.[3] The bad news about the fate of the rear guard did not break until the autumn, when Conrad was already on the Congo and able to see horrors enough at first hand. If Kurtz represents King Leopold in Africa not merely as an employee but as an embodiment of the civilizing mission and its concealed hypocrisies and crimes, he also represents to Marlow a figure comparable to Livingston and to Emin Pasha: a stranded emissary who finds it difficult to accept the idea that he needs to be rescued.

Marlow's insistence on the European-ness of Kurtz and the European mandate for the development of the Congo suggests that it makes as much sense to seek models for Kurtz among those who hold "a high seat amongst the devils" of Europe as it does to seek for local examples of horrific behavior. Kurtz has been linked with historical figures such as Georges Klein and Arthur Hodister (Sherry), with Léon Rom (Hochschild), with Major Edmund Barthellot and James Jameson in the rear guard of the Relief Expedition (Pearson), and even with Roger Casement (Ford). There are indeed similarities: Klein's name, Hodister's ability to procure ivory, Rom's penchant for decorative skulls, Barthellot's insanity, Jameson's depravity; but none of these associations do full justice to the way in which Kurtz is presented as a European carrying out a European mission. A closer analogy can be found with the Belgian king whose family connections embraced virtually all the crowned heads of Europe, or with a cosmopolitan German doctor representing the Khedive of Egypt who was popular among his Egyptian troops and eventually renounced British interests to espouse the German cause in East Africa.

There may be another reason why Conrad scholars have sought models for Kurtz among the perpetrators of specific horrors. It is easier to accept the idea of an individual trader who goes mad and loses all restraint than to accept the idea that the entire scramble for Africa on the part of European powers was not an occasion for restraint. It is easier to blame Kurtz's "horror" on specific acts of brutality than to acknowledge that the great civilizing mission was an excuse for "robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a grand scale, and men going at it blind – as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness" (50). This darkness is itself a

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[2] Emin Pasha (1840-92) was a German doctor named Eduard Carl Otto Theodor Schnitzer, born in the Silesian town of Oppeln (Opole) on 28 March 1840.

[3] Such was the euphoria following Stanley's exploits that in July 1890 the King was able to revise the Berlin Act and impose an import duty of 10% on all goods arriving in the Congo from abroad (in addition to the 15% export duty) for the sake of abolishing slavery (Pakenham 398-99).

European import, for Marlow notes that central Africa had become a dark place in the course of his own lifetime: "It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery – a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness" (52; see also Brantlinger).

It is a convention among Conrad scholars that even though Kurtz "goes native," natives are oddly exempt from service as models to explain his indulgence in horrors. Kurtz is white, and must therefore be based on white prototypes. But the accounts of missionaries and medical officers suggest a wide range of reference to native practices about which Conrad might well have been informed. Alexander Mackay, a Scottish missionary sent to Buganda by the Church Missionary Society, reported for example that Mtesa, the Kabaka (king) of Buganda,

> had a loathsome, incurable disease, and was advised by the witch doctors to resume the practice of kiwendo – human sacrifice – to propitiate the gods. Victims taken at random, unsuspecting peasants bringing in plantains to sell in the capital, were bundled off and held in slave-sticks for the night, then publicly butchered in the morning. Sometimes 2,000 people were killed in a single day. (in Pakenham 302)

Two early German explorers who penetrated into Katanga from Angola described their encounter with a local warlord named Msiri: "It was Msiri's way of impressing his European visitors to show them the varied collection of human skulls hanging on the trees outside his hut 'like hats on pegs' " (Slade, in Pakenham 400). The Batetela chief Gongo Lutete displayed an even larger collection at his stockade at Ngandu: "According to the count of [commandant Francis] Dhanis's medical officer, Captain Sidney Hinde, 'at least 2,000 polished human skulls formed a solid white pavement in front of each loop-holed gateway. Human skulls crowned every post in the stockade' " (Pakenham 439). Trophy skulls were a waste product of cannibalism, and – as we now know from studies of kuru and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease – the cannibals of Africa would have been wise to forego the consumption of the nervous tissue of their enemies. It is curious that while great political fanfare was made about the abolition of (Arab) slavery in Africa, relatively little noise was made about the abolition of cannibalism; gentleman cannibals who know the virtue of restraint serve as crew members in Marlow's riverboat. One eats and displays one's defeated enemies, and the white man's designation of all natives as "enemies" or "criminals" or "rebels" constitutes a license to torture and humiliate. Yet here again, the proper referent for Kurtz is cannibalism on a grand, a European scale: back in the sepulchral city, Marlow has a vision of Kurtz as a sick man with an insatiable appetite, whose colonial imperatives amount to cannibalism on an earth-devouring scale: "I had a vision of him on the stretcher, opening his mouth voraciously, as if to devour all the earth with all its mankind" (155). Lord Salisbury, explaining British colonial policy to the French ambassador in London, cited the proverb that "l'appétit vient en mangeant" ("appetite comes

with eating"; Pakenham 336); and colonial accounts frequently record the complaints of native rulers about the white man who comes to "eat our land" (cf. Pakenham 413).

Stanley's diaries record an encounter with natives on Lake Tanganyika in 1876 which can be taken as emblematic of the presumption of the European white man in his confrontation with natives who seek only to protect themselves and their families and to preserve some vestige of human pride, like the rowers Marlow observes from the French steamer, fine and natural fellows who "wanted no excuse for being there" (61). Stanley recorded the encounter in his own words:

> On coming near a village on the west bank of the Kasansagara River, we were forewarned by the female natives flying wildly away loaded with articles, of a rude reception. But approaching nearer we were told by the Wabembe cannibals not to advance unless we desired war. Wishing to test how far they would venture without sufficient provocation, I motioned the boats to advance. From wild gestures, striking spears on the ground, beating the water, and hopping up and down, they turned to stones of such large size as might well be termed dangerous missiles. Motioning a halt, we quietly surveyed the natives, watched the rocks flying into the air making deep pits in the water as they fell, like at an entertainment specially got up for our amusement. Not a word, a sign or a movement on our part indicated either wrath or pleasure, until the natives, as if tired, made a pause and regarded each other with encouragement. For my part I remembered the gentle-souled Livingstone and told them, if they were not such fools, I could feel hearty anger, but we had nothing to say to people who treated strangers so rudely without cause.
>
> We tried to make a camp at Kiunyu, Chief Mahonga's land. As we spoke they mocked us. When we asked them if they would sell some grain, they asked us if they were our slaves that they should till their land and sow grain for us. Meanwhile, canoes were launched and criers sent ahead to proclaim that we were coming. The beach was crowded with infuriates and mockers. Perceiving that a camp was hopeless in this vicinity, we pulled off, but having gone about half a mile, we perceived we were followed by several canoes in some of which we saw spears shaken at us. We halted and made ready, and as they approached still in this hostile fashion, I opened on them with the Winchester Repeating Rifle. Six shots and four deaths were sufficient to quiet the mocking etc. etc. etc. and to establish a different character for ourselves somewhat more respectable, if not more desirable. (Stanley and Nearne, eds., 125; entry for 27 July 1876)

Stanley sees himself here as mild and reasonable, a follower of Livingstone, a man of restraint provoked beyond endurance by the hostile gestures of "cannibals," "fools," "infuriates and mockers." It seems above all to have been the mockery that he was unable to endure.

In summary, the "horror" felt by Kurtz is not limited to the specific acts of individual demons of rapacity, nor is it an indictment of Belgian or Francophone colonialism alone; it is not the method that is at fault, but the "idea." The quest for prototypes of Kurtz should not distract us from recognizing that he embodies the strengths and weaknesses of the very "idea" by virtue of which Europeans, at least since the glorious days of Drake and the Golden Hind, have claimed the right to possess the globe and consume its riches, to eat the land, "to devour all the earth with all its mankind." Kurtz's unrestrained appetite is the mentality of the scram-

ble. When he says "My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river" (116), it is not because he has gone mad in the heart of darkness, but because he is a European who understands property rights and the law of vae victis, of "finders keepers, losers weepers." Kurtz goes to the Congo not like an anthropologist seeking to understand and appreciate alien cultures, but in order to "suppress savage customs." He is thoroughly European in his ambition, his arrogance, and his hypocrisy. On his way out to the Congo, Marlow noted that "Now and then a boat from the shore gave one a momentary contact with reality. It was paddled by black fellows" whose energetic movement "was as natural and true as the surf along their coast" (61); but André Gide, following in Conrad's footsteps in 1925, complained that he was unable to escape from the filtering influence of his own culture: " Surtout je m'aperçois qu'on ne peut y prendre contact réel avec rien; non point que tout y soit factice; mais l'écran de la civilisation s'interpose, et rien n'y entre que tamisé" ("Above all I realize that one cannot make real contact with anything; not that everything there is artificial, but the screen of civilization interposes itself, and nothing enters without being filtered"; Gide 30). One can only hope that the filters of political correctness, nationalism, and the scapegoating of individuals will not prevent Conrad scholars from appreciating the timeliness and relevance of *Heart of Darkness* as a profoundly disturbing reflection on what it means to be civilized and to be European.

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CONTRAPUNCTUS: EDWARD SAID AND JOSEPH CONRAD

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Nearly two years ago now, I was very privileged to have one of the more memorable experiences of my life, an experience whose rarity I remember feeling while it was happening. This was the day I made a trip up from Washington, D.C., where I live, to Columbia University for an interview with Edward Said, an interview that proved to be his last. The interview was originally the product of the generosity of Andrzej Busza, who, shortly after the international Conrad conference in Vancouver that he and John Stape organized in August 2002, contacted Said on my behalf, informing him that I hoped to speak with him about Conrad as part of a volume of essays Carola Kaplan, Andrea White, and I were putting together called *Conrad in the Twenty-First Century.* The interview ultimately took place on February 28, 2003, and despite the fact that he had undergone a number of difficult medical treatments and a thoroughly hectoring schedule during the preceding weeks, I will never forget the dashing figure whose boots I first heard clumping, then shadow I saw emerging toward me, down the third floor of Columbia's Philosophy Hall: a tall, astonishingly handsome man dressed in a long camel-colored coat and a bright cherry red scarf – Said once wrote that he saw it as his moral obligation to dress against the norm – with bright black boots, a vigorous shock of black hair, the hints of a turquoise silk shirt, a slightly graying full beard and a broad smile – the very picture, it seemed to me, of perfect health, and a person whose energy was equaled only by his hospitality. He escorted me through a labyrinth of alcoves – past two older women, or so I seem to remember, who appeared to be knitting black wool; past another figure with calipers, I am all but certain, who seemed determined to measure my head for "scientific purposes" – into the stately inner sanctuary of his office. And there we sat for the next three hours talking exclusively about Conrad – though this, of course, was essentially no limitation at all.

The result is printed in *Conrad and the Twenty-First Century* – with the exception of the fragment that appears at the end of my brief introductory remarks below. This fragment is how the interview actually began, and its subject, in Said's own turn of phrase and at his own request, is what being a "Conradian" had meant to him: i.e., the people he had met, the places he had been (especially Poland in 1972), the "worldly" circumstances and "contrapuntal" exchanges that were the consequences of his travels with Conrad. For my part, if I have begun my comments in narrative form, it is because this is a space I do not want to lose touch with entirely. Storytelling, as Walter Benjamin emphasizes and as readers of Conrad know too, is a curiously experiential form of expression that takes its meaning as much outside the tale in the community of speakers and listeners that it generates and presupposes as it does inside the words of the tale itself. So too Said, in his famous "Joseph Conrad: The Presentation of Narrative" essay, which was printed in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983) but whose original Polish circumstances of delivery he describes below, emphasizes the self-conscious *contextuality* of so many of Conrad's tales: the fact that they are generally very carefully dramatized, in one way or another, as being told in a certain place and time and to a certain audience, giving rise to a double-frame in which the ostensible "story" is persistently juxtaposed with questions of the circumstances of its consumption and experience. What I suggest in the following is that this kind of doubleness is crucial, even foundational, not only to Said's interpretation of Conrad but to his greater intellectual relation with Conrad: which began, as a matter of Said's published work, with his first book, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (1966), and continued in strikingly diverse and resonant ways throughout much of what Said felt and wrote thereafter. If the making of this argument gives rise to an occasional storytelling impulse in me, you must believe me that this is not preciousness on my part; rather it is the only way I have found myself able to articulate an insight that for me came principally out of the experience of the interview itself.

To begin to inquire into "why" Said was so attracted to Conrad – why, in Said's own words, "Over the years I have found myself writing about Conrad like a *cantus firmus*, a steady ground bass to much that I have experienced" (qtd. in "Traveling" 283) – is to encounter almost immediately a bewildering superabundance of narrative and material options. Among the most powerful of these is a narrative Said himself had come to strong terms with by the end of his life: one predicated on the idea of *exile*, on a vocabulary of displacement and disorientation, marginality and mobility, experimentation and alienation, filial foreclosure and affiliative compensation, that connects his formative experiences and Conrad's, and offers up a distinctive note that links each man's sensibility.[1] In a momentous passage from the

[1] For compelling expressions of intimacy with Conrad through the idea of exile, see, in addition to the *Reflections* essay quoted below, Said, *Power, Politics* 75-76, 246; *Said Reader* 421. For more on filiation and affiliation, see Said, *World, Text* 16-25.

introduction to *Reflections on Exile* (2002), Said explains Conrad's seminal place in the expressive history of not only his own writings but those of others of exilic and displaced experiences:

> The greatest single fact of the past three decades has been, I believe, the vast human migration attendant upon war, colonialism, and decolonization, economic and political revolution, and such devastating occurrences as famine, ethnic cleansing, and great power machinations... Exiles, émigrés, refugees, and expatriates uprooted from their lands must make do in new surroundings, and the creativity as well as the sadness that can be seen in what they do is one of the experiences that has still to find its chroniclers, even though a splendid cohort of writers that includes such different figures as Salman Rushdie and V.S Naipaul has already opened further *the door first tried by Conrad.* (xiv, emphasis added)

Yet if Said is among those pulled to Conrad through this general prism of exile, there are also specific historical continuities between Conrad's native Poland and Said's Palestine that reinforce and multiply their bond. The two erased homelands, fiercely contested from within and densely cathected with symbolic and ideological freight from without, offer a symbiosis that no doubt provided Said special access to those aspects of Conrad he was among the first to emphasize: the "presentation" of imperialist aggression; the romance of "Lost Causes"; the power-knowledge relations of Western epistemological systems and records; the instrumentation of imperialism through systems of culture; the "irreconcilable antagonisms" that dialectically and irrefragably underlie human affairs.[2] Once one starts looking, there are in fact extensive relations of continuity and correspondence – e.g., of skeptical temperament,[3] multiply *duplex* identity, technical virtuosity, sensory and experiential insistence, institutional suspicion and resistance, simultaneously experimental and preservationist impulse, and more – that run between Said and Conrad, all of which can become a bit overwhelming, as each additional increment

[2] See, respectively, "Joseph Conrad: The Presentation of Narrative," in *World, Text* 90-110 [as I suggest below, this essay is easily read implicitly in terms of the issues of imperialism Said was contemplating at the time and would explicitly incorporate into his literary analysis of Conrad later]; "On Lost Causes," in *Reflections* 527-53; *Orientalism* 216, 242-3, 324-5 and *Beginnings* 100-37; *Culture* 22-30, *passim.* "Irreconcilable antagonisms," of course, is a signature Conradian phrase (*CL2* 348) – but as Said points out, it is an important phrase for him too ("Traveling" 299). See also Said's first book, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*, and his political books on Palestine, which make occasional but meaningful reference to Conrad, most often with respect to Marlow's invocation in *Heart of Darkness* of the redeeming "idea" (51), which is for Said a kind of master-image of what Foucault calls "regimes of truth," and what Said calls "Culture" in its instrumentalizing relation to imperialism. Compare finally, with respect to Said's longstanding and trenchant interest in *Nostromo*, Christopher Hitchens' polemical but provocative speculation in his Preface to Said's *Peace and its Discontents* (1996): "it is my speculation that every line of Edward Said's political work, since at least 1967, has been explicitly concerned with *preventing* the replication among Palestinians of the banana-republic style and method that has become so dismally familiar in the Arab world" (xix).

[3] See "Conrad and Nietzsche," in *Reflections* 70-82.

of consideration contributes a new and vital thread to a web of continuities that seemed so self-sufficiently woven the moment before. It is only recently, for instance, in light of Said's final book, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004) – a posthumous collection of lectures specifically addressing "American humanism" and the state of the humanities in the United States, where "I have lived for the majority of my adult life, and for the past four decades...have been a practicing humanist, a teacher, critic, and scholar. That is the world I know best" (1) – that it becomes explicitly apparent how important Said's U.S. location may have been to his investments in Conrad. The tenacity and compulsiveness with which Said returns to Conrad during his forty years of writing, it now seems especially clear, has been powerfully informed by the resonant analogy between Conrad's living near the center and as an alien subject of the nineteenth-century British Empire, and Said's similar circumstances at the metropolitan center of the latest Empire on which the sun perpetually rises.

The idea of the *cantus firmus*, however, is predicated on not sympathy but rather counterpoint. Consequently, amid the vast tissue of intertwining correspondences that together make for a sort of "common ground" between Said and Conrad – such that Said can say: "You know, there are two great presences in my life intellectually: one of them literary, which is Conrad, the other one musical, which is Bach. With Conrad, of course, it's the whole: *I don't know a better, more encyclopedic description of the world from which I come than is provided by Conrad's novels*" ("Traveling" 291, emphasis added) – we are wise to consider, apropos of Bach, the Said/Conrad relation from a *contrapuntal* point of view. In *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Said glosses the contrapuntal as:

> a musical form...employing numerous voices in usually strict imitation of each other, a form, in other words, expressing motion, playfulness, discovery, and, in the rhetorical sense, invention. Viewed this way, the texts of the canonical humanities, far from being a rigid tablet of fixed rules and monuments bullying us from the past...will always remain open to changing combinations of sense and signification; every reading and interpretation of a canonical works re-animates it in the present, furnishes an occasion for rereading, allows the modern and the new to be situated in a broad historical field whose usefulness is that it shows us history as an agonistic process still being made, rather than finished and settled once and for all. (25)

I quote this passage at length because even though it does not explicitly refer to Conrad at all, it not only articulates a conception of the contrapuntal that helpfully frames Said's relation to Conrad (curiously recursive but also subversive, studied yet free, multi-vocal but not unison); it also *exemplifies* their contrapuntal relation. Consider, for instance, that from the perspective of "strict imitation" and precise engagement, it is difficult to imagine a more Conradian passage than one that (a) prioritizes music above all other arts (see *NN* ix); (b) walks a fine line between deep and disciplined attention to the "rules and monuments" of the past and the need ultimately to abandon them to pursue "the stammerings of [one's] own con-

science" (*NN* x-xi); (c) recognizes, in the words of Conrad's very famous letter to Barrett Clark on May 4, 1918, that "a work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion," the more so "the nearer it approaches art" (*CL6* 210-11); and (d) insists, as Conrad does in one of the most famous letters of them all, that history and its interpretation are processes of ever-ongoing, agonistic "irreconcilable antagonisms" (*CL2* 348). Yet at the same time, this hyper-Conradian passage – this passage which, "in the rhetorical sense," could very well be described as "invented" by Conrad insofar as it has little vocabulary not heavily pre-articulated and mediated by him – never would or could have been written by Conrad himself. Its immediately and aggressively didactic purposes; its interventionist political spirit; the kind of leftist, anti-nationalist, and anti-imperialist politics on which its is predicated and that it extends; even the utopic conception of the university that is its animating circumstance – all these are not simply a departure from Conrad; they are the positive and counter-pointed *undoing* of premises as fundamental and integral to Conrad's writings as the ones Said extends.

There is, then, a curious doubleness in Said's negotiation of Conrad that is its own kind of "irreconcilable antagonism": an intimacy so fundamental that even when Conrad is not intended, he is implicitly and extensively evoked; and at the same time a distance so pronounced that Conrad's very limitations and oppostion seem to offer up the foundational opportunity through which the signature elements in Said's voice, values, and vision emerge and define themselves. It is no coincidence, then, that many people who are not Conrad or anglo-postcolonial literary scholars are surprised to discover that Said wrote his first book on Conrad – and generally assume that to the extent Said's work bears relation to Conrad at all, it is one of repudiation. This is not the product of not knowing Said well, so much as knowing half of him too well. Similarly, Said's own interpretations of Conrad are continually – paradigmatically, I would say – couched in a rhetoric of division that replicates the duality of his own overarching stance toward Conrad. For example, Said's major arguments concerning *Heart of Darkness* and *Nostromo* – the two Conrad texts he admires most consistently and keenly – are each presented in terms of "two visions" at work "in" those novels, one predicated on all the objective and subjective processes of Eurocentric imperialist ideology which those books unsparingly critique but to which they are nevertheless limited, the other predicated on the limitlessly contingent worlds in which the "story" is and can be told, to which the books point and invite re-writing but about which the books remain silent and blank.[4] So too, in a slightly different key, the "Presentation of Narrative" essay in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* turns on the element of contingency that runs

[4] This is the principal argument of "Two Visions in *Heart of Darkness*" (in *Culture* 19-31) and "Through Gringo Eyes: With Conrad in Latin America" (*Reflections* 276-81).

throughout Conrad's fiction: each story (in one way or another) carefully set and situated in the circumstances that give rise to its articulation (if only in the Author's Note), precisely to emphasize the tremendous discrepancy between the invariably elaborate "tale" that finds itself presented for certain listeners, and the vast swathes of occluded reality and voice that are kept outside the charmed circle of speaker and listener (90-100). Even Said's own meta-critical reflections on the relationship between himself and Conrad take on a divided and conflicted character that is greater than the sum of the irreconcilable parts. Within the span of two pages, for instance, having described Conrad as "one the two great presences in my life intellectually" ("Traveling" 288); having praised *Heart of Darkness* as "the most uncompromised, unafraid confrontation with the irrational and the unknown – in every sense of the word: political, psychological, geographical, cultural – that there has ever been" (288); and having championed *Nostromo* for its "relentlessly open-ended, aggressively critical inquiry into the mechanisms and presuppositions and situatedness and abuses of imperialism" and for "a profound urge to get to the bottom of things" (289), all of which clearly and deeply capture Said's sympathy, he can also say:

> And yet – and this is the other part of it now – I have a feeling that Conrad and I would never, could never be friends!
>
> PM: Why?
>
> ES: Well, I think he's really the opposite of me in many ways. I mean, he's a man who believes in no political action. I think he thought it was all vain, and that's, of course, what's going on in his discussions with Cunninghame Graham, who is the opposite. That is to say: I am the Cunninghame Graham figure in the model, rather than Conrad. But you need a Conrad, I think, to have a Cunninghame Graham – that's the whole point. I've often felt that Conrad would have deeply disapproved of everything I did. ("Traveling" 290)

The analogy of Cunninghame Graham, the one friend with whom Conrad may have had the truest[5] line of communication, is revealing and we will return to it in a moment. Here, though, an important point to consider is that there may be an element of over-determination in the aggressively contrapuntal stance Said assumes toward Conrad: whose form is all too frequently the irreconcilable poles of absolute vision and sympathy on the one hand and complete blankness and blindness on the other. Consider, for instance, Said's eloquently dual description of *Heart of Darkness*:

[5] I do not mean to lapse into fictions of "authentic" or "essential" self here. "Truest" is shorthand for a distinctive lack of anxiety, a combination of candor and a distinct pairing of intellectual and expressive audacity, that experienced readers of Conrad's correspondence, beginning with Said (his first book on Conrad is the first sustained critical consideration of Conrad's letters) but especially after Cedric Watts' *Joseph Conrad's Letters to R. B. Cunninghame Graham* (1969), generally recognize to exist in the letters with Cunninghame Graham.

> Conrad is *so self-conscious* about situating Marlow's tale in a narrative moment that he allows us simultaneously to realize after all that imperialism, far from swallowing up its own history, was taking place in and was circumscribed by a larger history, one just outside the tightly exclusive circle of Europeans on the deck of the *Nellie*. *As yet, however, no one seemed to inhabit that region, and so Conrad left it empty.* (*Culture* 24, emphasis added)

Conrad was "so self conscious" – indeed, "What makes Conrad different from the other colonial writers who were his contemporaries is that...he was so self-conscious about what he did" (23) – that he is able to point to the very vast historical vistas that his culturally-determined and equally absolute blindness force him to leave "empty." Similarly, *Heart of Darkness*, despite its "immensely compelling" (23), "remarkably disorienting" (29), and unstintingly relentless (29-30) critique of Western imperialism and its Eurocentric apparatuses, cannot see beyond an imperialist frame, cannot recognize that what it registers "as a non-European 'darkness' was in fact a non-European world *resisting* imperialism so as one day to regain sovereignty and independence" (30, emphasis in original). Benita Parry, in a recent essay that may inaugurate a sea-change in contemporary criticism on *Heart of Darkness*, has explicitly challenged this view of "Conrad's 'Africa'" as "a world immutable and epistemologically empty" (41), arguing that in its self-conscious gaps, repeated expressions of bewilderment, and signature hermeneutic breakdowns, "the book alludes to a reality that lies beyond its own epistemologically constrained field of vision" (50), registering Africanist contact and inviting post-colonial re-writing. I would add, moreover, on the model of Melville's *Benito Cereno* – where the emphasis falls on the white narrator's perceptual limitations in direct relation to the agency and intelligence of the subversive black characters that the scene that Marlow describes as "quite a mutiny," where after much verbal abuse from Marlow the impressed African slaves run the hammock carrying Marlow's sickly "white companion" into a bush (*HD* 71-72), and also the scene in which the "screeching," abused, and unrepentant African slave burns down the Central Station's grass shed (76-78) – these seem to me, whether Marlow understands this or not, very plausibly readable as precisely Conrad's recognition and disclosure of the "non-European darkness" as "in fact a non-European world" very intelligently and deliberately "*resisting* imperialism so as one day to regain sovereignty and independence." My point, though, is not to open and enter the very complicated, important, and probably irresolvable issues of the degree and manner of *Heart of Darkness*'s investment in racism and imperialism, nor to quarrel with Said on a point (Parry's and mine) that I suspect he would acknowledge (for it is one of degree and subtlety), and which indeed seems to me not only in the general spirit of but ultimately made possible by the "second vision" he observes in *Heart of Darkness*. My point, rather, is the element of categorical over-determination that finds repeated articulation, like a *cantus firmus*, in Said's baseline formulations of what Conrad can and cannot see.

What I learned through the *experience* of the interview is that there is a logic, a purpose, and a significance behind this production of the contrapuntal – which, as I have already suggested, I believe derives from Said's engagement with Conrad as not simply an object but an internalized mechanism of (self-)critical inquiry. From my perspective as interviewer, the crucial moment of the interview happened early, when we felicitously stumbled onto the subject of Conrad's *Victory* – which I had just finished editing, and which Said was immersed in pondering for a book he was writing on "late style" and "late work" generally. These terms, Said explained, he derived from Adorno, and they are based "on the third period of Beethoven, where his style is difficult, and it's as if Beethoven is writing for himself: that he's lost his audience as he's lost his hearing" ("Traveling" 287). Much as Heyst attempts to retreat from an external "world of savage ferocity," so too this "later, more difficult meta-poetic work … turns on questions of the medium itself." There are "striking juxtapositions of banality and extreme difficulty," which Said elaborated in a number of different contexts – musical, literary, critical, philosophical, political – before arriving at his culminating and integrating point: that in opposition to "late works that are about *reconciliation*," *Victory* and the late Beethoven instance "another late style, which is the one I'm interested in … where everything gets torn apart, and instead of reconciliation there's a kind of nihilism and tension that is relentlessly honest and quite unique" (285-7). He continued:

> When you think of Conrad in his late phase – you know, as an older man, who's gone through a lot, and was slightly more famous than he was, say, when he wrote *Lord Jim* or even *Nostromo* – there's still this haunting sense that he's somehow not pulling it off; it comes out just as dark as his other work....[I]n that respect *Victory* presents a very interesting re-invasion of his past by Conrad whom, one would have thought, by that time, had settled himself, as it were. It's one of the most disturbing novels I have ever read. I read it recently, about a year or two ago, and I found it very disturbing for that reason. (287)

The experience of listening to these words was, in a word, transporting. Between the complex thoughts and juxtapositions and the spontaneous peals of eloquence in which they were expressed; between the serendipitous joy of talking about *Victory* (it is a novel of controversial status I had by no means expected to discuss) and the dawning realization that the pathos of this scene (in which there was absolutely no sentimentality) was that of a man confronting a savagely disappointing world (this was three weeks before the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003) and the cruelly premature arrival of a "late" period in Said's own life through the prism of "late" Conrad, holding himself to its standards of unrelenting, defiant, and unreconciled ethical and intellectual integrity – I felt literally expelled from my body and mind; I was both in and above the room; I was absorbed by a voice whose perfect understanding both surrounded and completely escaped me. I was so absorbed by this simultanouesly overfull and curiously evacauated experience, in fact, that it was not until the next day that it occurred to me that my own reading of *Victory* – which I was quite proud

of as I had spent three months working on it; it turns on the new "poetics of democracy" *Victory* inaugurates in Conrad's work as a function of the new public, popular, and *outwardly*-directed emphases and authorial circumstances of that novel[6] – was very much the opposite of Said's. Indeed, even more strange was the fact that the "outward" and "democratic" emphases of my own argument were actually derived at least in part from *Said's* earlier work – though this connection too was strangely unavailable to me in my moment of absorption. But most of all, in the light of retrospection, I was struck by the difference between my own evacuation in the seductive presence of Said, and the queer contradiction through which Said's equally absorbed and seduced turn to Conrad produced the terms of his own critical self-declaration and expulsion. For, turning to Conrad – and in particular, the "late" *Victory* – as a standard of "unreconciled" intellectual integrity *usque ad finem*, Said profferred an interpretation of *Victory* correct by any lights: "about withdrawal – from the world, and also the failure of that project" (286) – whose terms are the precise *opposite*, the very overdetermined *rejection*, of the fundamental political convictions through which Said, to the end, defined himself. Nothing could be further, that is, from the attitude of resigned fatalism and skepticism (with respect to any constructive human activity) that initiates and is confirmed by *Victory*'s fantasy of withdrawal from the world, than the man who five minutes after parsing *Victory* in this way advised academics:

> I think a reinvigorated attitude toward the humanities and toward the practice of humanism is the key [to the future of the university]. Its major component is re-appropriating agency – from globalization, from the military-industrial complex, from institutions, from everything that threatens the university, which I consider a utopic place. I believe in the importance of rethinking the relationship between these forces and the university as not one of complementarity but rather antagonism, and of taking the fight out there – in an unreconciled way. There are deep, irreconcilable oppositions which it is our duty to maintain. Between the obscenity of the imperial world view and that of the Christian fundamentalists which Bush represents, and his inexperienced, in my opinion, abstract, and in the end [XXX] advisors like Wolfowitz and Perle weighing in on a part of the world I know something about – I think it is our moral duty to oppose these people and to expose them precisely for the impractical, the abstract, the mechanical, the inexperienced, the ideological villains that they really are. And that's what we do, I think: we oppose it through all the means at our disposal. (299)

This was an interview about Conrad, one recalls; and my point is that the singular intimacy of Conrad seems to lie in the *doubleness* through which Conrad provokes his own refutation. The allure and utility of Conrad for Said – whose symptoms are the overdetermined categories into which Conrad becomes grouped by Said – emerge as a function of both the capacious sympathies and the necessary expulsions through which Said himself takes critical measure of the most instructive model he has for "beginning": through which Conrad provokes, dares, and forces Said to declare himself.

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[6] See Mallios, "Introduction" and "Declaring *Victory*."

This point was elaborated with one further wrinkle as we turned to *Heart of Darkness* – though the interview went on to cover many more texts and issues. Fortunately for me, *Heart of Darkness* was a text I was less captivated by at the time than *Victory*; so, as Said began a string of truly Olympian claims about the novella – "The intensity and power of what Conrad jams together is really unparalleled, I think, in the world of literature" (288); "It provides perhaps the most influential portrait of a continent ever done – in history" (288); "It's just a miraculous thing. You might say that it's Conrad's fortunate fall, more so than anything that comes before and anything that comes after" (288) – I was able self-consciously to appreciate the sheer force and eloquence of his words and presence. This time within the room rather than above it or looking back on it, I listened as Said spoke in magic cascades of language about the novel's compulsive power: how it has "compelled many, many others to write in its wake"; how V.S. Naipaul was "spellbound by the thing"; how even Chinua Achebe "can't stop talking about it, and he can't stop writing about it" (288-9). I remember being struck by the analogy between these "spellbound" writers (including Said) and Conrad; Marlow and his own compulsive quest for the charismatic Mr. Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*; and the two months I had just spent in Washington (it was a fiercely cold winter in this "sepulchral city"; Capitol Hill, where I live, was barricaded like a police state; Republicans and Democrats alike were beating the drums for war) deriving perfectly irrational sustenance from the idea that despite these depths of utter darkness I was headed for a talk with Mr. Said. And there he was: a "great presence" and remarkable "voice" before me; someone one who was going to "enlarge my mind" and "make me see things"; a product of "all of Europe" and then some, who could have been a politician (probably an extreme one) and actually was a kind of journalist and a great musician too; someone you didn't talk with but listened to, a "remarkable man," a force of vast power, charisma, and insight who certainly had the power to kick me free of the earth, whom I was burning to declare loyalty to, and who was somehow going to explain, justify, and reconcile for me how on earth one could be a professor of literature in these times of infinite political darkness. In other words, I became viscerally convinced of Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan's claims, in her important contra-Lacanian essay "*Heart of Darkness* and the Ends of Man," that desire is a force whose constitutive basis is a yearning for law rather than against it, and that *Heart of Darkness* is a text that may be read as mapping out a commesurate will, in the form of Marlow's relation to Kurtz, which was also mine to Said, for a guiding, authoritative, totalizing force.

But not so, at least in the end, Said's relation to Conrad. For whatever totalitarian and totalizing attractions the intimacy and authority of Conrad presented to Said (and as we have seen, there were many), the distinctive and energizing note of their relation – what makes Said talk in such glowing terms about Conrad – is the

dialectical mechanism, what Said would call the *secular* mandate, through which the very intimacy of Conrad requires a critical and self-defining gesture of difference – and defiance. This is what Said means when he describes Conrad as "a constant challenge" ("Traveling" 289) – a sort of "irreconcilable antagonism," hedged against temptations of totality and absorption, from within. Said understood Conrad as an exile, as someone like himself who was perpetually "out of place" and who could contribute a point of view from the perspective of displacement, disempowerment, discursive resistance and misrepresentation. Through this *sympathy*, there emerges a consistent Conradian vein throughout Said's work: in the *Fiction of Autobiography* book, which draws on phenomenology in an attempt to place and articulate Conrad as an alienated subject; in *Beginnings*, a deconstructive study that highlights *Nostromo* in studying the discrepancies between discursive "records" and displaced "origins"; in the "Presentation of Narrative" essay, a further investigation of Conrad to confront the animating contexts and realities that find themselves occluded through the written word; in *Orientalism* and the books on Palestine, which frequently reference the passage in *Heart of Darkness* concerning the "redeeming" power the "idea" to highlight the legitimating and eliminating power of Orientalist, Western, and anti-Arab narratives; in *Culture and Imperialism*, which in significant part turns on the thought-experiment of moving Conrad to the center of British literary canon to reveal the centrality of imperialism to that tradition and to recover the marginalized voices existing in apposition to that project; and in *Reflections on Exile*, which begins with and is itself a vindication of the "door first tried by Conrad." All of these texts share a fundamental coordinate of displacement; they all depend on the "extraordinarily persistent residual sense of his own exilic marginality" (*Culture* 24) that made Conrad's angle vision especially useful to and resonant with Said – pressing him on, in an almost Kurtzian spirit of defiance, in what I take quite seriously as Said's "lifelong struggle and attempt to demystify the capriciousness and hypocrisy of [any] power whose authority depended absolutely on its ideological self-image as a moral agent, acting in good faith and without unimpeachable intentions" (*Out* 230).

But in the end it is not sympathy with Conrad but being forced out of this very alien place whose textual gradient most thoroughly informs and models his own work and world, that is the fundamental mark of Conrad for and on Said. This has been the point of this essay – and it is present in the title *Out of Place*, which is both the name of Said's final and fullest autobiography (itself significantly a re-writing of the first Conrad book, on the "fiction of autobiography") and a phrase Said gets from Conrad. But Conrad uses it in reference not to himself but to his dialectical intimate and opposite, Cunnighame Graham:

> You and your ideals of sincerity and courage and truth are strangely *out of place* in this epoch of material preoccupations. What does it bring? What's the profit? What do we get by it? These ques-

> tions are the root of every moral, intellectual or political movement. Into the noblest causes, men manage to put something of their baseness: and sometimes when I think of you here quietly, you seem to me tragic with your courage, with your beliefs and your hopes. Every cause is tainted: and you reject this one, espouse that other one as if one were evil and the other good, while the same evil you hate is in both, but disguised in different words. I am more in sympathy with you than words can express, yet if I had a grain of belief left in me I would believe you misguided. You are misguided by the desire of the Impossible, – and I envy you. (*CL2* 24-25)[7]

The title of Said's autobiography is not an expression of empathy with Conrad; it is an expression of being displaced from the displaced intimacy of Conrad – and the beginning of the contrapuntal relation through which Said's work and person will declare themselves.

Opening Piece of Interview with Edward Said
Columbia University, February 28, 2003

PM: Perhaps a good way to begin this interview is to ask about your experiences in the world of Conrad and Conrad scholarship. Would you say a bit about your interaction with other Conrad scholars over the years, and how it may have impacted your own thinking and writing?

ES: I think my first important interaction was in 1972, five or six years after my first book came out. The Polish Academy of Sciences – this was during the dark days of the Communist regime – organized a Conrad travelling seminar, and I was invited and immediately accepted. That is where I first met Ian Watt, Tom Moser, Andrzej Busza, Hans van Marle, and a chap whose name escapes me. Zdzisław Najder was there too, though I had known him before – had always felt a kind of kinship with him too – because he came to Columbia shortly after I came. I came to Columbia in the fall of 1963, and he was here as a visiting professor I think in '65. I met him through Trilling, who had been one of the people he was writing about; he was giving a course about romantic or chivalric ideas of honor. No, the man whose name escapes me wrote the book about the jump way back...

PM: Morf?

ES: Morf!! Yes; I'm trying to think who else was there from the legendary figures. Ah, sorry, there was certainly one last person: Borys Conrad, who I discovered later had been discovered by the Poles about that time. They brought him to Poland with his girlfriend, an elderly English lady; and it was then that I had a chance to talk to him about people like Ford Madox Ford and his father and his mother. He seemed to be closer to his father than his mother at the time.

PM: Let's talk a bit more about the legendary individuals you just mentioned; Borys and Morf. First, what do you remember about Morf?

[7] Said quotes this letter at even greater length in *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* 32-33.

ES: Yes, Gustav Morf was a rather taciturn – I don't want to use the word rough – but there was something slightly off-putting about him. He seemed to be a bit on the reclusive side; I think he had problems with the language. I believe he was Swiss, and he was certainly a man of few words. He wasn't really a Conradian but rather a psychologist. And I remember clearly one thing he said to me directly. Now you understand this occurred when we were in Cracow at the time of the Palestinian attack on the Olympic Games. And he said: "They are killing people in Munich!" – pointing to me. And I of course didn't know what he was talking about, because we were in Cracow and everything was written in Polish. And then I went into the television room where, of course, the Polish news was going on, and then I saw the symbols and the pictures and all the rest of it. And then the next day he came up to me and he said: "They're now bombing in Lebanon!" – which is where I had come from because it was in the late summer, and I normally spent the summer in those days in Lebanon. Besides that he really had very little to say.

The style of the program was that we all met in Warsaw, and we were all staying in the same hotel – the big one: the Bristol or the Europejski – in the middle of unreconstructed Warsaw. I remember the food as being the opposite of the company – generally execrable. They would feed us a set menu every night including spaghetti *and* potatoes – or rice and potatoes, and some indescribable meat. The first night I got there I remember Ian Watt – this was really my first introduction to Ian – was quite upset by the fact that there was no vodka to drink. He went up and quarrelled with the waiter and the waiter said, looking at some list, "But it doesn't say you can drink vodka; it says you're supposed to drink wine." And he said: "I don't want wine, I want vodka" – and so then there was this great fracas about vodka. He then went to something called a Red Star shop where you paid hard currency – he went and bought a bottle, in dollars, in zlotys rather. And so we had vodka, thanks to Ian: he was quite a presence.

But what I wanted to say was, for me, that this was one of the great experiences of my life: being in Poland – because two of the people I venerate the most are not only Conrad but also Chopin, whose birthplace, of course was in Poland.

PM: Did you go to the monument in Łazienki Park?

ES: Yes, of course, and then there was a concert of Chopin – chamber music actually – which I went to twice, once in Warsaw, once in Cracow. This was the first time I really heard "The Trio" played, for I don't think there was a recording of it available at the time, over forty years ago. Chopin wrote a trio for violin, piano, and cello, and this one is called the Cracow Trio.

So I must tell you about the end of this trip. We went everywhere: we went to Warsaw, we went to Cracow, we went to Gdańsk, and we went to Zakopane. It was extraordinary – and so too were the politics and people. The person who in-

vited us to all these places was a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences [Mieczysław Brahmer]; then the person who actually coordinated the whole Conrad enterprise was a chap called Leszek Prorok. There was also a woman professor whose first name was Róża – I can't remember her last name [Jabłkowska] – but she and I became very good friends, and I liked her, and I had a pianist friend from Lebanon who went to Poland a few months later and they got to be friends. There seemed to be a conflict between the Polish Academy and these two people who were not Communists, but rather described themselves "Catholic" which meant in those days that they were not members of the Party – I don't know if they were Catholic, maybe they were. So we were "up" in the sense that we were guests of the Polish Academy, which is a very prestigious thing, but we were not quite at the level that you describe: that obviously came later.[8] This was the beginning, you understand, of the Conrad "rediscovery" in Poland: his works were still not all translated.

PM: Was Conrad, then, for those of you who were at this conference a kind of *lingua franca* for all the various political issues that were going on at the time both inside and outside Poland?

ES: Very much so. Especially for Najder. Najder was quite a presence; I had met him before, as I said, and he had spent time at Oxford; and he was interested in philosophy and other things. It was quite clear that he too was a member of some sort of resistance to the CP. I don't think he had yet become close to Wałęsa – as, of course, Solidarity had not yet emerged at the time – but *in nutre* it seemed to me to be there. I also got the curious impression that the people who were most anxious to see us were not so much the young people but old people, who represented the *ancien régime* and spoke French, for example: who knew Conrad originally, in other words, as people who were well educated, who had spent time in English universities, for example, before the War.

But I must tell you about the formal proceedings of the conference itself. One thing that struck me at the time was that for every session of the seminar there was always a presidium. So they had two, three people sitting up on the platform, and sometimes one of us would be asked to be a member of the presidium; we did nothing, except we sat there and it looked kind of official. But my contribution was made in the most – for me, I was thirty, thirty-five: quite young anyway – astonishing circumstances. Everyone gave a talk somewhere, and my turn was in Cracow. My talk was the one that appears in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*: it's the one about the settings. But I gave mine in Copernicus's library in Jagiellonian Univer-

[8] Before the interview started, I had described the "Conrad and History" conference organized by Zdzisław Najder and held in Cracow in 1999. It was introduced by the British Ambassador to Poland, a representative of the Ukrainian Embassy, and the Mayor of Cracow, in a celebratory year in which Cracow had been declared one of the thirteen great cities of the world.

sity in Cracow: an immense thrill and honor. It was great, wonderful library, ten times the size of this.[9] But they had no electricity, and I read my talk as it were by the light of a candelabra, sort of like – Liberace playing the piano. I remember that Ian was the discussant of my talk. He hadn't read it before, but he was very perceptive, extremely attentive, in the riposte that he gave. It helped me a great deal in formulating precisely what I was talking about. And in general the discussions were quite animated also because of the presence of somebody I forgot to mention but who is now passed away: Eloise Knapp Hay. She had reviewed my book shortly before the conference rather badly – pointing out all the mistakes I made and what not – and she was very Christian and extremely right-wing, but we became quite friendly.

PM: I have a question about the piece you just referenced in *The World, the Text, and the Critic.* To be honest, it has always mystified me because, or so it seems to me, there is a peculiar reticence about it. You build in the essay toward a climactic argument about how orality in Conrad serves as the negation, on Freud's model, of writing; but precisely as you make this argument, it seems to me that you leave the underlying ballast of your argument – where, in a worldly and material sense, it's coming from, and what the implications of the argument might be – hidden.

ES: (laughing) You know, I don't think – I haven't really read it for a long time, so you might be right. I thought it was one of my rather more important discoveries about Conrad! I don't think that anybody had ever noticed that before; and it struck me as a strange phenomenon that he was so meticulous about setting the stage for each of the stories; you remember that was my principal point. But then I found myself drifting, which is what Ian thought too, into people like Mallarmé and Freud – and he wanted to know about that and I just made it more explicit. I don't remember what conclusion we came to, and perhaps, it was a time in my life when I was steeped in a huge number of different things. I was still coming out of *Beginnings*, which was just about finished that time. It was the year I was on sabbatical in Lebanon. I'd never really written at all in Lebanon, except for in the summer; I got married to my Lebanese wife in 1970, and I got this Guggenheim and a sabbatical from Columbia in 1972-73; we had already arrived in Lebanon for the year, and I came from there to Poland by LOT, the Polish airline. And as I was saying I was steeped in a lot of different things: I had started to work on what would become *Orientalism* , and I was still very concerned with issues of structuralism and poststructuralism and Freud and some of the issues in *Beginnings*, which I hadn't quite finished it yet, I finished it that year – so maybe there were currents and too much issues that didn't get resolved into the matter I was dealing with.

[9] Referencing the remarkable library of his own office, many yards across and with a series of ladders towering up to a vaulted ceiling across endless rows of books, in which we were sitting.

PM: Please believe me: what I was saying was not a criticism of the piece but rather the feeling that you had come up with a vocabulary to articulate a number of different issues in Conrad that left its animating coordinates undisclosed.

ES: Yes, right well exactly: I think you're right, I think that's true. But you have to understand, I have to tell you from now, that I am very far away from all that stuff. I mean I haven't really looked at it in years. But in talking to you things do seem to flood back.

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THE PARADOXES OF THE EUROPEAN NARRATIVE: EDWARD SAID'S READING OF CONRAD

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Why Said? Here and now, in the course of a conference on Conrad, with all the Conrad experts around? And I should stress that the following analyses concern Conrad as well as Said, the latter being not only a point of departure but also one of the text's dominants and its point of arrival. Why Said, then? Obviously enough, readers would say, because of his numerous interpretations of Conrad's works: he started his career with the 1966 publication of his doctoral dissertation *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*, and he continued to write about the Polish novelist in his subsequent books; in his *Reflections on Exile* he remarks that writing about Conrad is his *cantus firmus*, "a steady ground bass to much that I have experienced" (555). But another reason for speaking about Said here and now, among respected Conradians, is that Said's biography – and, as some of you know, he died exactly one year ago, today we have the first anniversary of his death – resembles the tormented biography of Józef Konrad Korzeniowski/Conrad. Both writers left their homelands, both became writers in exile, and both devoted their lives to explaining – to themselves and to their readers – what it means to be uprooted, detached from one's past, witnessing the waning of one's identity. Both decided to write in English and quickly learned that one's sense of identity has much to do with language (for example, when you write about your childhood in a foreign language). Last but not least, both recognized and described links between culture and violence, language and power, narrative and domination.

It is no surprise, then, that Said was faithful to "his" Conrad, and that I have just used the pronoun "his" as a sign of parallels between the two. It would be a gross exaggeration to claim that Said's preoccupation with Conrad had to do solely with his own biography; yet it seems obvious to me that while commenting upon the novelist, the critic also commented upon himself. This is one of the paradoxes

worth pointing to, all the more because one of the dominant parallels between the two writers was that of their attitude to Europe as a certain cultural construct, a narrative, perhaps a sensibility. I think Conrad and Said believed in Europe and something that might be called the European idea, but they also kept on stressing that the idea was paradoxical, and that it informs and at the same time contradicts itself. This sensitivity to the paradoxical nature of the European narrative was, I suppose, strictly autobiographical and related to their own experiences of "life-in-exile." It had to do with their threatened identities, with all the moments when your self is questioned and suspended – they found the same terrifying sentiments in the XX-century Europe, the Europe that lost its links with its past and had its identity put into question. I think it should be added that the negative moment had its positive aspects (after all, this is the nature of paradox – every moment is bound to its opposite): it made it possible for both Conrad and Said to reformulate and redefine the status and meaning of Europe. The latter should not be disregarded: it adds a genuine happy ending to both biographies.

Having a minimum time-slot, all I can do here is merely point to certain strategies employed by Said in his interpretations of Conrad's texts. What we have in Said's subsequent analyses of the novelist is a curious staging of Conrad, and – with more time in hand – I would willingly devote myself to examine all the theatrical devices and metaphors present in Said. For the time being, let it suffice I distinguish in Said three stages, three movements, three acts of interpretation. The three critical scenes are related and complementary but they do not lead to any finale, or perhaps I should say they lead to something the American poet Wallace Stevens phrased as "the denouement has to be postponed" (from the poem *The Auroras of Autumn*). We should speak here of essays rather than critical analyses: Conrad and Said do not arrive at any ultimate conclusions; rather, they constantly trouble and open spaces of discussion, and stress the value of discussion, not of its ends.

The first act, the act Said started with, is to be found in his (first) book on Conrad: *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (1966). Already in its title the book is a critical proposition: the fiction of autobiography reveals a drama of identity that finds itself imbued with fictitious gestures, poses, and words. Yet the significance of Said's interpretation is that he goes beyond such general and theoretical abstractions. Of the book's two parts, the first one provides us with a magnificent reading of Conrad's letters, and it is in them that Said discovers the genealogy of Conrad the story-teller. The critic goes back to the period 1889-1894, when Conrad was at work on *Almayer's Folly*, and, having referred to a pile of letters, concludes that at the time the novelist faced his first personal and artistic crisis. What was the nature of the crisis? Said: "a curious phenomenon in Conrad's life… the creation [in letters] of a public personality that was to camouflage his deeper and more problematic difficulties with himself and with his work" (*JCFA* vii). Why

this? Mainly because Conrad felt there was a split, a conflict, between his experience and language that could not grasp life. For one thing, the novelist was not able to translate the chaotic flow of life experiences as the latter were too immediate and pressing. Said writes: "we see him gripped by a powerfully imaginative emotional and intellectual complex that he could not master because it too closely retraced the bewildering outlines of his own experience. Out of the fullness of one's heart ... no grammar is possible" (*JCFA* 49).

But there was something equally serious beneath – Conrad's inability to grasp and frame his own identity, and his rage at authenticating his true self. While analyzing the novelist's early letters to Kliszczewski, Said notices that they were written "out of his troubled sense of the threats of chaos" (*JCFA* 15), and that they provide an example of "a groping toward accurate self-awareness" (*JCFA* 14). Accordingly, in the years 1889-1894/5, Conrad was constructing in his letters his alter ego that would provide an alibi for his real ego – his true self that evaded translation into letters but was always present in the background.

It was this knot of repressed intentions and actual realizations, Said maintains, that propelled Conrad to writing his first two novels and becoming a story-teller. Some evidence may be found in Conrad's correspondence with his aunt Małgorzata Poradowska (Said analyzes the letters written between 1890 and 1895). As a matter of fact, Said speaks of the "sophisticated monologue directed by Conrad to his aunt" (*JCFA* 16; another theatrical reference) in which Conrad, like Hamlet, "was attempting to bring himself to a meaningful point of action" (*JCFA* 16). The action that the author of *Lord Jim* sought to perform had to be twofold – framing fragments of his experience into stories, and confirming his own identity as threatened by life in exile and in a foreign language. This feedback between writing and identity was for Said a dominant of many letters written during 1895. For example, in the three letters sent to Edward Noble (July 17, October 28, and November 2) Conrad stressed interdependencies between writing fiction and the writer's individuality, and he advised Noble to write from "an inward point of view, I mean from the depth of your inwardness" (*JCFA* 28). Character and individuality – these two moments are set against the histrionics and theatricality that Conrad felt were undermining his true self.

But if his identity seemed confirmed by the fact that he was able to make up, direct and control fictitious stories, the surrounding reality remained unspeakable, untamed and chaotic. Fragments of reality did not add up to any harmony or integrity. Instead, they disseminated into more and more complicated and untraceable patterns. As Said writes, during the years after 1895 Conrad "grew increasingly reliant upon himself, upon the evaluating rather than the perceiving consciousness, which faced a distracting sum of competing facts. Because each aspect of knowledge that came to his attention demanded recognition, he found it impossible to

settle upon a unitary view of reality" (*JCFA* 31). This in turn led Conrad to another crisis – the crisis of inability to see one objective truth that would be the principle of the world. This is splendidly elucidated by Said. A longer quote:

> The surface of his own life, like a palm whose life line breaks out in a myriad of crazy directions, reminded him that nothing in his own experience could furnish him with a firm notion of what it meant to *complete* something. He had no respect for his complex character: not only in his two occupations, his two countries, his vacillating world views, but also in his gallery of "economical" fiction, nothing could bring him to a fully manageable definition of objectivity. That would have been a fitting reward for the "endless discontent" of the writing. His novels, which tended, one gathers from the letters, perversely to "grow and grow," liberated along with what they had genuinely "rescued" too much of what was dark and imponderable. (*JCFA* 50-51; Said's emphasis)

The second stage in Said's life-long reading of Conrad may be reconstructed from insights recorded in the essay "Conrad: The Presentation of Narrative" that was included in the 1983 collection *The World, the Text, and the Critic.* One of the essay's key statements shows Said's development and evolution: "Conrad's writing was a way of repeatedly confirming his authorship by refracting it in a variety of often contradictory and negative narrative and quasi-narrative contingencies, and that he did this in preference to a direct representation of his neuroses" (*The World* 109). What the critic chose to stress in the seventies was the significance of narration, narrators, and frames of reference, as superior to the contents included in the narratives. Conrad's terrifying vision of the reality as ultimately ambiguous and meaningless manifested itself in the plurality of narrators and the "unreliable narration" device. On the other hand, the figure of narrator became for Conrad a way of coping with the problem of the "endless discontent" of writing – a narrator guarantees that his/her narrative is rooted in a specific experience, and it is not a series of verbal gestures. In fact, Said underlined in his essay Conrad's "general loss of faith in the mimetic powers of language" (*The World* 101), and he made an important distinction between "wanting-to-speak," or intention, and communication.

Said's main example is *Lord Jim.* As we know, there are three basic frames of narration in the novel: Jim's, Marlow's, and the novelist's. The point is all of them want to speak – not so much to others but in front of others (*The World* 103). What is crucial here is not the power to communicate but to authenticate his story by speaking it: here I am, in the flesh, this is not a fiction. We know, however, that their stories are fictions – not only in that they are actually novelistic devices but in that, for Jim, Marlow, and Conrad himself, words cannot fully express their experiences. Words lie, and that is why the only thing worth trusting is voice itself: narrative itself as spoken and not as a story. Said: "[t]he presence of spoken words in time mitigates, if it does not make entirely absent, their written version; a speaker takes over the narrative with his voice, and his voice overrides the fact that he is absent" (*The World* 95). Skeptical about the power of language, Conrad turned to

the physicality of the speaker, his physical efforts to narrate a story, perhaps his bodily gestures – in other words, visible evidence of one's presence.

But this strategy led to another failure. As Said demonstrates, *Lord Jim* and other stories by Conrad are in fact stories about silence, and inability even to voice oneself. At the end of his narrative, Marlow can say nothing of Jim – "that white figure in the stillness of coast and sea seemed to stand at the heart of a vast enigma" (qtd. in *The World* 105) and Jim himself, when we last see him, raises his voice only to depart in silence. The scene is permeated with absences – personal departures but also speech pauses and faulty language – and it brings to mind similar scenes in, say, *Heart of Darkness* or "Amy Forster." Said ends his essay with the following conclusion:

> The self, which is the source of utterance, attempts the reconciliation of intention with actuality; words are really being bypassed as a direct embodiment in material is sought by the imagination, at the same time that the ego reports its adventures and its disappointments. If language fails ultimately to represent intention and, analogously, if the mimetic function of language is sorely inadequate to make us see, then by using substance instead of words the Conradian hero, like Conrad himself, aims to vindicate and articulate his imagination. Every reader of Conrad knows how this aim too is bound to fail. In the end, like the dying Kurtz with his hoard of ivory, the hero becomes a talking insubstantiality. (*The World* 110)

I would like to return to the second part of *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* where Said interprets Conrad's short stories. One of the critic's main assumptions in this book is that before the beginning of the First World War Conrad "arrived at an impasse" (*JCFA* 136) both artistic and personal. In Said's words, Conrad "became convinced that, for all the self-searching of his 'autobiographies'... he could maintain his public image only by destroying his real being" (*JCFA* 136). In other words, some twenty years after the decisive year 1895 the novelist faced the same crisis of inability and Hamlet-like resignation. But in 1915 Conrad found himself in a different context and a different situation. As Said puts it, "[Conrad's] ability to harmonize past and present, action and thought, objective and subjective, failed him at just the moment that Europe's failed her" (*JCFA* 136). And it made a difference – the outburst of the war was, paradoxically, an act that helped the novelist redefine and recapture himself both as artist and man. That was precisely the moment when Conrad's ardent Europeanism was born.

According to Said, the decisive moment found its expression in *The Shadow Line* (written in 1915). At the beginning of the story, its narrator decides to leave the sea in "an implied avoidance of the spiritual impasse to which Conrad's antecedent stories had inevitably moved" (*JCFA* 171). His subsequent decision to take a job as a ship's captain marks his disinterested response to what seems an abstract situation – the narrator takes it as there is nothing else to do. From that moment on, the surrounding reality takes on a somewhat nightmarish aspect as if the whole world was stuck into impasse. This helps (another paradox): the narrator is forced

to overcome his own inertia and collect himself to face the ongoing disaster. In Said's words: "N [the narrator] is made to understand the real meaning of 'being oneself', which is to cross the line of shadowy, unrealized ambitions into a sort of restricted, terrible reality" (*JCFA* 186). The climax of the story comes when the calm and darkness give way to a storm, and the narrator's gloomy vision of the beastly Thing is dispelled. The narrator saves Burns from death and his sense of "duties" is reinforced. What is equally important is that, as Said notices, "N has really done something, has performed a complete action" (*JCFA* 194). Thus, *The Shadow Line* is a story of transition from a state of psychological inertia to a creation of character in which impasse and an awareness of impasse find a hard-won synthesis. For Said this was also true of Conrad who managed to create his own character in the face of the world war disaster: "Conrad's achievement is that he ordered the chaos of his existence into a highly patterned art that accurately reflected and controlled the realities with which it dealt" (*JCFA* 196).

One of the conclusions drawn from Said's essay has to do with the origins of Conrad's Europeanism. As the critic repeats over and over again, the narrator of *The Shadow Line* "puts his confidence in a historical, hierarchic continuum of imperishable worth" (*JCFA* 195); that is, "a ship's captaincy is a command within the order of British tradition, and British tradition derives (Conrad came to believe) from European tradition" (*JCFA* 195). Earlier in the text, Said writes:

> For the first time in Conrad's short fiction, we are watching a hero who unquestioningly accepts the responsibilities of tradition and the implications of his nationality. Is this not a reflection of Conrad's new, tolerant acceptance of his second nationality, seen as a first step toward the general establishment of Europeanism? (*JCFA* 178)

The answer, at least for Said, is yes – one of the critic's concluding statements is that "in Europeanism, Conrad sought the remedy for his troubles" (*JCFA* 186). Obviously enough, the troubles referred to are not only those connected with the political situation of Europe and England, but also those concerning Conrad's own stance as artist and man. Put briefly, Europeanism was a promise of a new rooting of the self – be it in political, psychological, spiritual or linguistic terms.

This is a good moment to move on to the third stage in Said's interpretation. I'm thinking here of his opus magnum – the 1993 *Culture and Imperialism* – and, more specifically, of one of its chapters entitled "Two Visions in *Heart of Darkness*." As is well-known, in the 1990s Said's postcolonial attitudes were sharper and much more combative. The same applied to his readings of Conrad. Although he remained faithful to his vision of Conrad as a great pioneer of the XX-century novel and a prophet of what is known today as postcolonialism, Said voiced his distrust toward some aspects of Conrad's *ouvre*; particularly those having to do with the idea of Europeanism.

The change may be felt in Said's introduction to the book. While mentioning *Nostromo*, the critic pays attention to Conrad's "limitations in vision," the most significant one consisting in providing "the same paternalistic arrogance of imperialism that it mocks in characters like Gould and Holroyd" (*Culture* xviii). All in all, the novelist may be called imperialist and anti-imperialist at the same time (*Culture* xviii), "progressive when it came to rendering fearlessly and pessimistically the self-confirming, self-deluding corruption of overseas domination, deeply reactionary when it came to conceding that Africa or South America could ever have had an independent history or culture" (*Culture* xviii).

A much more incisive analysis is included in the chapter devoted to *Heart of Darkness*. Its opening point is quite pessimistic: in the world presented in *Heart of Darkness* there is no way out of the imperialist discourse. Even Marlow is a part of the discourse: "the almost oppressive force of Marlow's narrative leaves us with a quite accurate sense that there is no way out of the sovereign historical force of imperialism, and that it has the power of a system representing as well as speaking for everything within its dominion" (*Culture* 24). In other words, "imperialism has monopolized the entire system of representation" (*Culture* 25) – it is by no means only political but also, perhaps first of all, ideological, cultural, and linguistic. In this context Conrad's Europeanism turns out to be ideologically loaded, and his hard-won identity is susceptible to imperialist pulls.

In another chapter Said suggests that it is in Yeats's poetry that we can see the full swing from "nationalism" (resisting imperialism) to "nativism" (reintroducing imperialism in its cultural and ideological forms).[1] With Conrad, however, Said is more cautious. After all, Conrad was fully aware that narrative and discourse might be unreliable and double-dealing. Perhaps it was his exile – his being an outsider – that helped him keep an ironic distance (this is what the critic himself suggests, *Culture* 25). As a matter of fact, Conrad's Europeanism cannot be approached in so simple (i.e. postcolonial) terms. There is too much rhetorical irony in his stories, and too many frames of reference to be taken into account – this dissemination of perspectives cannot be framed by any system of representation. It seems to me that the Said of the 1990s was not able to decide about Conrad's true intentions. He ends the chapter by stating that, almost despite himself, Conrad was a victim of the imperialist ideology: "Conrad's tragic limitation is that even though he could see clearly that on one level imperialism was essentially pure dominance and land-grabbing, he could not then conclude that imperialism had to end so that natives could lead lives free from European domination" (*Culture* 30). But even this sentence is ambiguous – as Said suggests in many other texts, the novelist is not sup-

[1] "Yeats and Decolonization," *Culture and Imperialism*: 220-238.

posed to provide such strong conclusions; these might be voiced by way of, say, innuendo or conjectural implication.

What I find particularly stimulating in the chapter is Said's idea of two visions informing Conrad's work, of its inherently paradoxical character and its immunity to naïve, one-sided interpretations. While discussing the novelist's ability to keep his ironic distance, Said writes: "[t]the form of Conrad's narrative has thus made it possible to derive two possible arguments, two visions, in the postcolonial world that succeeded his" (*Culture* 25). I think the same may be said of Conrad's own work. On the one hand, we have in his texts the narrative of Europeanism understood as an ideological construct – Conrad speaks from within Europe as a figure of identity and order. On the other hand, he constantly undermines this narrative, for example by showing "how ideas and values are constructed (and deconstructed) through dislocations in the narrator's language" (*Culture* 29). Said has a nice formula for this: "with Conrad we are in a world being made and unmade more or less all the time" (*Culture* 29).

What seems worth stressing is that the two visions do not constitute a logical sequence. One does not precede or follow the other. I think this kind of critical honesty – i.e. acknowledging that criticism, even when disinterested, is partial and subjective – does justice to Conrad's work. After all, he himself was very sensitive to the fact that what is being said is said from a certain point of view – that is why he paid so much attention to the point of view technique, anticipating the devices of shifting viewpoint and anti-hero. Also, the two visions inform Conrad's narrative of Europeanism: the latter was never taken at face value; the novelist was capable of seeing its rhetorical character and its ideological undercurrents, and at the same time he believed that such objections were made possible by the narrative of Europeanism. Thus, Europe as a certain idea and Europeanism as an ideological narrative stand in contradiction – yet I would claim it is a happy and prolific contradiction.

The same contradiction informs the best texts written by Edward Said. True, there are in his books arguments and examples that make us think of Said as an ideologue of sorts. But there is also something that makes his work exemplary and highly original: an assumption that nothing in a work of art can be disregarded, marginalized, backgrounded. This is expressed in the passage (taken from *Culture and Imperialism*) that seems to sum up Said's critical stance:

> As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts. In the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another, with only provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work. (*Culture* 51; Said's emphasis)

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CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

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Lord Jim and the Tower of Babel

Conrad introducing a mixed assortment of foreigners into his "free and wandering tale" (who either voice their opinions of Jim's case or react to Jim's inexplicable conduct) aims at showing how communication may be impeded due to different cultural backgrounds of the particular interlocutors. The arduous process of discovering the truth about Jim is enhanced by the fact that several of the speakers are of different nationalities. The interference of their native tongues not infrequently impairs their message. The key arbiters (Stein and the French lieutenant) as well as peripheral observers (e.g. the Malay helmsmen, or Egström), who directly or indirectly assist Marlow (and for that matter the reader as well) in examining Jim's predicament are unable to formulate a conclusive verdict. I am of the opinion that Conrad deliberately employed such a broad range of judges and witnesses to hear Jim's case in order to prove its intractability.

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"The Enchanted Interspace:" Novel Strangers and the Rebuilding of Self in *Heart of Darkness*

Leaving Poland for France at the age of seventeen, Joseph Conrad was forced to re-undergo the process of both self and public identity as French-speaker, Sailor, English subject, and finally Writer. In *Heart of Darkness*, we can see traces of these exercises in identity not just in a Kurtz to whom "all Europe contributed to the making of" or in the "wanderer" Marlow "like a Buddha in European clothes" encountering the "formless" incomprehensibility of Africa. On a more basic level, we find this fascination with reinvention of self in the novel's preoccupation with language and narrative. Narrative is a key building block of both public and private selves – a powerful tool as one seeks to re-invent oneself, or mere impotent sound if the boundaries crossed are too alien. Thus, from the "correct entries" of the accountant, to Towson's *An Inquiry into Some Points of Seamanship*, to the "burning noble words" of Kurtz's report for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, *Heart of Darkness* is, in many ways, a text about the value/futility of text; a narrative about the breakdown of narrative. Even as Marlow, Buddha-like, uses narrative to cement, however problematically, the community of the *Nellie*, Kurtz's scrawled "exterminate all the brutes" points to narrative's failure. "The

horror!" is perhaps more cry than story, but that may very well be the point, for the only way to escape context in language is to escape language itself. Kurtz may be able to kick "himself loose from the earth," but he can never adequately describe that sensation with language. Ultimately, though, *Heart of Darkness* itself works as a powerful tool in the construction of Conrad – a self-well versed in the inevitably piecemeal assemblies that make-up man.

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"Human decency questioned" – Conradian legacy mirrored in the twentieth century English literature

This paper concerns the concept of human nature, its goodness and decency, in the context of Western civilization. Conrad is presented as a forerunner of a whole range of literary voices which echoed the accusatory note on the Western world. It is about Conrad, and his literary adherents, who denied the idea of progress, and doing that, they undermined the foundational notions regarding the civilized man and civilization per se. The paper provides the reader with analysis of various individuals, heroes who experience a journey through darkness – if not hell; in other words, a journey through our world and our psyche. This exploration, visible particularly in Conradian fiction, is later on reflected in works of such authors as T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, William Golding, Samuel Beckett. Modern characters, outlined by these writers, inscribe themselves into the so-called anti-heroic attitude. For each of them reality around them is depicted as hellish, thus the reception of the outside world turns out to be quite unbearable. Consequently, their voyage resembles a recess in one's psyche, a search for one's true self – the self-contextualized by the modern Western world. Against such a background Conrad appears to be the most significant European writer/thinker, almost a "prophet" whose conclusions resound in works of other literary figures so constitutive of European culture.

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The Power of Suggestion: Joseph Conrad, Professor Grasset, and French Medical Occultism

Medical doctors were an important presence in the life of Joseph Conrad, from the illnesses that dominated his family life, to his friendships with such physicians

as Tebb, "the good Mac" and Sir Robert Jones. Despite the importance of these English physicians in his life, Conrad frequently retired to the continent for medical treatment, or found himself in the hands of European physicians during his family's travels. Exposure to French medical occultism may have had an unrecognized effect on Conrad's fiction, especially in the years 1906-10. If Conrad's English physicians were mostly trained as physiologists who assumed that disease, including nervous and mental diseases, had some organic cause, the European physicians who treated Conrad were students of Jean Martin Charcot, the French physician who studied hysteria, "somnambulism," and practiced hypnosis as a treatment. Conrad (and his family) were under the care of two such physicians: Paul Glatz, the Director of the Swiss hydropathic facilities at Champel-les-Bains, and Joseph Grasset, the "celebrated" Professor of Clinical Medicine at the University of Montpellier. Grasset, a well-known specialist on the nervous system, was also writing and publishing extensively on the "prescientific" occult and the demi-fou when Conrad and his family consulted with him during their March through May illnesses of 1907. At this time, Conrad was revising *The Secret Agent* for publication as a novel and could have been exposed to Grasset's work in at least two venues. Grasset's interests and works on the occult may thus help explain specific revisions of, and additions to, the1906 serial version published in Ridgeways, an early version that differs significantly from the final novel form. Conrad's fascination with the "prescientific" and its manifestations in the powers of suggestion and telepathy are evident in "The Secret Sharer"; similarly, his interest in (and ridiculing of) the séance and clairvoyance is apparent in the figure of Madame de S- in *Under Western Eyes*. These later works may thus also reflect Conrad's acquaintance with Grasset's theories of the "prescientific" and "semi-insane."

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Africanist Presence in Conrad's Europe: Antithetical Structure of *Heart of Darkness*

The aim of the paper is to explore the implications of blackness, as related to the 19th/20th century colonial enterprise, for Conrad's delineation of the white European male as seen in the context of Toni Morrison's critical essay "Playing in the Dark." White invisibility in *Heart of Darkness* as opposed to black invisibility in most of American literature, multiplicity of voices - narrative and cited - in Conrad's story, the author's use of irony and auto-irony, his constant questioning of the homo duplex device as well as his antithetical presentation of characters,

scenes and episodes sabotage the surface text of the story. The resultant tensions lead to an emergence of a subtext, thus accounting for the conflicting critical readings of *Heart of Darkness* as an expression of either its author's condemnation or condoning of racism and the European imperialist venture. The Africanist presence in Conrad's story serves to define the white European male as racist and rapacious, at the same time establishing Marlow and his creator as anti-imperialists, in opposition to some allegations to the contrary.

James Coghlan

European Industrialisation and Cultural Consequences in the Works of Joseph Conrad

As Conrad said, man has become the "slave of his own detestable ingenuity." Having flown in an airplane and experienced steam taking over from sail, he certainly could see the destruction of certain ways of life.

Technological consequences are not necessarily always all positive or negative. I intend look at the way Conrad employs technology within texts. *The Secret Agent, Nostromo* and "The Shadow Line" would be the initial texts considered. *The Secret Agent* mentions lots of technologies and so too does "The Shadow-Line."

We live in an era of ever changing technology. I think that Conrad's depiction of the commercial propulsion of such technology, goes against the current of literal thought at the time he was writing, like H. G. Wells in *The Time Machine*. Whether from personal reasons or from pure genius, he was certainly aware of the impact on other countries of European Industrialisation.

Laurence Davies
Dartmouth College, Hanover NH

Undercover Actions: Conrad's Place in the Literature of Criminality

We often speak of Conrad as a force behind the modern European spy thriller; considering his antecedents, we sometimes hear of his putting paid to an earlier popular genre: the novel of anarchist terror. Still less subject to discussion yet a matter of great fascination is his presence in the literature of criminality – that substantial sub-set of fiction concerned at least as much with the politics, psychology, morality, and metaphysics of crime as with its detection. He stands with Balzac,

Dickens, and Dostoevsky among the ancestors of a genre whose canonical standing is unsteady yet rich in achievement.

In exploring this topic, my method will be to start with influence and move to speculative association. Thus I shall begin with the example of an Englishwoman who knew Conrad, F. Tennyson Jesse. Jesse was a novelist and an authority on criminal jurisprudence. Her novel *A Pin to See the Peepshow* is a fictional version of one of the most vexed capital trials in twentieth-century Britain, the Thompson and Bywaters murder trial. In her imagined portrayal of the mental landscape of a woman who was tried and hung for a crime teeming with extenuating circumstances, Jesse evidently takes as her model Winnie Verloc's state of mind in the final chapters of *The Secret Agent.* Indeed, the original trial coincided precisely with the London staging of Conrad's novel.

The second example, Nicolas Freeling, was another great admirer of Conrad, but one who started writing in the sixties rather than the nineteen-twenties. English-born, he spent most of his adult life in France and the Netherlands, and these are the settings of his fiction. In the novels, Freeling constantly alludes to Conrad's works, as if in constant dialogue with them, and one significant chapter of *Criminal Records*, his study of the metaphysics of crime, is devoted to Conrad. Impatient with the conventions of the detective story, Freeling was always shaking the bars of his generic cage, and did so in the name of Conrad, the source of never-failing intertexts.

Freeling and Jesse have both suffered the unjust effects of guilt by association with a popular mode which they both enriched and questioned. The suspicion of "genre fiction" may indeed be more common in the English-speaking world than elsewhere. In any case, the authors to be discussed in my third section are neither as directly influenced by Conrad nor as likely to be boxed in by condescending critics. While neither Leonardo Sciascia nor Friedrich Dürrenmatt owes much explicitly to Conrad, it seems reasonable to assert that their anatomies of criminal behavior appear in a creative space that Conrad helped to clear. With that in mind, I intend to discuss the resonance of their fiction in a Conradian setting.

Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan
University of Haifa

Traduttore/Traditore: Translation, Exile, and Betrayal in *Lord Jim*

The paper offers a psycho-textual discussion of Lord Jim in relation to Conrad's exilic sensibility. Starting from a discussion of a significant mistranslation in the novel (one of Conrad's notorious gallicisms), I would argue that unlike Nabokov

or Joyce or other exiled Modernists, Conrad is not a nostalgic writer in any obvious sense, but his form of homesickness is translated into an "anxiety of paternity" which resonates in Marlow's relationship with Jim. The autobiographical dimension of the novel is thus not only evident in the familiar motif of desertion and in the Patna-Patria connection, but more significantly in this resonance of the same anxiety and the same desire.

Anthony Fothergill
University of Exeter

Conrad, Cosmopolitanism and the idea of Europe

The paper intends to trace the conflict between that notion of "Cosmopolitanism" and that of "Civilization" as the words were current in the first decades of the 20th century. The paper will present how Conrad might have thought about these two concepts as well as the writer's idea of Europe. Incidentally, in the title there is a pun as Joseph Conrad wrote in a journal called *Cosmopolitan*, which is not, however, the main issue to be discussed in the paper.

Dan Haumschild
University of Wisconsin, La Crosse

An Artful Act: Viewing Terrorism Differently

Terrorism. When one thinks of this word it can make the skin crawl. The word evokes images of death, violence, and hate; and we remember that these consequences were the result of apparently irrational motivations. In today's world, terrorism is a concern for almost every government. Recent threats to the European Union among other organizations have the terror threat at an all-time high. Many people view terrorism as a mindless act of mayhem; but if we are going to stop terrorism we must look at it from a different angle.

In Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, Vladimir presents an idea of terrorism that is sharply contrasted to the common view surrounding this stigmatic act. Indeed, the speech he presents about terrorism appears to more closely resemble Immanuel Kant's viewpoint on aesthetics than any common thought about anarchism. By probing these outwardly contrasting concepts terrorism and art and exposing their similarities, we may be able to more fully understand our own thoughts about the subject and, perhaps, gain a more appropriate view of terrorism

as it presents itself in Europe today. The following paper attempts to show this correspondence between the philosophical paradigms of aesthetics and the philosophical paradigms of terrorism presented in *The Secret Agent*.

J. Gill Holland
Davidson College, North Carolina

A Further Study of "Sympathy" in Joseph Conrad's Writings

In "Sympathy: The Missing Cornerstone of Conrad's Artistic Credo" I tried to do two things: first, to lay out the Conrad's place in the history of the concept of sympathy which became the cornerstone of nineteenth-century literary realism, though it has been largely forgotten and is missing in manuals of literary terminology today; second, to examine passages in Conrad's essays and fiction that showed the centrality of sympathy to his view of life and art, notably in the preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* the preface to *Lord Jim, Lord Jim* and the final scene of *Heart of Darkness*. (The essay appears in *Journeys, Myths and the Age of Travel: Joseph Conrad's Era*, ed. Karin Hansson, University of Karlskrona/Ronneby, Sweden, 1998, pp. 97-109.)

I propose to give a quick summary of that essay and then spend the main body of my paper on further development of the place of sympathy in other works by Conrad, both essays and fiction. I will also suggest the importance of the term in critical discourse beyond England in Continental Europe.

Carola M. Kaplan
California State University, Pomona

Cosmopolitan Conrad

"All Europe had contributed to the making of Kurtz." The same could be said of the author of this sentence, Joseph Conrad himself. Indeed, this composite cultural perspective, with its conflicts and contradictions, is the dominant feature of Conrad's life and writing. How else to understand his devotion to French literature coupled with his determination to write not in French (or Polish!) but English; his mysterious declaration (no explanation given) that English was the only language in which he could ever have written; his defensive protestation, "It does not seem to me that I have been unfaithful to my country by having proved to the English that a gentleman from the Ukraine can be as good a sailor as they, and has something

to tell them in their own language" (*CL2* 323); and his satirical treatments of English, Italian, French, Russian, and German characters, some affectionate, some vitriolic. Indeed Conrad's description of himself as "homo duplex" is an oversimplification, as he himself recognized: "*Homo duplex* has in my case more than one meaning" (*CL3* 89). In acknowledging Conrad's connection with many European cultures, however, it is equally important to be aware of his separation or distance from all of them. For it is Conrad's sense of his ineradicable foreignness.

I will argue, that is responsible for one of the greatest features of his art: his unique ability to make room for the Other in his fiction. In the following paper, I will consider, in Conrad's fictional treatment of several non-European characters within the framework of their cultures (among them, Karain in "Karain," Arsat in "The Lagoon," Jewel and Jewel's mother in *Lord Jim*) the connections between Conrad's sense of his own Otherness and his gift for considering the possibility of Other voicesand asking readers to listen for these voices within the apparently exclusively European perspective of his writings.

Ann Lane Bradshaw
Japan Women's University, Tokyo

Under Northern Eyes: the role of the Australian, Louis Becke, in Joseph Conrad's writing

In one of the early reviews of Joseph Conrad's first book, *Almayer's Folly*, Conrad's novel was described as "an Australian story." This inadvertent mistake can in fact lead to an interesting line of inquiry. Conrad was first published by the London publisher T. Fisher Unwin concurrently with Louis Becke, an Australian and another Unwin author who was similarly writing stories about the South Seas. Though Becke's books and most of his short stories are now long out of print, he was a very prolific writer and at first he enjoyed great public popularity. He is largely overlooked now, but at the time when Conrad was just starting as a writer the situation was very different and to recover the atmosphere in which Conrad was working from the point of view of his potential readership, as well as for the fledgling writer himself, it is necessary to know more about Becke.

There are several important points of similarity between Becke's and Conrad's work: an exotic South Seas location, authenticated by being known at first hand by the author. The two authors never met each other, but the two authors' social-literary circles overlapped and Conrad read *By Reef and Palm*, and *A First Fleet Family*, expressing admiration for the former.

I argue that Conrad read Becke to some creative benefit. Correspondences between the narrative strategies used by Becke in various stories in his *By Reef and Palm* (1894) and those we see in Conrad's "The Lagoon" and even more so in Conrad's "Karain: A Memory," suggest one way in which Conrad may have found Becke creatively helpful. Becke's stories probably provided Conrad with examples of a narrative set-up that, being simple, was easily imitable, and at the same time comfortingly familiar both from Polish stories, and from Conrad's own experience of English shipboard yarns. The second type of correspondence between Conrad and Becke refers us to what I call Conrad's "talismanic" habit of attaching his fictions to each other, to events of his own life, and to the work of other authors. In this way also, recovering the "Australian story" in Conrad's creative life sharpens and extends our appreciation of what enabled his writing, the spirit in which he composed, and the specific resources of his mosaic creativity.

Claes Lindskog
Lund University, Sweden

Scandinavian Characters in Conrad

Jakob Lothe begins the introduction to his volume *Conrad in Scandinavia* (a collection of essays on Conrad by Nordic scholars) by saying, "[t]he title of this volume...may at first sight appear somewhat surprising. Joseph Conrad never visited Scandinavia; and although Heyst (in *Victory*) comes from Scandinavia and Falk is "a Scandinavian of some sort" (*TOS* 121), it would be a gross exaggeration to claim that Scandinavian characters feature prominently in his works" (1). As far as I can see that is the full extent of previous research on the matter.

Without denying that "feature prominently" would, of course, be a gross exaggeration, I do think that a group of characters which includes both Axel Heyst and Christian Falk, as well as Freya Nelson of the seven isles and quite a large number of minor characters, should be worth examining. This is especially so since Conrad frequently resorts to stereotypical portrayals of national groups. It should therefore be of interest to examine how this affects the description of a group towards which Conrad is emotionally unbiased; and to my mind Conrad's descriptions of Scandinavians do evince certain marked common characteristics, which furthermore are consonant with the stereotypes of Scandinavians common in Conrad's time.

My paper will discuss why Conrad made Axel Heyst a Swede and Christian Falk a Norwegian, but also how the portrayal of Scandinavians in general relates to prevalent national stereotypes of the time. I shall also discuss what light my results throw on the general issues of national stereotypicity and characterisation in Conrad.

Mary Morzinski
University of Wisconsin – La Crosse

The Nigger of the "Narcissus": Conrad's Prescience of International Community

Since its appearance in 1897, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* has been regarded not only as a classic sea novel but also as a brilliant psychological study of the characters on the "Narcissus." In addition to these popular interpretations of the book, I would add that, in these children of the sea and their various nationalities, Conrad saw a micro community which can be considered as a forerunner of the macro community forming on the European continent today. For Conrad, the basis of community is work. As long as the crew members of the "Narcissus" worked together for a common cause, their lives ran smoothly, but without that element of solidarity their individual national backgrounds surfaced and proved detrimental to the community of the ship.

Peter Nazareth
University of Iowa

Dark Heart Or Trickster?

Whereas Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* has been praised in the West as a work that exposes the nature and cruelty of European imperialism in Africa, in the Third World there is a critical battle over this text. There are those who, beginning with Chinua Achebe, angrily denounce it, and Conrad, as racist. There are others such as Wilson Harris who who say that Conrad opened the door through which we (Third World writers) could walk through. In my interpretation, Conrad could not have exposed British imperialism directly in England at the height of the British empire and so he had to use strategy, including the strategy of racist words and perspectives, which he actually turns inside out. I will show that Third World novelists such as Tayeb Salih (Sudan) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Kenya) walked through the door opened by *Heart of Darkness* in their famous novels, *Season of Migration to the North* and *A Grain of Wheat.*

I started teaching a course called "Elvis as Anthology" in 1992 which received a great deal of national and international media attention. One of the best stories was by Keith Morrison on NBC'S "The Today Show." In his story, he showed me saying that Elvis broke up the worldview imposed on the colonials through language just as Conrad did in *Heart of Darkness.* I played the TV story in class when teaching

"Conrad and Descendants" in the Fall of 2003 to show how my other class had succeeded in getting Conrad on network television. Playing it in the Conrad class instead of the Elvis class, I discovered that Morrison not only used my Conrad reference but also structured his story in a similar way to Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* to break up the imposed worldview in a way that the organizers of "The Today Show" did figure out. This falls into place when one realizes that Keith Morrison is a Canadian wearing the skin of a U.S. American, comparable to Conrad who was a Pole wearing the skin of an Englishman. I would like to play this story and analyze it to show the contemporary relevance of Conrad in the Third World which faces a modern version of the old colonialism.

Richard Niland
Corpus Christi College, University of Oxford

Conrad's Language of Retrospection: Youth, Poland and the Romantic Past

This paper will examine how Conrad's representation of the past and his awareness of the passage of time are indebted to the language of 19th century Polish Romantic historiography and philosophy. Philosophers such as August Cieszkowski, Edward Dembowski, Henryk Kamieński and Bronisław Trentowski influenced greatly the Romantic literature of Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki that Conrad acknowledged formed an important part of his Polish inheritance. It will be seen that the influence of these philosophers and their reaction to the Hegelian tradition of historiography with its focus on the movement of time and historical forces informs Conrad's own representation of the passage of time, from his intense investigations of the past and its contrast with the present in *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness* to his consistent interest in the Napoleonic period as a historical counterpoint to his own time.

Conrad's concern with presenting the effects of time, as evidenced by his complex narrative structures and their investigations of the past, is in the tradition of the philosophy and historiography of 19th century partitioned Poland that saw the past as a source of inspiration in the face of a stateless present. This national language of retrospection is present in the writing of Conrad's father Apollo Korzeniowski and his first guardian Stefan Buszczyński, both of whom were influenced by the historiography represented in August Cieszkowski's *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie* (1838). Analysing the language of Polish Romantic historiography, Stefan Buszczyński's writing will also be examined here as he continued to infuse Conrad with an Hegelian awareness of the movement of time and, importantly, to expose

him to a scepticism towards the future that ensures Conrad's inheritance of the Hegelian notion of "ever-becoming" is tempered by a rejection of the certainties of the Hegelian *telos*. Conrad's attitude to the past will emerge as a complex reaction to both one of 19th century Europe's most important philosophers of history and to the cultural climate of his Polish background.

John G. Peters
University of North Texas

The Space of Russia in Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*

Throughout his writings, Conrad investigates the human experience of space and its relationship to knowledge of the external world. In so doing, he demonstrates a gap between objectivity and subjectivity when experiencing space because space can only be accessed through the medium of human consciousness. Conrad considers how human beings experience space in an individual and contextualized manner. Furthermore, he looks at the relationship between western civilization and the human experience of space. In this investigation, Conrad identifies three different temporal representations: subjective space, objective space, and narrative space.

In this essay, I will consider the various ways in which Conrad investigates the phenomenon of the way human beings experience spaciality in general and how the various characters in *Under Western Eyes* experience the spaciality of Russia in particular.

As Conrad does regarding other objects of consciousness (perception of events, objects, and subjects, as well as the experience of time), Conrad compares objectified space with subjectified space. In particular, he shows that the human experience of space is always a contextualized phenomenon such that the boundaries between subject, object, and surrounding circumstances blur. In this way, Conrad demonstrates two conclusions: first, that space can only be experienced through the medium of human consciousness, and, second, that each experience of space is unique since the convergence of subject, object, and circumstances are always changing. As a result of the relative nature of the human experience of space, the space of Russia is not a single, measurable entity but rather a different entity at each point that it appears. Not only will Russia be different for one person (e.g. Razumov) than it is for another (e.g. the teacher of foreign languages) but it will be different for the same person depending on the changing circumstances in which that person experiences it.

In its simplest form, this phenomenon can be seen in the differences between the way Razumov experiences the space of Russia early in the novel as a kind of

parent figure and nurturer, whereas the teacher of foreign languages (despite having lived there as a child) seems to experience Russia as an object of irrationality, confusion, and exoticism. In a more significant manner, differing experiences of the space of Russia can be linked to the political activism of the novel as different characters experience a different Russia at the same moment in time and as they imagine a different Russia of the future.

These are the issues I would like to address in my essay as I try to demonstrate how Conrad uses this relative experience of the space of Russia to reveal a relativity at the heart of Western civilization and a skepticism regarding the ability to know anything with certainty.

Sema Postacioglu-Banon
University of Venice

Under Western Eyes: Translation and Authority

In this paper I wish to discuss the power and authority of translation in *Under Western Eyes.* My discussion starts from a minor linguistic question regarding translation and follows Conrad's confrontation with and response to Dostoevsky and Maupassant in the portrayal of the dynamics between Razumov/Haldin and Razumov/the language teacher.

The process of "perfection of duplication" which Razumov undergoes is looked into as the testing ground both to distinguish two "false doubles" and to lead the discussion to the essentially European concept of **romanitas** – which I refer to as a new authority grounded on an inner space conceived as the space of life rather than imaginary political identity.

Brygida Pudełko
University of Opole

Turgenev and Conrad: European Writers

Turgenev and Conrad are writers whose basic literary and intellectual outlook was European. Turgenev on many occasions openly voiced his pro-Western and pro-European preferences and commitment to Western ideas and institutions. Civilization meaning the civilization of the West was the ideal of civilization Turgenev remained faithful to all his life. It comes as no surprise that Turgenev, a Russian who adhered to Western beliefs and European principles appealed to Conrad.

The "European" Turgenev, though belonging not to Conrad's own, but to his father's generation, appeared to Conrad a spiritual contemporary, a symbol of moderation as opposed to extremism, and of humanity as opposed to chauvinism. Conrad also seems sympathetic to Turgenev's model of patriotism involving self-commitment to his country as well as an objective evaluation of Russia and the West. Conrad's Polish, French and English influences and traditions clearly contributed to his concern with the most important issues of European history and thought, and made him sensitive to cultural differences and distinctions between European national spirits.

Richard Ruppel
Viterbo University, La Crosse, Wisconsin

Homosexuality in *Under Western Eyes*: Reading through Culture & History

I hope to provide cultural and historical support for a reading of *Under Western Eyes* that suggests the language-teacher narrator is a closeted homosexual. I published an essay on Conrad and homosexuality five years ago in *The Conradian*: "Joseph Conrad and the Ghost of Oscar Wilde," and I included a brief section on the novel. I hope to extend and sophisticate this reading based on some additional historical and cultural research.

In the essay, I pointed out that the language-teacher narrator of *Under Western Eyes* is an aging bachelor with an almost obsessive interest in a young person. He is attracted to Natalia, who is, of course, a woman, but what seems to attract the narrator is her **masculinity,** what he calls her "exquisite virility."

One of the melancholy features of the novel is the narrator's insistence that, much as he admires Natalia, there can be no possibility of a romance between them. He is, he insists, a totally inappropriate suitor: too Western, too unimaginative and insignificant, and, especially, too old. When he feels she is threatened by Peter Ivanovitch, the narrator complains that he cannot protect her. If he sees Natalia as robust, "virile," and assertive, he presents himself as her opposite: an impotent, bodiless phantom.

The narrator's insistence on the impossibility of a romance with Natalia, despite his attraction to her, can be explained if we see him as an early example of the closet homosexual. The narrator claims that he could not be the man to arouse her because of his "person" and "ideas": he is too old and his ideas are too dry and pedestrian for an idealistic Russian girl. Yet we might also conclude that he is not as old as he claims and that those "ideas" might include an appreciation of male

beauty incompatible with the possibility of heterosexual romance. This appreciation is suggested by the terms he uses to praise Natalia and by his repeated admiration for Razumov's good looks; and comparison of the living Razumov to a work of art, marks the speaker as a connoisseur of male beauty.

In short, I do not believe it too fanciful to suggest that the narrator acts like a man who, in middle age, has found a young woman he could sexually admire after spending his life admiring young men – it could also explain the retiring, self-effacing, and personally non-revelatory quality of his narrative, a narrative that has the feel of having been written by a man who has something to hide.

Joanna Skolik
University of Opole

The Rover and Mediterranean Tradition

The Rover is perceived as a kind of a summation of ideas and themes present in Conrad's oeuvre. The novel also plays an important role in the legend about Conrad's sense of guilt; it has been read as his rehabilitation. In *The Rover* Conrad comes back to the motifs of solidarity, isolation, commitment, national identity, love, friendship, fidelity to one's nation and country.

In his volume *A Mediterranean Hour* Parandowski declared for Conradian values, values which originate from the heritage of ancient culture; Mediterranean tradition (Conrad always underlined his connections with the Mediterranean civilisation). Parandowski wrote in the introduction that the stories of the volume were written during the occupation in order to protect his own inner world from destruction. Parandowski wrote his essays in the name of all human values worked out by Mediterranean civilisation including loyalty, dignity and national fidelity. Parandowski underlined continuity of antic cultural tradition and the persistence of Mediterranean cultural tradition in spite of any barbarism at any time. I would like to take a closer look at the values presented in *The Rover* following Jan Parandowski's essay "A Mediterranean Hour."

Dorothy Pula Strohecker
University of Maryland

Conrad and Europe: "The Map is not the Territory"

Knowing Conrad's Europe can be as epistemologically challenging as knowing Conrad. His characterization of himself as "homo duplex" applies not only to his

dual heritage, dual citizenship, dual identity, and books based on doubling and duality, but to the split between his Slavic background and culture with its accompanying patriotic passion and the touted rationalism, enlightenment, and progressive thinking historically granted to Western civilization.

Poland did not identify with the Slavophiles but traditionally identified herself with Western Europe, as Conrad insisted in many iterations. Yet Conrad can be seen as divided between East and West, especially in his most autobiographical novel, *Under Western Eyes.* Although much has been made of Dostoevsky's influence on *UWE,* especially *Crime and Punishment,* the influence is more graphically detailed in a comparison with Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* or *The Devils.* Here I present some close explication of *The Possessed* in comparison with *Under Western Eyes.*

In the book, *Between East and West: Writings From Kultura* (Ed. Robert Kostrzewa, Hill and Wang, New York 1990), Czesław Miłosz's essay, "About Our Europe," speaks of Poland as part of "Central Europe" and "attempts to define specific Central European attitudes"; "Central Europe is hardly a geographical notion. It is not easy to trace its boundaries on the map … The ways of thinking and feeling of its inhabitants must thus suffice for drawing mental lines which seem to be more durable than the borders of the states"; "… dark visions of the future … seem to be a specialty of Central European writers." Conrad certainly fits within Miłosz's description of his "geographical longitude." Furthermore, when Miłosz says he returns to his "question as to the apocalyptic frame of mind in Central Europe," we again think of Conrad. But finally, as Miłosz confesses, "I am inclined to agree with Milan Kundera when he says that at present there is more energy and vigor in the literature of our Europe than in its Western variety," we again go back to Conrad's *Under Western Eyes,* a book that preceded, proclaimed, and perhaps prophesied, the whole neuro-linguistic complex of the unmapped territory in the longitudes defined as Central Europe.

Jean Szczypien
SUNY-FIT University, New York

Polish Butterlies in *Lord Jim*

Romanticism was one of the main European cultural movements in the nineteenth century. Although the ideological base was the same all over Europe there were some Polish distinctions that I shall discuss in this paper in relation to *Lord Jim.* Mainly, I shall examine how Conrad incorporated images from Alexander Fredro's *Zemsta* [*The Revenge*] (1833) into this novel thus providing the reader with a clearer understanding of the novelist's view of romanticism and with his intention concerning Stein. As Michael Riffaterre states in *Text Production*: "A literary text always carries meaning in relation to texts that it presupposes" (281).