Yearbook of Conrad Studies

(Poland) Vol. II 2006

Jagiellonian University Press

The *Yearbook of Conrad Studies (Poland)* is an annual series devoted to the life and work of Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski who, while being one of the great names of English literature, had a cultural background that was very much Polish and indeed "continental."

The first volume of the *Yearbook* was entitled *Conrad's Europe* and was published in 2005 under the auspices of the University of Opole and the Joseph Conrad Society (Poland). This second volume (2006) is published in Cracow by the Jagiellonian University in conjunction with the Joseph Conrad Society (Poland).

Polskie
Towarzystwo
Conradowskie

ISBN 978-83-233-2318-1

Yearbook of Conrad Studies

Yearbook of Conrad Studies (Poland) Vol. II

Cracow 2006

Yearbook of Conrad Studies

(Poland) Vol. II 2006

Jagiellonian University Press

Published under the auspices of the Faculty of Polish Language and Literature

REVIEWER
dr hab. Krystyna Stamirowska, prof. UJ

EDITOR
dr hab. Jolanta Dudek, prof. UJ

COVER DESIGNER
Paweł Górny

TECHNICAL EDITOR
Ewa Cebo

PROOFREADER
Katarzyna Świerk-Bożek

TYPESETTING
Wojciech Wojewoda

First Edition, Kraków 2007

ISBN 978-83-233-2318-1

www.wuj.pl

Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego
Redakcja: ul. Michałowskiego 9/2, 31-126 Kraków
tel. 012-631-18-81, tel./fax 012-631-18-83
Dystrybucja: ul. Wrocławska 53, 30-011 Kraków
tel. 012-631-01-97, tel./fax 012-631-01-98
tel. kom. 0506-006-674, e-mail: wydaw@if.uj.edu.pl
Konto: Bank BPH SA, nr 62 1060 0076 0000 3200 0047 8769

CONTENTS

CONRAD AND THE CRACOW ROYAL ARSENAL

Stefan Zabierowski

The University of Silesia, Katowice

As we all know, it was eventually decided that the recently created Jagiellonian University Joseph Conrad Research Centre would be located in one of the rooms of the old Royal Arsenal building at the bottom of Grodzka Street, just opposite the Wawel Castle.

Unwittingly perhaps, the University has chosen a building which – standing as it does opposite the Royal Castle – is not only both handsome and beautifully situated, but is also the most appropriate of all possible homes for the Najder Collection, for it was here that – in 1914, when the Arsenal was the headquarters of the Austrian garrison in Cracow – something happened that was to have a decisive bearing on the fortunes of Joseph Conrad.

Let us remember that in 1914 Conrad was invited to visit Poland by the mother-in-law of a young Polish friend and political associate called Joseph Jerome (Józef Hieronim) Retinger. Conrad arrived in Cracow on 28th July 1914, accompanied by his wife Jessie and their two sons Boris and John, only to find that he had come to witness the outbreak of war between Britain and Austria on Austrian soil and that he – as a British citizen – was now faced with the prospect of immediate internment for the duration of hostilities.

Conrad's Polish friends decided that he should go into hiding in Zakopane, where one of his cousins – Aniela Zagórska – ran a guest-house called "Konstantynówka" (at 7, Jagiellońska Street). There the Korzeniowskis stayed, but as the war dragged on and their money began to run out, Conrad decided to look for a way to get himself and his family back to Britain. In this he was helped by the Cracow lawyer Dr. Theodore Kosch, who later gave the following account of what happened:

> "My junior colleague Dr. Francis Kowalski, who was also staying in Zakopane, told me that his step-sister was on extremely good terms with the wife of no less a personage than General Kuck, the commander of the Austrian garrison in Cracow, so it seemed obvious that the best plan would be to ask her to help us get the Korzeniowskis back to Britain.

Everything went perfectly. Dr. Kowalski returned to Cracow and told his step-sister about the plight of the Korzeniowskis, who had planned to stay in Poland for no longer than a few weeks, but were now virtually destitute and unable to buy food or even warm clothes for the winter. She in her turn told the Commandant's wife, who was so moved by what she heard that she persuaded her husband to issue a special pass exempting Conrad and his family from travel restrictions within Austria. The wording of the pass (issued in October 1914) is as follows:

'Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski wishes to travel to Vienna with his family. From a military standpoint I see no objection. All persons in authority are requested to allow this family to proceed without hindrance.'

Thanks to this document the Conrad family were able to get to Vienna. After that they crossed the border with Italy and subsequently boarded a Dutch ship which took them safely back to Britain."[1]

Is it not a truly remarkable coincidence that General Charles Kuck (or rather Kuk, which is the correct spelling) almost certainly signed Conrad's special pass in the very same Arsenal building which – some ninety years later – now houses the Jagiellonian University Joseph Conrad Research Centre? Let us hope that this is a good omen for the future of Conrad studies.

[1] T. Kosch, "Powrót Conrada do Anglii," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 30 (1960). Reprinted in S. Zabierowski, *Polska misja Conrada*, Katowice, 1984, 43.

THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY JOSEPH CONRAD RESEARCH CENTRE

Jolanta Dudek

The Jagiellonian University, Cracow

The Jagiellonian University Joseph Conrad Research Centre – which is now under the wing of the Faculty of Polish Language and Literature – was created by the Senate of the Jagiellonian University on December 21st 2005 in order to provide local research facilities for Conrad scholars. The main impulse behind the University's decision to set up the centre was, of course, the donation by Professor Zdzisław Najder of his rich collection of books, journals and other resources connected with Conrad – who is, after all, not only a great English author in his own right, but is also one of the greatest writers – some would even say *the* greatest – that Poland has ever produced.

Having accepted the request of the Board of the Faculty that I be the first director of the Joseph Conrad Research Centre, I took up my duties at the beginning of February 2006. With the help of the Dean – Professor Jacek Popiel – a home for the centre was found in one of the rooms of the old Royal Arsenal at 64 Grodzka Street, which had recently been acquired by the Faculty.

In March Dr. Andrzej Juszczyk and Hubert Kopeć M.A. – then still an undergraduate – brought that part of the Najder Collection which was in Opole to its new home in Cracow and at about the same time packages of books kindly donated by Professor Andrzej Busza began to arrive from Canada. Two special bookcases were designed to fit into the recesses in the walls and the Centre now has its own telephone and computer. Hubert – now a postgraduate student doing a Ph.D. on Conrad – has been entrusted with the task of making a new catalogue and taking care of the collection on a day-to-day basis.

Our aim is not only to gradually expand the collection in order to provide as many resources as possible for Conrad scholars, but also – and perhaps above all – to foster Conrad studies in Poland. As well as continuing the Yearbook of Conrad Studies (Poland), which was first published in 2005 (Vol. I: *Conrad's Europe*) by the Polish Conrad Society at the University of Opole, we shall also be hosting inter-

national conferences designed to explore hitherto unfathomed aspects of Conrad's work.

The focal theme of this year's conference, which is intended to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Conrad's birth, is "The Reception of the Work of Joseph Conrad – Readers Real and Implied." The conference – organized jointly with the Joseph Conrad Society (Poland) – will be held in Cracow from 22nd to 26th September 2007.

January 2007

LITERATURE AS PROPHECY: THE CASE OF CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS*

Andrzej Busza
University of British Columbia, Vancouver

None of Conrad's works has been so much in the limelight recently – both academic and popular – as *Heart of Darkness*. Together with such texts as Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Austen's *Mansfield Park*, and Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Conrad's novella found itself in the force field of the late ideological turn in critical discourse. Ever since Chinua Achebe called Conrad "a bloody racist" (Achebe 343) and *Heart of Darkness* "an offensive and totally deplorable book" (Achebe 345), critics have sparred with undisguised passion arguing in support of, or against, Achebe's somewhat melodramatic indictment. After the postcolonial hurricane came feminism and foregrounded Marlow's aunt, the two ominous knitters and, above all, the Intended. The African woman neatly bridged for the ideologically inclined the two currents. Although both trends have Marxism in their genealogy, both are singularly ahistorical in their approach; both flaunt an arrogant presentism; and both titilate the critic's conceit by ostensibly exposing from a position of superior consciousness the writer's myopias.

I want to do otherwise. In the essay that follows, rather than belabour the inevitable historically determined limitations of all texts, I wish to consider a special sense in which literature can be deemed "timeless". Taking a cue from Conrad's own thoughts on the subject, I shall argue that some works of literature – for instance, *Heart of Darkness* – not only comment in an incisive and profound way on major issues and problems of its day but also project reflections derived from their penetration of the core of human experience – as it were prophetically into a future time.

As we all know, in Biblical times there were individuals who fearlessly spoke truth to power, preaching against the mighty of this world – kings, princes, priests, scholars – heedless of the will of the establishment, of the pressures of conformity, of consequences. They inveighed against injustice, corruption, and impiety; and they sought to awaken the moral conscience of the people and make them see life in the perspective of eternal truths and values. Speaking in metaphors and symbols,

they warned of approaching disasters and foretold the course of history. The names of these extraordinary figures were: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Daniel, Habakkuk, and so on. They were the prophets and their stories, sayings and writings form an important part of the Old Testament. Here, for example, is Habakkuk at the turn of the 6th century B.C. calling down woes on the Assyrians, who, as one of the dominant powers in the region, oppressed the Israelites:

"Woe betide you who heap wealth that is not yours
and enrich yourself with goods taken in pledge!"
Will not your creditors suddenly start up,
will not all awake who would shake you till you are empty,
and will you not fall a victim to them?
Because you yourself have plundered mighty nations,
all the rest of the world will plunder you,
because of bloodshed and violence done in the land,
to the city and all its inhabitants.
...
Woe betide you who have built a town with bloodshed
And founded a city on fraud,
so that nations toil for a pittance,
and peoples weary themselves for a mere nothing! (Hab. 2. 6–13)

Although these words were directed at the Assyrian Empire – which indeed soon crumbled to dust – they remain a perpetual condemnation and warning to all nations which exploit, oppress,and seek to enslave other peoples.

More recently the prophetic function appears to have devolved in some measure upon the great writers. They perform the function perhaps with less fervour, righteousness, and certitude than the *navi* of old, but the tone of the prophet's voice is nevertheless unmistakable in their writings. We hear it in the gnomic sentences of Wilfred Owen's "Preface," drafted shortly before he was killed on the Sambre Canal in Flanders just a week before the armistice:

This book is not about heroes. English poetry is not yet fit to speak of them.
Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty,
dominion, or power, except War.
Above all I am not concerned with Poetry.
My subject is War, and the pity of War.
The poetry is in the pity.
Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory.
They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn. (31)

A year or so later, Yeats, horrified by "the growing murderousness of the world" ("The Trembling of the Veil" 130), prophesied the advent of the Savage God with his jackboot battalions and screaming dive bombers in a poem entitled with blasphemous irony "The Second Coming":

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.
Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand. (210–211)

And there is a passage in T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land* (which incidentally contains some echoes of *Heart of Darkness*) that reads like some eerie foreglimpse of the terrors that have haunted our post-Hiroshima imagination:

What is that sound high in the air
Murmur of maternal lamentation
Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal (ll. 366–376)

In modern prose fiction the prophetic vein is even more in evidence. A list of obvious examples would include: H.G. Wells' scientific romances (which, incidentally, were written in the same decade as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*), Zamyatin's *We*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, Orwell's *1984*, Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, Gibson's *Neuromancer*, Lessing's *The Good Terrorist*, and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Moreover, if one uses the term "prophecy" in the wider biblical sense, as I intend to in relation to Conrad's story, one could add to the list such titles as: Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*, Kafka's *The Trial*, Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, Jünger's *On the Marble Cliffs*, Golding's *The Lord of the Flies*, Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, and Dellilo's *White Noise* – each grappling in its own way with the perennial questions, the new dilemmas, and the greatest fears of modern man.

While the idea of ascribing prophetic powers to the creative writer is very old, it acquired a rather special formulation and emphasis during the Romantic period. William Blake (born exactly one hundred years before Conrad) who spearheaded the revolt against 18th century rationalism, which had naturalized religion, depersonalized God, and secularized the Church, consciously assumed the mantle of the bard and prophesied against priests, kings, Empire, and the "cogs tyrannic" (*Jeru-*

salem 15: 18) of nascent industrial capitalism. His visionary portrayal of the other *Heart of Darkness* of Conrad's story, London, "the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth" (45), is fraught with images and symbols of social injustice, exploitation, enslavement, institutionalized violence and Pharisaism:

London

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infant's cry of fear,
In every voice; in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born Infant's tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse (102)

Another rebel against the tyranny of practical reason and material interests, Shelley, in his rhapsodic *A Defence of Poetry* not only attributes prophetic powers to the poet, but actually subsumes the prophet in the poet:

> Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called, in the earlier epochs of the world, legislators, or prophets: a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters. For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time. (500)

Shelley concludes with a confidence in the supreme value of literature that will probably be never repeated:

> Poets are the hierophants [priests who interpret sacred mysteries] of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. (513)

Writing at the end of the 19th century, Conrad, who in many ways is an heir of the Romantics, echoes, albeit in a somewhat muted manner, Shelley's affirmation of the prophetic nature and timeless appeal of art:

> The changing wisdom of successive generations discards ideas, questions facts, demolishes theories. But the artist appeals to that part of our being which is not dependent on wisdom: to that in us which is a gift and not an acquisition – and, therefore, more permanently enduring. He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives; to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain; to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation – and to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts, to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity – the dead to the living and the living to the unborn. (Preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* viii)

The pivotal idea in both manifestos is that the artist – like the prophet – connects through his imaginative vision the *now* of human experience to its *before* and its *after*; or to put it another way, experiences retrospectively as well as in advance the fate of past and coming generations. As Blake expresses it with poetic concision in the introductory poem to his *Songs of Experience*:

> Hear the voice of the Bard!
> Who present, past, and future, sees. (81)

In *Heart of Darkness*, even before Marlow starts his monologue, the essence of which is recollecting and reflecting upon past events in the present, it is made clear to the reader that the narration as a whole will have a dual thrust and focus – directing our attention alternately to the present and to other times.

The story opens in the present. It is high tide, and the sun is about to set. We are on board a pleasure craft anchored in the lower reaches of the Thames, the river that runs through the greatest, the richest, the most powerful, and civilizationally the most advanced city on earth, whose commercial and political tentacles extend all over the globe, even to its darkest places. But the focus of the narrative does not remain fixed in the present for long. We are soon reminded of the process whereby the Thames became the important river that it is:

> The tidal current runs to and fro in its unceasing service, crowded with memories of men and ships it had borne to the rest of home or to the battles of the sea. It had known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud, from Sir Francis Drake to Sir John Franklin, knights all, titled and untitled – the great knights-errant of the sea. It had borne all the ships whose names are like jewels flashing in the night of time, from the *Golden Hind* returning with her round flanks full of treasure, to be visited by the Queen's Highness and thus pass out of the gigantic tale, to the *Erebus* and *Terror*, bound on other conquests – and that never returned. It had known the ships and the men. ... the adventurers and the settlers; kings' ships and the ships of men on 'Change; captains, admirals, the dark "interlopers" of the Eastern trade, and the commissioned "generals" of East India fleets. Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they

> all had gone out on the stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire. (47)

Then night descends upon the river, and the silence is broken by Marlow's oracular statement: 'And this also ... has been one of the dark places of the earth' (48). It is the reflection of a man of imagination and vision. Indeed, his very appearance suggests a latter-day prophet:

> Marlow sat cross-legged right aft, leaning against the mizzen-mast. He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled and idol. (46)

When darkness deepens further, he becomes, in effect, a disembodied voice, a kind of oracle:

> It had become so pitch dark that we listeners could hardly see one another. For a long time already he, sitting apart, had been no more to us than a voice... I listened, I listened on the watch for the sentence, for the word, that would give me the clue to the faint uneasiness inspired by this narrative that seemed to shape itself without human lips in the heavy night-air of the river. (83)

Our final view of Marlow completes the pattern: "Marlow ceased, and sat apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha" (162). And to whom is this Buddha "in European clothes and without a lotus-flower" (50) preaching? His audience consists of four friends – all of whom like Marlow have followed the sea. "Between us there was," the nameless narrator tells us at the story's beginning, "the bond of the sea" (45). They have had a common past and that is why Marlow can speak to them with some ease and freedom. But, whereas Marlow has continued in this calling, remaining free of land entanglements and being thus able to view and judge the things of the land with detachment, the others have now left the sea. Their work is no longer "out there in the luminous estuary" but behind them in "the brooding gloom" (45) of "the monstrous town" (48). They have become familiar spirits of this infernal world; an integral part of its fabric. One is a Director of Companies; another, a Lawyer; the third, an Accountant. They represent the pillars of modern capitalist society: corporate power, law, finance. The fourth listener, the anonymous narrator, is presumably our own – that is, the reader's – surrogate within the fictional framework. And it is this delegation from the land, from the dark heart of the greatest Empire of all time and the centre of the civilized world, that hears out Marlow's story and learns from it some bitter and disturbing truths about human history and nature.

One of the most cherished 19th century illusions was the belief that humanity was following an ever-ascending trajectory of progress – moral, spiritual, as well as material. This myth was reinforced by the positing of virtually qualitative distinctions between modern man and men in past ages, and even more dramatically, between civilized man and the so-called savages of more primitive societies. Indeed,

there were some intoxicated optimists who toyed with the idea that man would eventually, perhaps quite soon, transcend himself, and a Superman would emerge, supplanting man just as *homo sapiens* had once overcome the ape. Though I would hesitate calling Nietzsche an optimist (I suppose one could call him a "tragic optimist"), a passage from his strange book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* conveys this notion with rhetorical and imaginative power:

> And Zarathustra spoke thus to the people:
> *I teach you the Superman.* Man is something that should be overcome.
> What have you done to overcome him?
> All creatures hitherto have created something beyond themselves:
> and do you want to be the ebb of this great tide, and return to the animals
> rather than overcome man?
>
> What is the ape to men? A laughing-stock or a painful embarrassm.
> ...
> Behold, I am the prophet of the lightning ... but this lightning is called
> *Superman.* (41–43)

These words and ideas were sweet music to the ears of the apologists of Imperialism. Translating Nietzsche's primarily moral and spiritual emphasis into ideological terms, they interpreted the message as offering philosophical support to their actual practice of treating indigenous peoples as sub-human beings. Later, these ideas would degenerate even further and contribute to the Nazi ideology of the Master Race and the Final Solution.

The whole drift of Conrad's anthropological thinking runs counter to this trend. Originating from a country which had itself been swallowed up at the end of the 18th century by a huge Empire and whose inhabitants were treated as second-class citizens and worse, Conrad naturally felt more sympathy for subject and oppressed peoples. The protagonist of one of his later stories, "Prince Roman", (which incidentally is based upon the actual life and experiences of a friend of the Korzeniowski family) is made to walk all the way in chains to his Siberian exile – guarded by Russian gendarmes – just like those six black men "connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking" (64) whom Marlow sees on his arrival at the Outer Station. Similarly, Conrad's twenty years at sea which brought him into contact with men of extremely diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds in the ports he visited as well as on board the ships he served (British merchant crews of the time were incredibly cosmopolitan – often less than a third of the complement were British) must have impressed upon Conrad a sense of the unity of mankind – those elements which all human beings regardless of colour, race, nationality share in common – rather than the surface differences. Out of the same experience came the realization that so-called civilized men will often behave in a manner that would be an embarrassment to or even instill sheer horror in so-called savages. He saw this no doubt more clearly than elsewhere during his trip into the

centre of Africa. Thus, for Conrad the gap between "primitive" and "civilized" man is as thin as a sheet of paper rather than the abyss dreamed of by Nietzsche or the barbed-wire fence in which the Imperialists believe and which they periodically rebuild. Bertrand Russell, who met Conrad in 1913 and was deeply impressed by him, writes in an often quoted passage of his *Autobiography* that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* "expresses, I think, most completely his philosophy of life. I felt, though I do not know whether he would have accepted such an image, that he thought of civilized and morally tolerable human life as a dangerous walk on a thin crust of barely cooled lava which at any moment might break and let the unwary sink into fiery depths" (279). The 20th century – with its festival of blood and mud on the Western Front, its concentration camps, gas-chambers, and crematoria; its artillery barrages and carpet-bombing; its cluster bombs and napalm – has surpassed itself in proving Conrad's pessimistic vision of modern man sadly accurate.

But let us return to the deck of the *Nellie*, now in total darkness, the four listeners and Marlow talking. Repeating the pattern of the first narrator's reverie on the romantic past of the river Thames, Marlow proceeds to relate the Roman Conquest of Britain to contemporary colonial experience. But whereas the former passage, in turning to history, invested the present with a glowing halo of romance and adventure (like the reddish light of the setting sun), Marlow's historic meditation (spoken already in darkness) draws from the past gloomier and more sobering lessons.

> "I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago – the other day... Imagine the feelings of a commander of a fine – what d'ye call'em? – trireme in the Mediterranean, ordered suddenly to the north; run overland across the Gauls in a hurry; put in charge of one of these craft ... Imagine him here – the very end of the world, a sea the colour of lead, a sky the colour of smoke ... Land in a swamp, march through the woods, and in some inland post feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed around him, – all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men. There's no initiation either into such mysteries. He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination – you know, imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate." (49–50)

While this is clearly a preview of Marlow's own nightmarish trip up the Congo, and even more precisely and poignantly of Kurtz's encounter with the darkness, it also prefigures the 24-hour nightmares of a young NATO soldier sent the other day into the Hindu Kush mountains in north-eastern Afghanistan or of a U.S. marine posted to Khe Sanh in Vietnam in December 1967. Here is Michael Herr describing *that* experience:

> Sometimes you'd get so tired that you'd forget where you were and sleep the way you hadn't slept since you were a child. I know that a lot of people there never got up from that kind of sleep; some called them lucky (Never knew what hit him) ... Mostly what you had was on the agitated side of half-sleep, you thought you were sleeping but you were really just

> waiting. ... Or dozing and waking under mosquito netting in a mess of slick sweat, gagging for air that wasn't 99 per cent moisture, one clean breath to dry-sluice your anxiety and the backwater smell of your own body. But all you got and all there was were misty clots of air that corroded your appetite and burned your eyes and made your cigarettes taste like swollen insects rolled up and smoked alive, crackling and wet. ... And sometimes the only reason you didn't panic was that you didn't have the energy. (53–54)

For the marine, for the Roman commander, and for Marlow Apocalypse is Now. Moreover, it is an apocalypse that has to be lived through alone – like a bad dream, or like a bad trip.

"Do you see the story?" Marlow cries out in anguish in the course of his narrative, "Do you see anything? It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream – making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams..." (82) And nightmares. The feeling of horror and the utter loneliness which these dreamers of bad dreams share is much more important than the time and distance that separate them.

By conflating discrete moments in history (the rise of the Roman Empire and the zenith of European colonialism) and distant places (the darkening estuary of the Thames and the snake-like Congo River), Conrad can isolate and stress those features of human nature and experience that are universal and permanently enduring. And in doing so, he seeks, on the one hand, to undermine the ethnocentric arrogance and complacency of Western man, and, on the other, to encourage imaginatively the sense of solidarity of which he speaks in the Preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* that I quoted earlier: "the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity – the dead to the living and the living to the unborn" (viii). Thus, Marlow feels this sense of solidarity not only with his listeners on board the *Nellie* with whom he shares a common past life at sea; but also with the boiler-maker-cum-pigeon – enthusiast who, like Marlow, is a good worker and appreciates good work; with the Russian harlequin who is also a dedicated sailor and romantic adventurer as well being humane in his dealings with whites and blacks alike; and with the native helmsman whom he has taught to steer the steamer and who is killed before Marlow's very eyes; and even with Kurtz, who in spite of his degradation, depravity and crimes in the end sees *The horror* and passes judgement upon himself:

> "He had summed up – he had judged, 'The horror!' He was a remarkable man. After all, this was the expression of some sort of belief; it had candour, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth ... That is why I have remained loyal to Kurtz to the last". (151)

And in a similar way, Marlow reveals the latent fellowship of sorrow in love shared by the two women who have loved and been deserted by Kurtz: the white

Belgian girl in the sepulchral city and the splendid African woman on the banks of the river:

> "I shall see this eloquent phantom as long as I live, and I shall see her, too, a tragic and familiar Shade, resembling in this gesture another one, tragic also, and bedecked with powerless charms, stretching bare arms over the glitter of the infernal stream, the stream of darkness." (160–161)

In contrast, the imperialist ethos and ideology represent the complete negation of this kind of true human solidarity. They promote not a sense of brotherhood, but of division, dividing people into the rulers and the ruled, the oppressors and the oppressed, the civilizationally advanced and the underdeveloped. The ruled can either suffer in silence and humiliation:

> "Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair." (66)

Or try to ingratiate themselves with the rulers through servility and by betraying (breaking solidarity with) their own people:

> "Behind this raw matter one of the reclaimed, the product of the new forces at work, strolled despondently, carrying a rifle by its middle. He had a uniform jacket with one button off, and seeing a white man on the path, he hoisted his weapon to his shoulder with alacrity. ... with a large, white, rascally grin, and a glance at his charge, seemed to take me into partnership in his exalted trust." (64–65)

(Fifty years later, when colonial disciplinary methods had been transferred and adapted to the concentration camp system, the first category would become the so-called *Musselman*; the second, the hated and despised *Kapos*.)

In this world, ruled not by the principles of solidarity but by the Hobbesian condition of War (in which the life of man is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" [183; pt. 1, ch. 13]) and the Darwinian survival of the fittest, even the oppressors cannot enjoy the feeling of solidarity. The pilgrims are for ever bickering, backbiting and intriguing among themselves: "There was an air of plotting about the station, but nothing came of it, of course" (78). The manager is not only blessed with health ("Men who come out here," he opines, "should have no entrails" [74]), but is also the local Solomon:

> When annoyed at meal-times by the constant quarrels of the white men about precedence, he ordered an immense round table to be made, for which a special house had to be built. This was the station's mess-room. Where he sat was the first place – the rest were nowhere. (74)

The only common purpose which these men know is *greed*: "To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe" (87). In the language of the classical prophets Conrad's pilgrims are idolaters and the idol they worship is ivory.

Naturally, they try to outwit each other. All try to pull strings with the Administration back home in the sepulchral city. The bond of thieves and criminals does not yield true solidarity. In this way they become victims, too, of the hell of their own making. As Tadeusz Borowski and Primo Levi have shown graphically and with horrid irony, in the 20th century hells of Auschwitz and Birkenau the victims became oppressors, and the oppressors were often victims.

And what is Marlow's attitude to the flabby devil of European colonialism and all his works? At first he seems to hedge a little, as if reluctant to look into it too much – or maybe out of politic deference to his listeners who are after all making money in the hub of the British Empire. (Just as Conrad had to employ all kinds of obliquity to avoid offending the conservative sensibilities of his *Blackwood's* readers.) Although Marlow defines the essence of imperialism clearly enough as

> "robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a grand scale, and men going at it blind... The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much" (50–51).

He tries to differentiate between, say, Roman conquerors and the modern colonists. "What saves us", he argues, "is efficiency – the devotion to efficiency" (50). Moreover, modern imperialism is redeemed by an idea: "An idea at the backof it; not a sentimental pretense but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea – something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to..." (51) – that is, the great civilizing mission. He then tries to discriminate, to suggest a difference between British and other imperialisms. On the large shining map in the Company's offices "[t]here was a vast amount of red – good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there, a deuce of a lot of blue, a little green, smears of orange, and, on the East Coast, a purple patch, to show where the jolly pioneers of progress drink the jolly lager-beer. However, I wasn't going into any of these. I was going into the yellow. [I.e. the Congo Free State owned by King Leopold II of Belgium.] Dead in the Centre" (55–60). But each of these illusions is subsequently undermined by his narrative.

The chief devil in the land – the remarkable Mr Kurtz – turns out to be not Belgian at all – but half-English and half-French. Indeed, we are told: "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" (117). And where is the saving efficiency? Is it displayed by the French "man-of-war anchored off the coast ... shelling the bush" (61)? Does it consist in the "objectless blasting" (64) which seems to be the only work going on at the Outer Station? Or is it symbolized by the relics of Western technology: "the boiler wallowing in the grass" and "the undersized railway-truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air" (63)? And what about the idea? Is it embodied in Marlow's Aunt's sentimental chatter about "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways" (59)? Is it expressed in the hypocritical discourse flowing from the Sepulchral City? Or is it epitomized in Kurtz's memorandum on

the "Suppression of Savage Customs" with its "luminous and terrifying" postscript: "Exterminate all the brutes!" (118) – a directive that is often issued when a power-crazy idealist, abandoning all restraints, assumes godlike prerogatives and seeks to rule the lives and decide on the deaths of those who have either submitted to the will of this false prophet or been forced to bow down before him. The place may be a stadium in Berlin or a plantation in Guyana.

The terrifying truth and the warning contained in *Heart of Darkness* is revealed gradually – Conrad like Marlow and the Prophets speaks in riddles, metaphors and symbols – after all he too was writing at the heart of a Great Empire. And, indeed, he appears to have been successful in clouding the picture to some degree. One needs only to read some of the early reviews of *Heart of Darkness* to see how little his contemporary British readers understood. It took more than half a century – and a period specializing in real life horrors – for the spectral illumination of Conrad's story to become truly visible. Not long ago it even acquired the dubious recognition of inspiring a piece of pop prophecy on film.

WORKS CITED

Achebe, Chinua. "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkeness*" (1975). *The Norton Critical Edition of Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness*. Ed. Paul B. Armstrong. 4th ed. New York and London: Norton, 2006.

Adams, Hazard, ed. *Critical Theory Since Plato*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971.

Blake, William. *The Poetical Works of William Blake*. Ed. John Sampson. London: Oxford UP, 1960.

Conrad, Joseph. "Heart of Darkness." *Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories*. Edinburgh and London: John Grant, 1925.

_____. *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*. London: Dent, 1950.

_____. *Tales of Hearsay and Last Essays*. London: Dent, 1955.

Eliot, T.S. *Collected Poems 1909–1962*. London and Boston: Faber, 1963.

Herr, Michael. *Dispatches*. New York: Vintage International, 1991.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan* (1651). Ed. C.B. Macpherson. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.

The New English Bible with the Apocrypha. Oxford and Cambridge: Oxford UP/Cambridge UP, 1970.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, Transl. with an Introduction R.J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth–Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1980.

Owen, Wifred. *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*. Ed. C. Day Lewis. New York: New Directions, 1964.

Russell, Bertrand. *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell: 1872 to World War I*. New York: Bantam Books, 1968.

Yeats, W.B. *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*. London: Macmillan, 1965.

_____. "The Trembling of the Veil". *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1958.

Point of View in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and the Ultimate Uncertainty of Knowledge

John G. Peters
University of North Texas

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* presents obvious and subtle representations of point of view. In the novella, various narrative techniques appear, and these techniques result from Conrad's overarching epistemological investigation into the relationship between knowledge and point of view. Conrad consistently depicts characters as unable to access phenomena except through the medium of human consciousness (since all phenomena filter through human consciousness). Unlike most earlier writers, who almost always employed narrative techniques meant to universalize the experience of phenomena, Conrad consistently demonstrates that phenomena can only be experienced individually. Conrad's goal is to show the reader that point of view is subjective not objective, and hence although various characters may experience the same phenomena–they all experience them differently. In this way, Conrad represents the apprehension of phenomena as an individual not a universal experience, and Conrad's reader must therefore always consider the point of view from which the novella is told.

The aim of most previous writers, especially Realist writers, was to make the experience of the characters conform to that of the readers. Common experience between reader and character is what was supposed to make a work realistic. In a work of fiction, readers encounter events and other phenomena that concur with their past experience, and thus the writer reinforces the idea that everyone experiences essentially the same things. Conrad, however, reverses this process and hence also reverses its result. Like earlier writers, Conrad seeks identification between reader and character, but unlike earlier writers, he intends the reader's experience to conform to that of the character–not the character's experience to conform to that of the reader. The readers recognize themselves in the characters rather than recognizing the characters in themselves. In other words, although Conrad and many of his predecessors represent characters and readers each experiencing essentially the same phenomena, Conrad's predecessors show this similarity of experience occurring because of similar past experience (the character's experience concurring with

the reader's), while Conrad shows this similarity occurring because of a similar present experience (the reader's experience concurring with the character's). Reader and character do not experience the same phenomena because phenomena are universal but rather because the reader enters the mind of the character and experiences phenomena as the character does, in many cases at the same moment the characters does.

To place the reader into the character's experience, Conrad employs both broad-scale techniques as well as more narrowly-focused devices. Of the narrowly-focused narrative devices, *Heart of Darkness* includes two of particular import. The first is what may be called limited angle of view. Limited angle of view is a technique that limits how much of a scene a character can perceive because the character is located at a particular point in space and time. The character's angle of view may be limited by his or her distance from an object or by other objects intervening between the perceiver and the object of perception. With limited angle of view, a character cannot perceive a scene in panorama–only in parts. For instance, shortly after Marlow comes into view of the Inner Station, he surveys it through binoculars and remarks that "near the house half-a-dozen slim posts remained in a row, roughly trimmed, and with their upper ends ornamented with round carved balls."[1] Even through binoculars, though, Marlow's distance from the station limits his angle of view, and so what he sees as "round carved balls" look entirely different once he gets closer to the station and his view becomes less limited:

> Now I had suddenly a nearer view, and its first result was to make me throw my head back as if before a blow. Then I went carefully from post to post with my glass, and I saw my mistake. These round knobs were not ornamental but symbolic; they were expressive and puzzling, striking and disturbing... . They would have been even more impressive, those heads on the stakes, if their faces had not been turned to the house. (*Y* 130)

Initially, Marlow does not see these objects as shrunken heads but as knobs of wood on the tops of the posts: "I had expected to see a knob of wood there, you know" (*Y* 130). This difference in perception results from the difference in physical distance between Marlow and the posts at the different instances of perception. Marlow only sees these objects as shrunken heads when the physical distance between himself and the objects diminishes and thus the angle of view is not as limited. Conrad limits Marlow's ability to perceive the objects when he first sees them by limiting the angle from which Marlow can view the posts. In so doing, Conrad also limits what the reader can see at that particular moment. The reader can only see through Marlow's eyes and should recognize that Conrad only represents Mar-

[1] Joseph Conrad, *Youth and Two Other Stories*, Canterbury edition (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1928), 121. Hereafter, all references to Conrad's works will be taken from the standard 1928 Doubleday edition of Conrad's works, except those to *The Secret Agent*, which will be taken from the 1990 Cambridge University Press edition (edited by Bruce Harkness and S.W. Reid). All of these references will be followed by an abbreviated title and their page numbers in parentheses.

low's point of view–not an objective point of view. Marlow and the reader see the same things and at the same moment in time–but not because Marlow's experience concurs with the reader's past experience but rather because the reader can only access phenomena through Marlow's eyes, and thus, like Marlow, the reader sees at first only knobs of wood and only later sees the heads when Marlow also sees those objects as such.

The other important narrative device Conrad employs is what Ian Watt calls "delayed decoding"[2] (which may not be the best term to describe this phenomenon). Delayed decoding refers to incidents in Conrad's works in which a character initially sees an object as one thing and then later sees that object as something else. Unlike limited angle of view, a character's perception of an object changes not because the location from which the character perceives the object becomes less limited but rather because of the incongruity between the object and the context in which it appears. Perhaps the most obvious example of delayed decoding occurs when Marlow remarks,

> Sticks, little sticks, were flying about–thick: they were whizzing before my nose, dropping below me, striking behind me against my pilot-house. All this time the river, the shore, the woods, were very quiet–perfectly quiet. I could only hear the heavy splashing thump of the stern-wheel and the patter of these things. We cleared the snag clumsily. Arrows, by Jove! We were being shot at! (*Y* 109–10)[3]

Watt views this phenomenon as something of a perceptual mistake that the perceiver later corrects; such incidents show a movement "directly into the observer's consciousness at the very moment of the perception, before it has been translated into its cause";[4] they combine "the forward temporal progression of the mind, as it receives messages from the outside world, with the much slower reflexive process of making out their meaning."[5] Ramon Fernandez has remarked similarly that Conrad

> applies himself to seizing things at their birth, in their formation, and, so to speak, on the hither side of their definition... . An image of the event is communicated to us possessing the qualities of recollection, of a personal, affective recollection, since rememoration's unique

---

[2] Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 175–79. For responses to Watt, see Bruce Johnson, "Conrad's Impressionism and Watt's 'Delayed Decoding,'" in *Conrad Revisited: Essays for the Eighties*, ed. Ross C. Murfin (University: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 51–70; and Robert S. Baker, "Joseph Conrad," *Contemporary Literature* 22.1 (Winter 1981): 116–26.

[3] Some other examples of delayed decoding include *Heart of Darkness* (46–47), "Youth" (*Y* 22––23), "The Secret Sharer" (*TLS* 97–98), "The Idiots" (*TU* 84), "An Outpost of Progress" (*TU* 112–13, 114), *Lord Jim* (*LJ* 296–97), *The Shadow Line* (*SL* 113–14), "Freya of the Seven Isles" (*TLS* 196), *Nostromo* (*N* 249), *The Secret Agent* (*SA* 198–99), and "Typhoon" (*T* 56). For more on these incidents, see my *Conrad and Impressionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[4] Watt, 175.

[5] Watt, 175.

medium is the shades of the impression *before* the latter's elucidation by comparison and reasoning.[6]

Bruce Johnson, however, disagrees and argues that such an incident is "not really undesirable temporary misunderstanding so much as an unmediated observation."[7] In effect, Johnson argues that Marlow does not see, for example, arrows that he first mistakes for sticks but rather that he actually sees sticks and then afterwards actually sees arrows. When Marlow sees these objects as sticks, they are incongruous with the context in which they appear. As a result, Marlow mediates the experience of seeing sticks by filtering these objects through his past experience. Once he does so, the sticks appear as arrows and are thus more congruous with their context. In other words, it makes no sense for sticks to be flying about in that context, and therefore Marlow unconsciously filters these objects through his past experience until he arrives at a denotation for them that does make sense–arrows. Regardless of whether this is a perceptual mistake (as Watt seems to suggest) or simply two different perceptions of a particular object (as Johnson seems to suggest), though, both views demonstrate that Conrad continually represents individual point of view by means of this narrative device. Phenomena filter through a single human consciousness–in this case, Marlow's consciousness. Furthermore, as is true of limited angle of view, in order for the reader to concur with Marlow, the reader must enter Marlow's mind and experience phenomena in the way Marlow does and at the moment Marlow does. Hence, when Marlow sees sticks, the reader sees sticks, and when Marlow sees arrows, the reader sees arrows.

On a more broad scale, Conrad employs three variations on narrative methodology: multiple narrators, frame narration, and what may be called direct indirection.[8] Of these techniques multiple narrators perhaps most clearly demonstrates individual point of view. Traditional narratives employed a single narrative voice, and that voice was often intended to give an objective account of the events and other phenomena that occurred in a particular work of fiction. Multiple narrators was a significant revision of traditional narrative techniques in which a single narrator led the reader through the course of events. In essence, multiple narrators is only different from a single narrator in that a number of individuals narrate events rather than simply one individual, but that single fact makes all the difference because each narrative voice presents phenomena from his or her own individual point of view. In *Heart of Darkness*, a number of characters tell Marlow about Kurtz for example. The brick maker, the company's chief accountant, the Central Station

[6] Ramon Fernandez, *Messages*, trans. Montgomery Belgion (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927), 144. (Emphasis is Fernandez's.)

[7] Johnson, 53.

[8] Donald Davidson uses a similar term in his article "Joseph Conrad's Directed Indirections" (*Sewanee Review* 33.2 [April 1925]: 163–77), but his article describes a different phenomenon from what I call direct indirection.

Manager, Kurtz's Intended, the Russian, and others tell Marlow about Kurtz, but they all tell him about a different Kurtz. Kurtz is not necessarily each of these representations in actuality, but rather the other characters' own particular points of view limit their perception of Kurtz. Consequently, Kurtz is a universal genius, a great orator, an employer of unsound methods, a usurper, a great man, and so on, depending upon who happens to be narrating to Marlow at that particular moment. The perceiver's own subjective characteristics as much as Kurtz's essential characteristics present Kurtz as he appears at various points during the course of the narrative. Each is Kurtz in a different circumstance as his outlines blur with those of the perceiver. In the end, Conrad's technique of employing multiple narrators represents the limitations of a single consciousness to apprehend phenomena other than individually.

In addition to multiple narrators, Conrad also uses frame narration. This narrative technique (which has been much discussed) is the most prominent and most traditional narrative feature of *Heart of Darkness* (although Conrad modifies this technique for his own purposes). Frame narration serves two primary purposes in the novella: it allows Conrad to separate himself from the narrators, and it demonstrates (as do Conrad's other narrative techniques) that the narrative represents an individual point of view. In *Heart of Darkness*, frame narration resembles the multiple narrators technique in certain ways. In fact, the multiple narrators technique and frame narration overlap in the novella. On its surface, the frame narration seems to function such that Conrad distances himself from the events that take place by having Marlow narrate the novella and then further distances himself by having a frame narrator relate the events that he has heard Marlow narrate. In a sense, this is true, but there is also an earlier step in this progression because Marlow's experience is not entirely firsthand. Some of what Marlow relates to the frame narrator and his companions is learned from the various other narrators in the novella, and thus a progression runs from the multiple narrators to Marlow to the frame narrator and finally to the reader. In this way, we see how phenomena affect and are altered by Marlow, the frame narrator, and the other narrators; we also see how each narrator experiences phenomena differently. As noted earlier, the various narrators all perceive Kurtz, for instance, but each perceives him differently. Furthermore, Conrad shows the difference between the frame narrator's point of view and Marlow's. Marlow, of course, believes that his experience in the Congo is significant, but initially the frame narrator seems less enthusiastic: "[W]e knew we were fated, before the ebb began to run, to hear about one of Marlow's inconclusive experiences" (*Y* 51). The frame narrator's attitude towards Marlow's narrative, however, changes significantly during the course of the novella as he is drawn into Marlow's tale and experiences what Marlow experiences. Conrad thereby demonstrates how individual point of view can change through its interaction with other points of view. Watt remarks that Marlow has "changed the way that the primary narrator [frame narrator], at least, sees the Thames; for when he raises his head, the narrator's vision,

now coloured by the expansive power of Marlow's primary symbol, discovers that 'the tranquil waterway... seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness [*Y* 162].'"[9] At the end of the novella, the frame narrator has come to see Marlow's African experience through Marlow's eyes, as even the frame narrator's language resembles that of Marlow (*Y* 162).

The other broad-scale narrative technique that Conrad uses is what I call direct indirection. Conrad's narratives of direct indirection are his most subtle in their representation of individual point of view, and even experienced readers may fail to grasp the difference between a direct narrative and Conrad's direct indirection. *Heart of Darkness* is perhaps Conrad's best example of direct indirection. The novella is direct in that it seems to move chronologically and to resemble traditional narratives, which move chronologically and often present a universal experience to the reader. Even though *Heart of Darkness* lacks the radical temporal dislocations of such works as *Nostromo*, however, it is far from a chronological narrative. Marlow often digresses as he relates his experiences. As a result, the narrative diverges from a linear temporal sequence and more often transforms into the sequence of events as they arise in Marlow's memory. In other words, events occur not in the sequence in which they occurred chronologically but rather in the sequence in which they occur in Marlow's mind. During the course of the narrative, Marlow sometimes remembers incidents that are out of the chronological sequence of events and brings them into the narrative at that point. Unlike his narrative techniques in *Nostromo*, *Lord Jim*, or *Chance*, for example, the sequential dislocations in *Heart of Darkness* are almost seamless and give the illusion of a chronological narrative, but the novella is not a chronological narrative. Marlow's comments about the Intended, for instance, first occur not when she appears in the novella but instead when she is absent. Shortly after the attack on the steamboat, Marlow realizes that Kurtz might have been killed by the Africans who had just attacked the steamboat. Marlow then expresses his disappointment at the thought that he would not get the chance to hear Kurtz speak:

> I was cut to the quick at the idea of having lost the inestimable privilege of listening to the gifted Kurtz. Of course I was wrong. The privilege was waiting for me. Oh yes, I heard more than enough... . A voice. He was very little more than a voice. And I heard–him–it–this voice––other voices–all of them were so little more than voices... . Voices, voices–even the girl herself–now– (*Y* 114–15)

Just after these comments, Marlow remarks, "Girl! What? Did I mention a girl? Oh, she is out of it–completely... . Oh, she had to be out of it. You should have heard the disinterred body of Mr. Kurtz saying, 'My Intended.' You would have perceived directly then how completely she was out of it" (*Y* 115). In this case, Marlow expresses his feelings at discovering that Kurtz may be dead and then projects ahe-

[9] Watt, 253. (Ellipses are Watt's.)

ad to his meeting with Kurtz and then still later with the Intended, even though he has yet to even reach the Inner Station and has yet to actually meet either character. Furthermore, the reader, like Marlow's listeners, have no idea who this "girl" is, and thus the reader, like Marlow's listeners, is left puzzled. As a result, although the transitions are smooth between time sequences in this passage (as they are elsewhere in the novella) and may perhaps lull readers into thinking that they are experiencing a chronological narrative, they in fact are not. These subtle temporal dislocations demonstrate that all phenomena in the novella filter through Marlow's mind (and then through that of the frame narrator). Narratives of direct indirection imitate the style of an actual storyteller in which events flow sequentially, but the sequence is that of the mind not of chronology.

Ultimately, by maintaining the constant of subject matter, Conrad's narrative techniques demonstrate the multiplicity of experience and show that phenomena are altered as they filter through individual consciousnesses such that events, objects, human subjects, and so on change depending on who experiences them, as well as when and where they are experienced. The end result of relativity of the phenomena represented in *Heart of Darkness* demonstrates that for Conrad all knowledge is affected by the consciousness through which it is experienced, and thus all knowledge is tentative and uncertain. Consequently, Conrad emphasizes how narrative point of view affects the nature of this novella (and his other works as well) and how *Heart of Darkness* in particular would be a very different novella if told by another character or if rendered by a more traditional narrator.

YOUTHFUL LATITUDES: JOSEPH CONRAD'S ICONOGRAPHY OF GEOGRAPHY AND AUSTRALIA

Ann Lane

Japan Women's University, Tokyo

Conrad made five voyages to Australia as a seaman between 1879 and 1893, but, given the total of about 17 months he spent in ports here, remarkably little is known about his experiences. What did he read while shipbound here? He enjoyed theatre and opera. Did he not venture ashore to see a performance? Was he never tempted into making a trip "up-country" such as the passenger who was the first reader of his M.S. of *Almayer's Folly* did, during the *Torrens'* stay in port in Adelaide?[1] In the iconography Conrad was later to develop for himself, the contained sea, the Mediterranean, is figured as the cradle of this Odysseus' early youth, but entering onto the phase of youthful adventure meant leaving the Mediterranean:

> issuing thence to the west and the south as a youth leaves the shelter of his parental house, this spirit found the way to the Indies, discovered the coasts of a new continent, and traversed the immensity of the great Pacific, rich in groups of islands remote and mysterious like the constellations of the sky. (*The Mirror of the Sea*, 152)

So perhaps, given Conrad's particular iconography of geography, his associations of Australia with his own youth and the idea of "youth" required a seaboard acquaintance solely. A journey into the interior, as shown in *Heart of Darkness*, would represent an irreversible move out of youth, a penetration into darker "continental" realities. Conrad's chief image of Australia would seem to belong to Conrad's pre-Congo days, to those early years at sea when he had – so he told Edward Garnett emphatically – "not a thought in his head." "I was a perfect animal" (Garnett 125). So, alas, there is no corresponding "Murray Diary" amongst Conrad's manuscripts.

---

[1] J. Conrad, *A Personal Record* (London: Dent & Sons, 1946 – first published 1912) 18. Unless otherwise specified, references to Conrad's work are to the Dent Collected Edition, Cambridge UP, 1977.

However, since Australia had a fond place in Conrad's memories of his youth, and, as I shall be arguing, so did the Australian author Louis Becke, a couple of details we do know about Conrad in Australia are intriguing for not fitting his schematization in his later fictional self-*Mirror*. One of the first suggestions we have on record that Conrad consider writing as a way to earn money came from his uncle Bobrowski in 1881, apropos of Conrad's intended next voyage to Australia. Bobrowski wrote advising that, as eyewitness accounts would be of great interest to Polish readers, his nephew should consider collecting some reminiscences for the *Wędrowiec* (*Wanderer*) magazine in Warsaw.[2] Conrad did not take up that suggestion, and it was a number of years before he did publish anything he wrote (Najder 70). Yet it seems that when in Sydney, either in 1880–1881, or more likely in 1888, he did go to the office of the editor of the *Bulletin* newspaper, described in *The Planter of Malata* as "the principal newspaper in a great colonial city." The signal distinction of the *Bulletin* under J.F. Archibald's editorship from 1880 to 1907 was its inclusion of new poems and short stories, making it "the only literary newspaper in the Antipodes" (*Planter*, 14). Archibald himself was therefore the likely model for the editor in *Planter*, who is pictured in one scene in his office after "feasting a poet from the bush the latest discovery of the Editor." Such "discoveries", explains the *Planter's* narrator, "were the business, the vocation the pride and delight of the only apostle of letters in the hemisphere, the solitary patron of culture, the Slave of the Lamp – as he subscribed himself at the bottom of the weekly literary page of his paper" (*Planter*, 49). When the Editor and his cronies rush out of the editorial office in pursuit of some non-literary discovery they leave behind the poet asleep on the hearthrug.

Conrad's visit to the *Bulletin*, if he did go there in 1888, was the time of Archibald's discovery of one later-famous poet "from the bush," Henry Lawson, whose first poem Archibald published in the *Bulletin* in 1887, and whose first story (*His Father's Mate*) was published there in 1888. However, it was a different, future "discovery" of Archibald's with whom Conrad in his own early writing career was most to converge.

When Conrad's first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, was published in 1895 the reviewer for the *Athenaeum* was one of the first to associate Conrad with the Australian author, Louis Becke.[3] What struck reviewers as points of similarity were the locations of Becke's and Conrad's fiction, and the apparently first-hand authenticity of the two authors' knowledge. The agreed masters of that oxymoronic genre of "authentic fictions," set in exotic Eastern locations, were Kipling and Stevenson,

[2] Cf. K. Carabine, "'The Black Mate': June–July 1886; January 1908", *The Conradian*, 13 (1988), 128–148. Carabine argues that Conrad wrote a version of this tale in June–July 1886 as an entry for a prize in the popular paper *Tit-Bits*.

[3] *The Athenaeum* 25 May 1895. Reprinted in Norman Sherry. Ed. *Joseph Conrad: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1973) 52.

but some reviewers judged that Conrad and Becke were contributing valuably by introducing new regions. However, there was another reason, not evident in the reviews, why Conrad was probably compared with Becke. Both authors were being published simultaneously by the same publisher, T. Fisher Unwin, so the batches of new books Unwin sent to reviewers in April 1895 contained the work of both authors, side by side.

Louis Becke had been J.F. Archibald's "latest discovery" of 1893, not a "poet from the bush" this time, but an Australian yarn-spinner from the South Seas (Grove Day). Becke's stories were about his colourful experiences as a trader and supercargo in the Marshall Islands, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, the Kingsmills, New Britain, Noumea and Fiji. In other words, various of those groups of islands in the Pacific that Conrad later described in the *Mirror*, as "remote and mysterious like the constellations of the sky." Besides trading, Becke had probably done some gun-running on the side (like Conrad in Marseilles), and during the mid 1870s he acted as supercargo on the "blackbirding" (labour-pressing, with, to use Conrad's words from *Heart of Darkness*, "all the legality of time contracts") ship of the notorious "Bully" Hayes, the last of the Pacific buccaneers. Back in Sydney in 1893 and chronically short of money, Becke acted on Archibald's suggestion that he write his stories down, just as he told them: "they will make dashed good yarns!", said Archibald (Grove Day 37).

Since Becke's stories of 1893 did prove popular with the *Bulletin's* readers, Archibald decided to try to take them a step further. He packaged them up and sent them to his friend W.H. Massingham, the editor of the London *Daily Chronicle*. Massingham was enthusiastic, writing to Becke that he had read the stories "with the greatest interest." Then he went on to claim something that seems outrageous, and which may have had more to do with polarizations of literary politics than clear literary evaluation. "I think them extremely strong," Massingham wrote, "– incomparably stronger than Stevenson's work, which seems to me clearly derived from them" (Grove Day 39–40). The upshot of Massingham's forwarding Becke's stories to T. Fisher Unwin with his recommendation was that Unwin decided to publish them as a volume in his *Autonym Library* in 1894, the same year as he accepted Conrad's first novel, *Almayer's Folly*. We know, from the letter Conrad wrote to Unwin in 1896, that Conrad owned a copy of this book of Becke's, entitled *By Reef and Palm*, and that he had read it more than once, with admiration.[4]

The occasion for this, the first of two letters to Unwin in which Conrad mentioned Becke, was probably a suggestion from Unwin that he introduce Becke and Conrad to each other, since Becke had moved to live in London in August 1896. The proposed meeting didn't take place because in August Conrad was still in

[4] *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad.* Vol. 1 (*CL1*) Friedrick Karl and Lawrence Davies. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983, 298. Subsequent references to Conrad's letters are to this series of volumes.

France on his honeymoon. Nor did Conrad and Becke meet, up till the time of Becke's departure from England in 1900. But their paths crossed socially – for one example, Becke had been introduced to Stephen Crane a month after Conrad met this future friend for the first time (Grove Day 47). And their paths in terms of public reception continued to cross, with reviewers still comparing Conrad with Becke in reviews of *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1898), and *Lord Jim* (1900), so well after the two authors had diverged in their choice of publishers.

Conrad scholars of today do not concur with the early reviewers that Becke's is a name to be conjured with Conrad's. In those few cases where Becke is discussed at all, the consensus view may be fairly represented by Ian Watt's estimate that, though Conrad apparently had some admiration for Becke, Becke was no direct source for Conrad. Rather, he should be grouped with Stevenson and Kipling, whom Conrad also admired, but where, even there, there is no "convincing evidence of significant influence; and there is no reason to suppose that Conrad was particularly indebted either to Stevenson or Kipling beyond their part in creating an audience for exotic narrative" (Watt 43).

However, in an author's creating "popular fiction," the commercial impulse may be adulterated by other factors, emotional and creative. And "indebtedness" is a claim that clearly needs much teasing apart, particularly in Conrad's case. The ways in which Conrad used other authors' work were the subject of Yves Hervouet's study, *The French Face of Joseph Conrad*, where Hervouet painstakingly located the passages in Conrad that, when juxtaposed with passages from Guy de Maupassant, or Gustave Flaubert, Anatole France and Victor Hugo, demonstrate with certainty that Conrad's "borrowings" ranged from extended translation ("theft," as it were) to quotations of phrases, of images, and of rhetorical cadencing. Thus, Conrad's works may be described as "complex cultural artifacts, echo-chambers constantly reverberating intertextually with innumerable borrowings, quotations and allusions" (Hervouet 231). Hervouet disagreed with Frederick Karl that the French influence on Conrad "diminished somewhat as he began to find his own voice in those distinctive years between 1899 and 1904." On the contrary, what most challenges critical understanding is the "incontrovertible fact that Conrad's triumphant originality in his major phase, far from precluding the use of models, actually depended on them" (Hervouet 230).

Hervouet's researches were restricted to French models who were authors Conrad admired as "maitre." However, it has also been demonstrated that in *Victory* Conrad drew on a Pacific story by Robert Louis Stevenson – whose facility in writing popular fiction he purported to despise.[5] Furthermore, in a case involving a popular fiction writer who, as with Louis Becke, hasn't withstood the test of time so well, there are links between *Heart of Darkness* and various short stories by C.J.

[5] O. Knowles and G. Moore, *Oxford Reader's Companion to Conrad:* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000, 357. Cf. *Collected Letters*, vol. 2, 371.

Cutcliffe Hyne (Winnington 163–182; Ruppel 3–14). The relevant stories of Cutcliffe Hyne's are a series published in *Pearson's Magazine* from 1897 to 1899 that narrate the adventures of *Captain Kettle*, and a single story called *The Transfer* in an 1897 issue of *Pall Mall Magazine*. These stories were based on the author's travels, which included a visit to the Congo where, like Conrad later on, Cutcliffe Hyne met Roger Casement. As Peter Winnington says, Conrad's story about the Congo, which he began writing in December 1898, resembles to an extraordinary degree, in terms of plot and narrative device, and also (in Hervouet's term) "precise images," the series of adventures of Captain Kettle which were set in the Congo, in *Pearson's Magazine* from July 1898. In Captain Kettle's Congo adventures, as in *Heart of Darkness*,

> their respective protagonists are both in search of work at the outset; both are obliged to make a hasty departure once the papers have been signed; both sail out to Africa as passengers on a steamer that calls on various small places along the coast. Their first encounter with west coast Africans is with a group of moribund conscripts ["not enemies, not criminals," Conrad writes, "brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts" – or, in Cutcliffe Hyne, "Slaves is what you English would call dem. Labourers is what dey call demselves"]. Both make long overland journeys early in their Congo career, and then take command of a riverboat that is attacked by natives. This is followed by a period of isolation, in a place almost as far from civilization as it was possible to get. Here the second major character in the respective stories, Kurtz and Kettle's companion Clay, is worshipped by natives; they both die before they can be brought back to more civilized parts. Finally, when Kettle and Marlow return to the coast, they have both lost status in the eyes of their fellows. (Winnington 165–166)

Of a number of parallels in imagery, the most arresting is the Bhudda pose. As the natives sacrifice a chicken before Clay he takes up the position ironically:

> [he] hitched up his feet and squatted cross-legged on the chair, and held up his hand palm outwards, after the manner of some grotesque Chinese idol. (Winnington 166)

The image is echoed precisely in Conrad's story, when Marlow sits

> Cross-legged right aft, leaning against the mizzen-mast. He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol. (*Heart of Darkness*, 46)

However Conrad's borrowing cross-dresses, as it were, so the pose is Marlow's, not Conrad's Clay-figure, Kurtz. Conrad borrows by inversion, as he was to do later when borrowing from Stevenson's *The Ebb Tide* for *Victory*. In *Victory*, characteristics of Conrad's chief villain are transferred from Stevenson's Heyst-like protagonist (Epstein 189–216, Watts 133–137).

The resemblances between Cutcliffe Hyne's 1897 story *The Transfer* and *Heart of Darkness* extend to the design of the framing narrative, as well as the subject matter. As Richard Ruppel summarizes *The Transfer*:

> It has two narrators, one who opens and closes the tale, and another who tells the main part of the story to the primary narrator while the two sit comfortably aboard ship. The second narrator, an Englishman, tells of how he followed a European into the heart of the Congo. The European [a Belgian, Baron Caissier] had gotten a group of natives together to raid villages and gather an enormous amount of ivory. He is obsessed with ivory, and when he learns that a trader has accumulated a small hoard of his own, he takes it from him and threatens this rival with death. Instead, he dies himself in the interior. The second narrator returns to civilization and meets the European's Intended. While telling the story to the primary narrator, he hesitates to detail all of the European's excesses, but he admits to a grudging admiration for him. (Ruppel 3)

However, resemblances of character and plot are relatively easy to point out. The difficulty of making out the case for Conrad's use of popular fiction models is, as Winnington says, that the parallels are often such that, "taken by themselves, would not amount to more than coincidences" (Winnington 178). The force of the argument, then, is of necessity collective and incremental, and this is even more true of the case to be made for another way in which we may see Conrad's fiction is linked with Cutcliffe Hyne's. This, so far unnoticed correspondence is the same kind of link as we shall find between Conrad and Becke.

Names – even the consonance of their first letters alone – could represent the cross-over point between fact and fiction. It was clearly the case that Conrad viewed his choice of his own name as significant in some talismanic way. When, on July 4, 1894, he submitted his manuscript of *Almayer's Folly* to T. Fisher Unwin he used the pseudonym of "Kamudi," hoping the book would be accepted for publication in Unwin's "Pseudonym Library" series. We can see how important the pen name he had chosen was to him from a letter he wrote on August 18th to Marguerite Poradowska. At that time, nervously despairing of being published by Unwin, he wrote that he had requested the return of the manuscript, and if Poradowska would translate it into French for submission to *Revue des Deux Mondes* she might put her own name foremost. Only, with one important stipulation:

> I wish to keep my name of "Kamudi"... a Malay word meaning rudder. I do not want [the pseudonym set in] large type or anything of that sort ... The name "Kamudi" somewhere in small print will be adequate. Let your name appear on the title-page – with merely an explanatory note to say that K. collaborated on the book. Do you agree? (*CL1* 168–169)

Knowing that Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski was often as a child called Konrad rather than Józef, and having access to manuscript versions of novels he much later wrote – a striking example being *Under Western Eyes*, where Conrad scribbled letter "K"s in the margins – we can see why the choice of a pseudonym such as "Kamudi" would appeal so much to him.[6] Beginning with a "K" it pivots

[6] D.R. Smith, "The Hidden Narrative: the *K* in Conrad". Ed. David R. Smith, *Joseph Conrad's "Under Western Eyes": Beginnings, Revisions, Final Forms.* Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, 1991, 39–81.

the first letter of the author's name back from the Anglicized form of Conrad with a "C", the form Conrad had adopted for professional use as a seaman since the late 1880s, back to the Polish spelling of Konrad with a "K" – Konrad spelled the same way as the hero of two of Mickiewicz's patriotic poems. And a further language/identity joke played about that pseudonym could also be shared with an intimate such as Poradowska. The Malay fisherman's term "Kamudi" means "rudder." So, the word, learned from Malay by a Pole, for use in his first novel written in his thirdly-acquired language of English, is also code for his professional double life, the seaman-novelist.

In the light of Conrad's known sensitivity to names pivoting on K and C, then, one further feature of *The Transfer* (1897) becomes especially interesting because it seems to connect it not only to *Heart of Darkness* (1898–1899), which Conrad wrote a year later, but also anachronologically to a story Conrad wrote earlier, not later, than Hyne's. *An Outpost of Progress*, which Conrad completed in 1896, like *Heart of Darkness* concerned ivory and two main characters, one the Belgian Carlier, and the other his fellow trader, Kayerts. At the end of Conrad's story both men die, but Kayerts, like Hyne's Caissier, and unlike Kurtz, dies by hanging. So, along the same lines as Conrad was presumably thinking, we can put together Carlier – Kayerts – Caissier – Kurtz. Or, to include names from Cutcliffe Hyne's 1898 *Pearson's* series as well, Carlier – Kayerts – Caissier – Kettle – Clay – Kurtz. Names to conjure with!

What I suggest is that Conrad, sensitive as he already was to names pivoting on K and C, would have been struck forcibly by the correspondences between his own story of two Europeans far from the constraints and supports of their own civilizations, fighting over ivory, and Cutcliffe Hyne's. Cutcliffe Hyne's story may therefore be seen as having provided an intermediary point on which Conrad swung from his first story concerning Belgians and ivory to his next.

The stories of Louis Becke's in *By Reef and Palm* were likely congenial to Conrad for a number of reasons additional to the one Conrad specified in his letter to Unwin. Conrad told Unwin he admired Becke's "perfect unselfishness" in the telling of his stories, his way of standing "magnificently aloof from the poignancy and humour of his stories," which, Conrad asserted to Unwin "[is] a thing I could never do – and which I envy him" (*CL1* 298). A thing Conrad did do, like Becke in various stories published before Conrad wrote his earliest framed tale, *The Lagoon*, was use the visit of one or more white men on a trading schooner or brig to determine the narrative period. Becke's idea, and then Conrad's, is to channel, or, to draw on Gerard Genette's terminology, "focalize" a story through an observer whose information is limited and partial (because he is white rather than native, a sailor rather than a landsman, visiting rather than resident) (Genette). This play also gives the potential to dramatize distinctions between the action of the story and the narration of it, and between narrative time and story time. Furthermore, the distance between teller and tale makes a natural opportunity for a mood congenial to

both of these authors. Already in the *By Reef and Palm* stories, as in Conrad's more confident fictions in narrated mode after *The Lagoon*, we find pithily expressed sharpness or cynicism ("In the South Seas, as in Australia and elsewhere, to get the girl of your heart is generally a mere matter of trade"[7]), a love of periodically phrased prose generally, and of the cadences of bathos for endings. (For example, the ending of Becke's story "Long Charlie's Good Little Wife":

> "Tiakapo,"* said the Good Little Wife, as she rolled up an empty square gin bottle in one of Charley's shirts for a pillow, and disposed her graceful figure on the floor mats beside his bed, to fight mosquitoes until daylight.
>
> *"Good-night" Becke 1895, 104)

Karain: A Memory, which Conrad completed in April 1897, has a more complicated frame than *The Lagoon*, and one which more exactly repeats features of a certain story in *By Reef and Palm*. Conrad's *Karain*, another *Malay thing* as he described it, was, like *The Lagoon* intended for magazine publication. As with Becke's *The Fate of the "Alida"*, the story is told by an unnamed narrator, who remembers the story after reading by chance something in a newspaper that stirs his recollection of certain events that happened, in a distant place, years before. Becke's story begins:

> The other day, in an Australian paper, I read something that set me thinking of Taplin – of Taplin and his wife, and the fate of the *Alida*. This is what I read: ... (Becke 1895, 135)

Conrad's narrator in *Karain* is more clearly characterized than this narrator of Becke's, in both his temperament and his language, but the narrative is set in motion by exactly the same prompt. The narrator reads something in a newspaper, years later, in a quite different place:

> We knew him in those unprotected days when we were content to hold in our hands our lives and our property. None of us, I believe, has any property now, and I hear that many, negligently, have lost their lives; but I am sure that the few who survive are not yet so dim-eyed as to miss in the befogged respectability of their newspapers the intelligence of various native uprisings in the Eastern Archipelago. Sunshine gleams through the lines of those short paragraphs – sunshine and the glitter of the sea. A strange name wakes up memories. (*Karain, Tales of Unrest*, 3)

Distance of time is a distinctive feature of the outer frame of both of these two stories. Gaps within time feature within both authors' narratives. These impressionistic effects are achieved through the same naturalistic reason: the narrator's visits are occasional. Conrad's narrator explains that "In many successive visits we came to know [Karain's] stage well", and "for two years at short intervals we visi-

---

[7] L. Becke, "Long Charley's Good Little Wife." *By Reef and Palm.* London: T. Fisher Unwin, 3rd ed. 1895, 101.

ted him. We came to like him, to trust him, almost to admire him." Time moves in jumps and the narrative is correspondingly fractured in Becke's story:

> At daylight we saw Taplin and his wife go off in the *Alida's* boat. They waved their hands to us in farewell as the boat pulled past the brig, and then the schooner hove-up anchor, and with all sail set stood away down to the north-west passage of the lagoon.
>
> ...
>
> A year or so afterward we were on a trading voyage to the islands of the
>
> Tubai Group, and were lying, becalmed, in company with a New Bedford whaler. Her skipper came on board the brig, and we started talking of Taplin, whom the whale-ship captain knew.
>
> "Didn't you hear?" he said. "The *Alida* never turned up again. 'Turned Turtle,' I suppose, like all those slashing over-masted 'Frisco-built schooners do, sooner or later."
>
> "Poor Taplin," said Warren. "I thought somehow we would never see him again."

Then,

> Five years had passed. Honest old Warren, fiery-tempered and true-hearted, had long-since died of fever in the Solomons, and I was supercargo with a smart young American skipper on the brigantine *Palestine*, when we one day sailed along the weather-side of a tiny little atoll in the Caroline Islands.
>
> The *Palestine* was leaking, and Packenham, tempted by the easy passage into the beautiful lagoon, decided to run inside and discharge our cargo of copra to get at the leak. (Becke 1895, 146)

The *Palestine*? Reading this, Conrad was presumably struck by the coincidence that the name of Becke's fictional ship was the same as that of Conrad's actual ship, which similarly leaked, on his voyage of 1881–1883. If, as I would suggest, Conrad knowingly chose a frame for *Karain* that was like that of *The Fate of the Alida*, then we may view him as doing with Becke what he also did with Cutcliffe Hyne: connecting a fiction of his with a fiction of another author's and to an event in his life – with an anti-chronological element presiding as a wild-card function.

When Conrad came to write about his *Palestine* voyage in *Youth* (1898), he chose a Becke and Cutcliffe Hyne-like narrative situation, with seamen sitting idly together, yarning while smoking or drinking. In *Youth* the frame setting is described by an anonymous primary narrator:

> We were sitting round a mahogany table that reflected the bottle, the claret glasses, and our faces as we leaned on our elbows. There was a director of companies, an accountant, a lawyer, Marlow, and myself... We all began life in the merchant service. Between the five of us there was the strong bond of the sea.
>
> Marlow... told the story... of a voyage. (*Youth*, 3)

Becke's narrator in *The Fate of the "Alida"*, similarly unnamed, depicts a scene like that in *Youth*:

> Our captain, a white trader from the shore, and myself were sitting on the deck 'yarning' and smoking. (Becke 1895, 136)

This same narrator, though unnamed in this story, is a familiar figure in others of Becke's stories also. Elsewhere, this supercargo is named as "Denison," alter-ego of the supercargo Louis Becke. G. Peter Winnington suggested that Conrad was prompted to invent Marlow, who is first named as the narrator in *Youth*, and who reappears in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), *Lord Jim* (1900) and *Chance* (1913, though begun in 1898), by seeing how successfully Cutcliffe Hyne used Captain Kettle in the 1896–1898 *Pearson's Magazine* stories (Winnington 178). However, it is worth pausing here to consider Lawrence Graver's proposition that the "bemused, nostalgic, ironical" voice of the unnamed narrator of that Becke-like story, *Karain* (1897), similarly set in the South Seas, "belongs to Charlie Marlow" (Graver 31). Whichever quarter the impulse to invent Marlow most immediately came from, it is clear that Conrad was preparing to invent for himself, from around 1897, a Denison/Captain Kettle-like character, so as to dramatize his own presence impartially in his stories. It is probable that both Becke's and Cutcliffe Hyne's examples encouraged Conrad in this direction, though as a ploy for magazine writing, maintaining a central character so as to continue readers' interest and loyalty was a resource whose usefulness was professionally clear well before Becke, Cutcliffe Hyne or Conrad used it. Arthur Conan Doyle, for example, had invented Sherlock Holmes in 1885 for stories he was publishing in *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal.*

What I am suggesting is that Becke's stories about the Pacific, like Cutclife Hyne's about the Congo, provided Conrad with a means of linking his own experiences to the work of another writer and contemporary, and to certain precise verbal images – for example, the name and associations of the *Palestine*.

The name of *Palestine* may already have been marked out for Conrad much earlier, through being part of a roguish joke of the 23 year old second mate Korzeniowski, since the captain's name, on this biblically-named vessel, was Elijah Beard. (To be able to make jokes in a language you have only been learning for two years is a good joke in itself, and no mean achievement.) Anyway, it is worth noting that when Conrad fictionalized this ship in *Youth* he altered the captain's name to "John Beard," erasing the biblical reference, but retaining the iconic "beard." In writing his story, palimpsest-wise, over the facts of his experience, Conrad left enough of the factual name to mark the relation of fact and fiction in his story. Indeed, he plays on the changed part of the name, when he makes a slip in professional etiquette of address an essential part of the brief characterization of Mrs Beard – she has to correct herself three times when talking to the young second-mate Marlow:

> When I brought her the shirts, she said: "And the socks? They want mending, I am sure, and John's – Captain Beard's – things are all in order now. I would be glad of something to do."

> ... I carried Mrs Beard's bag to the railway-station and put her all comfy into a third-class carriage. She lowered the window to say, "You are a good young man. If you see John – Captain Beard – without his muffler at night, just remind him from me to keep his throat well wrapped up." "Certainly, Mrs Beard," I said. "You are a good young man; I noticed how attentive you are to John – to Captain..." The train pulled out suddenly; I took off my cap to that old woman... (*Youth*, 9–10)

Conrad changed the name of the ship, too, but in this case he retained a biblical signification. The ship in *Youth* is called the *Judea*.

At this point it is necessary to make out a case for Conrad's having read stories in a further volume of Louis Becke's, which came out in the year Conrad was writing *Karain*. *Pacific Tales* (1897) received the most favorable reviews of all of Becke's books, and since Conrad was at that time writing a Pacific tale himself, he would likely have wanted to see what Becke had written. And indeed, certain correspondences in names and characters, cumulatively too many to discount, evidently mark the link Conrad was making with the Australian author and with his own youthful experiences in that part of the world. In *Karain* there is a character named "Hollis". In *Pacific Tales* one of the stories is entitled *Hollis's Debt: A Tale of the North-West Pacific*. Another story is called *Chester's Cross*. Conrad has a captain Chester in *Lord Jim*. This Captain Chester is a West Australian. And Conrad's character Stein in *Lord Jim* resembles the character in Becke's story *Dr. Ludwig Schwalbe, South Sea Savant*, where Dr Schwalbe is a German trader and naturalist, the "bug hunter" as the captain of the visiting trading brig calls him. Schwalbe, like Conrad's Stein, has elected to stay on in the East, and, in Becke's words, "follow his entomological and ethnographical pursuits, to which ... he was now entirely devoted." The name of the visiting brig in this story is, once again, the *Palestine*.

The plot of Becke's story *Hollis's Debt*, where the castaway Hollis gets his revenge on the captain of a visiting brigantine who had flogged him and left him to die on a different island three years earlier, has no resemblance to anything in *Karain*. But here is how Becke begins: "One day a small Sydney-owned brigantine named the *Maid of Judah*, loaded with coconut oil and sandalwood and bound for China, appeared off the little island of Pingelap, in the Caroline Group."[8] So Becke has ships named both the *Palestine* and the *Maid of Judah* in stories published earlier than Conrad's *Youth*. Judah was the southern section of ancient Palestine, and the kingdom of Judah was succeeded by Judea.

I think that with this joke Conrad was triangulating his *Palestine/Judea* on Becke's *Palestine/Maid of Judah*, and, furthermore, that he was doing something similar with the character "Hollis." Conrad has the character Hollis of *Karain* reappear in a story he wrote as much as sixteen years later. In an early manuscript of *Because of the Dollars*, written in 1913–1914, and another tale set in the South Seas

[8] "Hollis's Debt: A Tale of the North-West Pacific." *Pacific Tales*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, Colonial Edition, 1897, 115.

and with Australian references, Conrad explicitly identified this Hollis with the Hollis of *Karain.* Originally he had the (again) unnamed primary narrator of *Because of the Dollars* describe Hollis, who tells him the story, as "the resourceful fellow who once saved the sanity and perhaps the life of a certain splendid Malay adventurer by hanging a Jubilee sixpence on his neck." In the better known instance, Conrad had earlier linked *Heart of Darkness* to *Youth* in this same way, when the primary narrator of *Heart of Darkness* identifies this story's Marlow and his audience as the same as in *Youth*: "Between us there was, as I have already said somewhere, the bond of the sea." But in his final version of *Because of the Dollars* Conrad cut the sentence that explicitly identifies this Hollis with the Hollis of *Karain,* though he retained the name Hollis (Graver 174).

It is not difficult to imagine how Becke's stories would have had an early appeal for Conrad. The stories in *By Reef and Palm* probably provided Conrad, at a timely moment in his fledgling career of writing in a language not natively his own, 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. Becke's stories supplied models for Conrad that were probably encouraging because they were popular with the English readership Conrad was courting. (*By Reef and Palm* was to go through seven London printings in 10 years, and he was published in magazines such as the *Pall Mall Gazette, English Illustrated, Sketch, Illustrated London News* and *New Review.*) (Grove Day 39) But they were also made encouraging models, I suspect, because Conrad thought he could do the same sort of thing better. However, if Becke's usefulness to Conrad were limited to the rather simple frame ideas Becke employed, one would expect Conrad to cease alluding to Becke, as he ceased using Cutcliffe Hyne's fictions, once he had established his own more sophisticated techniques. However, as we have seen, there are apparent allusions to Becke as late as *Because of the Dollars,* and also in *Victory* (1915).

Conrad's original title for *Victory* when he began writing it in 1912 as a short story, aimed at magazine publication, had been *Dollars.* As the story outgrew its initial scale, Conrad changed the title for his novel, but transferred it to *Because of the Dollars,* which he wrote while in the midst of composing *Victory.* I have suggested that Conrad plucked the name of "Hollis" from Becke's volume *Pacific Tales.* However, the story that in a simple way resembles *Victory* in its setting, characters, and running theme of "dollars" is in *By Reef and Palm. 'Tis in the Blood'* opens with a *Victory*-like geographical setting, a Marlow-like narrative setting, a character who resembles Schomberg, Conrad's lovelorn Teutonic hotelkeeper in Surabaya, and another character, the trading skipper Robertson, who resembles in name as well as profession the captains in *Victory,* Morrison and Davidson. (In another case of Conrad's swinging between one work and another, this same Captain Davidson is also a central character in *Because of the Dollars.*)

It has been sometimes supposed that Conrad's practice of borrowing from other writers was a way of combating insecurity. However, we do know that Conrad had sufficient confidence – misplaced though it turned out to be – in the appeal of both *Victory* and *Because of the Dollars* (retitled as *Laughing Anne*) to offer them as adaptations for the stage. I myself think that the reason why Louis Becke was present so long in Conrad's fictions, through the literary equivalent of a "touch of the cap," was that Conrad found it creatively enabling if he could cross-reference his fictions to other authors' work, to others of his own works, and to episodes in his own life. With respect to his fictions, cross-referencing gave them a quasi-factual status, a life in time. In the well-known case of Marlow, the character ages progressively, in temperament as well, so that by the time of *Chance* (1914) he has become sardonic and irritable. However, we may see from a reference in the playscript of *Laughing Anne*, which describes Hollis as being forty years old, that Conrad did the same thing with Hollis as with Marlow. The Hollis in *Karain* was described as "young Hollis." So, if Hollis is 40 at the time of the *Laughing Anne* playscript, he was 23 years old in *Karain*, or, if 40 at the time of *Because of the Dollars*, then 17 in *Karain*. Either way, the character has aged in proportion to the years that separate the two stories in which he appeared (Conrad 1934).

A second effect of cross-referencing was, oppositely, anti-chronological. In various of Conrad's writings we may see an anti-chronological recurrence of experience and images being creatively enabling but hardly welcome as a matter for light joking. However, where the references return Conrad to Australia and Louis Becke, the anti-chronology is happily so. Insofar as he associated his youth with Australian and Eastern settings, this explains Conrad's return to Becke, well after he had outgrown his early publishing stable-mate. In this way we may after all regard the geographical error of an early reviewer, who described *Almayer's Folly* (actually set in Borneo) as "an Australian story" as an inadvertent truth.[9] Recovering Louis Becke as a representative of the "Australian story" in Conrad's writing helps very much to clarify the mechanisms, the resources, the mood and the associative genius of his creativity.

WORKS CITED

Becke, Louis. *By Reef and Palm*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 3rd ed. 1895.

_____. *Pacific Tales*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, Colonial Edition, 1897.

Busza, Andrzej, "*The Rover*: Conrad's Nostos". *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures: Second Series, Papers from the International Conrad Conference*. University of Pisa (September 16th–18th, 2004).

[9] Review in the American *Book Buyer* magazine, cited in J.D. Gordan, *Joseph Conrad: The Making of a Novelist* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1941), 271.

Carabine, Keith. "'The Black Mate': June-July 1886; January 1908". *The Conradian*, 13 (1988): 128–148.

The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad. Vol. 1, 1861–1897. Ed. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies. Cambridge: CUP, 1983. (*CL1*)

The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad. Vol. 2, 1898–1902. Ed. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies. Cambridge: CUP, 1986. (*CL2*)

Conrad, Joseph. *Three Plays: Laughing Anne, One Day More, and the Secret Agent.* London: Methuen & Co., 1934.

Epstein, Hugh. "*Victory*'s Marionettes: Conrad's Revisitation of Stevenson". *Conrad, James and Other Relations.* Eds. Keith Carabine and Owen Knowles. Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, 1988.

Garnett, Edward. "Introduction." *Letters from Conrad 1895–1924.* London: The Nonesuch Press, 1928. Reprinted in the Norton Critical Edition of *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Robert Kimbrough, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1971.

Genette, Gerard. *Narrative Discourse.* Transl. Jane E. Lewin. Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.

Gordan, John Dozier. *Joseph Conrad: The Making of a Novelist.* Cambridge, Massachussets: Harvard UP, 1941.

Graver, Lawrence. *Conrad's Short Fiction.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969.

Grove Day, A. *Louis Becke.* New York: Twain Publishers, 1966.

Hervouet, Yves. *The French Face of Joseph Conrad.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.

Najder, Zdzislaw. *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.

Knowles, Oven and Gene Moore. *Oxford Reader's Companion to Conrad.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000, *Collected Letters* 2, 371.

Ruppel, Richard. "*Heart of Darkness* and the Popular Exotic Stories of the 1890s". *Conradiana*, 21 (1989), 3–14.

Sherry, Norman, ed. *Joseph Conrad: The Critical Heritage.* London: Routledge, 1973.

Smith, David R., ed. *Joseph Conrad's "Under Western Eyes": Beginnings, Revisions, Final Forms.* Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, 1991.

Watt, Ian. *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.

Watts, Cedric. "*The Ebb-Tide* and *Victory*". *Conradiana*, 28 (1996), 133–137.

Winnington, G. Peter. "Conrad and Cutcliffe Hyne: A New Source for *Heart of* Darkness". *Conradiana*, 16 (1984), 163–82.

REBUILDING THE SELF IN THE *HEART OF DARKNESS*

David Ariniello

University of California at Irvine

Although the anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski was a young man when Joseph Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness*, there is evidence that the two Polish expatriates met and maintained a friendship for some time a good ten years later, when both had become respected in their fields and both had established themselves in English society.[1] In fact, in the very year of the one well-documented meeting between the two men, 1923, Malinowski published an essay on *The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages* which takes up many of the themes Conrad first explored in a literary context in *Heart of Darkness*. Malinowski's essay, written as an appendix to the work on linguistics, *Meaning of Meaning* by Odgen and Richards, emphasizes the use of speech in practical matters, insists on the primacy of context in determining meaning, and explores the phenomena of the magical attitude towards words which is prevalent both in "the child" and "primitive or natural man" (Malinowski 265). It is not hard to see the echoes in this study of *Heart of Darkness* – Marlow's obsessive focus on "surface-truth" (*Youth* 105), the language of everyday work, and his respect for the functionality of the kind of language in Towson's book on seamanship anticipates Malinowski's enquiry into the pragmatic nature of native fishermen's shouts and the surface but comforting nature of everyday greetings. Malinowski's careful enumeration of context in his assessment reveals the kind of cognizance that can be gained from most travel literature, whether Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* or William Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, but it is something particularly highlighted and problematized in *Heart of Darkness*. Lastly, the magical attitude toward words, an attitude which lends to words the power over things, is one which Conrad sprinkles throughout *Heart of Darkness* in moments when it seems he trusts words to stand on their own, without much relation to any reflected reality. Phrases such as "an exotic Immensity

---

[1] Z. Najder, *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. See also Clifford (140–162).

ruled by an August benevolence" (*Youth* 129) and "the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention" (101) take on a weight of their own, functioning less as descriptions of the jungle and more as incantations of mystery. These elaborate phrases are different from Malinowski's native chants, since they become alive rather than summon the living, but they exemplify the same principle – words become things just as words call things into being; either way, language and reality merge.

Malinowski was a scientist known for his ability to provide a novelistic-like description of his subjects while Conrad was a novelist who brought an anthropological understanding to the various cultures he depicted. Both men, working at the revolution of modernism drew increased attention to issues of language and the human subject, brought a unique perspective to just such issues due to their anthropological stance. Although published over twenty years before Malinowski's essay, *Heart of Darkness* not only investigates the uses and limitations of language in ways similar to Malinowski's anthropological study, it frames problems of language, narrative and identity that will preoccupy modernists, linguists and psychologists throughout the twentieth century.

Heart of Darkness works to illuminate the key role language plays in building and advertising the self both within the narrative through the characters of Kurtz and Marlow, and metatextually through the creation and dissemination of the book itself. Edward Said has remarked that Conrad's writing project involved, essentially, "the achievement of character," (Said 13) and James Clifford agrees that for Conrad "the act of writing always reaches toward rescue," a kind of "writing (a miraculous presence-in-absence) as salvation" (Clifford 157) which will reconstruct, with the help of a faithful reader, an "artificial and deadly serious" (Clifford 154) self. On the one hand, the characters within the novel use not only language, but narrative and encounters with the strange to define themselves. On the other, the man Konrad Korzeniowski creates the author Joseph Conrad with the aid of this and other literary projects. As Allan Simmons points out recently in "The Art of Englishness: Identity and Representation in Conrad's Early Career," national identity at least, "was a conscious choice" for Conrad (3). Indeed, the preoccupation with language, narrative and the strange in *Heart of Darkness* has long been noted by many critics – the nesting narratives call attention to narration, the failure of language at key moments in the novel invites the reader to become aware of language as artifice, and the confrontation with an alien culture focuses attention on that which is not ourselves. I would like to investigate here whether the difficulties faced by Conrad's characters in *Heart of Darkness* in their problematic encounters with language, narrative and the strange infect, in certain ways, the basic problem of self-creation faced by Conrad and soon by a vast array of modern writers and modern selves.

I say here "self" and others might say personality, persona or ego. What I mean is both an individual's ideas about who or what he or she is – socially, morally,

historically, culturally – and how that individual presents his or her persona; what tools are used, what strategies employed in the realm of language, clothing, gesture and social behavior. Recognizing then, that there is not simply a one to one relation between self and language, I will nevertheless concentrate here on the use of language, narrative, and the strange in the production of self in fiction, touching on three milestones in twentieth century literature as models for the changing process of constructing and advertising a self. In 1899, we find *Heart of Darkness* working on one level as a document to advertise Conrad as Conrad by self-consciously exploring exactly what it takes to make and present an individual as individual. Since one aspect of this construction is language, I will begin with a focused examination of language use, keeping in mind that the boundaries between language, narrative and the designation and identification of the strange are necessarily intertwined.

At the beginning of *Heart of Darkness*, the narrator tells us that he, the various captains of industry on board the *Nellie*, and Marlow are held together by "the bond of the sea," and we see this bond reinforced as they "exchange a few words lazily" before Marlow begins his story (48). The first mode of communication modeled in the novel is thus an instance of empty speech which is dependant upon context for meaning since these few, lazy words are said not to convey any information but out of politeness or camaraderie. In J.L. Austin's terms, this is performative speech (Austin 133–140), speech as act, produced to dispel "the strange and unpleasant tension which men feel when facing each other in silence" (Malinowski 249). Indeed, Malinowski himself describes this "phatic communion" in which "ties of union are created by the mere exchange of words" as "an *act* serving the direct aim of binding hearer to speaker" (249–250, emphasis added). These social uses of language, like such ritualized greetings as "nice day today" or "How are you?" are uses of speech which bind the users together even though, or perhaps because, they hold no real content. They *do* instead of *mean*. Already, we experience the power of language to almost physically mark out a territory of identity. While the men of the *Nellie* do not feel quite the uncomfortable tension Malinowski describes, this act of speaking without content, this participation in polite ritual, works as both social bond and as advertisement of an aspect of the men's social selves. It is an exchange that validates each of them as members of the seafaring community as much as their postures, complexions, and sea-legs while at the same time preparing the ground for the narrative performance that is to come.

In Malinowski's essay, he asks us to "imagine [ourselves] suddenly transported on to a coral atoll in the Pacific, sitting in a circle of natives and listening to their conversation" (232). He goes on to relate the boastful narrative of a particular native, pointing out how the meaning of the utterance is deeply dependant on context. Conrad asks us to imagine ourselves on the deck of a cruising yawl on the Thames, listening to Marlow's "inconclusive tale." In both cases, we are silent witness first to the bond of empty speech and then to the narrative act. Marlow,

however, is much more than the boastful native refereed to in Malinowski's hypothetical situation. In fact, he is akin to Malinowski himself – a part of the community of the *Nellie* yet simultaneously removed. Of course, to some degree the unnamed narrator makes gestures similar to the classic anthropologist, legitimizing himself in his descriptions of the circumstances of the tale in what amounts to the claim: "I was there" before fading into the background. Still, Marlow is in two senses equated with the classic anthropologist. First, as the narrator points out, he is "a wanderer" (*Youth* 50) who goes native in ways ordinary sailors do not – a participant-observer even in England. Second, his narration is classic ethnography – the explication of a foreign culture, presented to his own for digestion. Within his tale, as we shall see, is another anthropologist gone native, one who succumbs to the lure of the strange and becomes lost in the hyphenated status of participant-observer.

The narrator illustrates Marlow's difference by contrasting him with a portrait of typical sailors whose "minds are of the stay-at-home order" (*Youth* 50) and who let difference wash over them without effect, inurned in their own "slightly disdainful ignorance" (51). We might imagine a continuum then, from those like the Intended, who are never exposed to the strange, to those like the average sailors, who refuse to experience it even when they are exposed, to those like Marlow, with his dance from one culture to the next, and finally, to those like Kurtz, who become consumed – whose original self is eclipsed by the new. Each of these positions is signified, in part, by a discrete set of linguistic and narrative strategies. Sailors tell tales in simple language with meanings well-articulated and self-contained, like a nut in a shell. Marlow tells tales that are more like Clifford Geertz's "thick description" – presenting an array of information which works somehow to organically illuminate a complex whole (Geertz 3–30). Kurtz, finally, seems more like a post-modern narrator – his words have lost context; he speaks in a pastiche of Imperialist rhetoric divorced of any real meaning, "the occasional utterances of elevated sentiments" (*Youth* 162) become image and parody. Yet even as Marlow narrates this problematic disconnection which tends to empty the most noble of Kurtz's literary productions, he displays a distrust of his own thick but never definitive description and admits to a longing for the kind of secure voice that will somehow transcend language: "A voice! a voice! ...grave, profound, vibrating... the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light..." (*Youth* 148, 124).

How, though, does voice and language work to build a self? And does Marlow's linguistic adaptability necessarily correspond to an unstable identity? To answer these questions we need to look a bit closer at the link between language and self. For Emile Benveniste, it is the constitutive "call" of language within a community of speakers which brings the ego into being (Benveniste 198–229). Since individual egos have no epiphenomenal reality other than that which we are able to glean through language, language *is* ego and ego needs language to exist. One cannot

imagine language as merely reflective of a pre-existing ego since there is no "real" ego to reflect, unless it is the line traced by an electroencephalograph. Conversely, ego would be little more than that without a language in which to express itself. Even the neurolinguist Terrence Deacon, in his study of the co-evolution of language and the brain, finds "that the major structural and functional innovations that make human brains capable of unprecedented mental feats evolved in response to something as abstract and virtual as the power of words" (322). Neither the human brain as we know it nor the phenomena we know as language could exist without the other. For Benveniste, language is "the very definition of man" because only through expressing oneself in a community speakers, in the I–you dialectic of a speaking situation, is the concept of subject realized. At the same time, there can be no vehicle of communication, no "tool" of language without first speaking – declaring ego and other and thus initializing the "dialectic reality" that makes both communication and man possible. Just as there can be no person without the expression of language, "a language without the expression of person cannot be imagined" (Benveniste 225).

Similarly, in terms more reminiscent of Jacques Lacan, we can think of all external reality, the other, or that which is not ourselves, as dependant upon a subject perceiving it through differentiation (Lacan 1–7, 31–107). What brings that subject or ego into being is the dialectic opposition of self and other – a dialectic which both springs from language and makes language possible. By performing the role of speaker in a dialogue with another speaker, one constitutes the self, another speaker, and everything else. In this way, the use of language creates three positions in the universe: the self, the partner in language which is another entity assumed to have an ego like the self, and everything else which is the world of beasts, things, and machines. Language not only establishes places of subjecthood which can be shared via the speaker-listener exchange, it constitutes an entire world – that which does not speak. Again, language springs up at the very moment when such a thing as the human or "subject" exists, and it operates at the key intersection between the undifferentiated mass that is the universe and a perceiving individual able to name and delineate that mass. Without language there could be no subject able to contemplate the world, there would only be the One, outside of time and space. It is language which creates the rift that allows both self and other to exist but which forces an abstraction and a separation, both in terms of time and in terms of sensual reality. At the same time, language mediates between that rift, allowing a categorization and a kind of knowledge of that created other simultaneously signaling through its use a membership in the community of man.

If we allow for this kind of important, primal role of language in the very formation of self it is easy to see how the use or misuse of language by the characters in *Heart of Darkness* might reveal a similar shift in identity and how Marlow's linguistic dance between cultures and registers might lead him to an

identity crisis. Nonetheless, such a framing of the discussion tends to elide the fact that what we are discussing here is literature – a highly self-conscious construction of language in explicitly constative form. Where does writing on paper fit into the discussion of language as generative force? We have already mentioned the performative aspect of the document *Heart of Darkness* as a publication designed to construct Conrad as English author. More generally, though, literature's specialized form of word use which makes explicit its own existence as words cannot help but call attention to the generative nature of language itself.[2] As readers and writers use words to create a fictional world and the fictional personalities residing within that world, they hearken back to the generative moment when they first used words to create their own world and the personalities with whom they have been living. Each literary creation then, holds within it an echo of the primal, self-and-world-creating moment when each of us first began to use language to constitute our worlds. This echo is quite powerful, since it reminds us of the part we play, with language, in creating both ourselves and the world in which we reside. As a result, literature can be used to self-consciously forge new categories of identity and new understandings of that which we think of as reality. Not only as creative writers but as creative readers we can use our interaction with that which is fictive or expressively unreal to help carve out our own, singular space in the existing fate of our lives and the existing language system into which we are born. As an arena in which various linguistic markers can be tried on, and as a model for various ways to speak and to be, literature can become a playground on which we can vet our emergent desires. As a model of the generative process we went through as we became members of the human community – building a world and a set of egos within that world through the use of words – literature can become a talisman imbued with the power of creation.

Of course, it might be hard to see narratives of horror and tragedy, among other things, as utopian playgrounds of creative opportunity. Nevertheless, no matter how diabolic the characters or contemptible the scenarios, by fictively bringing them to life through the acts of reading and writing, we are complicit in their existence and we reveal at least some desire for a taste of their transgressive freedom. In any event, it is literature's existence as language which imbues it with a particular power. Since it forces the participants in its world (that is, readers) to partake of the mediating and delineating force that constitutes that world (that is, language), literature is built by the reader in a manner other fictive spaces are not. At the same time, because it is made of words, this model of fictive space calls attention on a meta-textual level to the power of language as a phenomenon capable of simultaneously constituting the world and identifying man.

---

[2] "Telling a story" is consciously, overtly doing what all constative language always does: it interprets or tells the story of the world – what we see, hear, smell, touch, taste, and how these experiences make us feel.

In *Heart of Darkness*, we find a fictive space created by an artist adept at negotiating linguistic boundaries and in need of an arena in which to forge a unifying identity.[3] Although it can be argued that the tri-lingual Conrad had already forged a rather secure identity as a board-certified member of the English sailing community, it seems clear that his transition to a permanent member of English society proper demanded some further work – this time of the mind. In the world of work, after all, it is a silent solidarity of partnership which is forged, something similar to that felt by Marlow towards his helmsman on the Congo. The "savage who was no more account than a grain of sand in a black Sahara... had done something," and, when killed, he is "missed" "awfully" because he has been "a help – an instrument" (*Youth* 131). Opposed to this kind of belonging, a belonging no doubt experienced first-hand by the heavily accented, Polish Conrad "doing his job" on English sailing vessels, is the linguistic membership in a community in which each member acknowledges the other not just for the "kind of partnership" (131) involved in mutual work, but as an individual equal in complexity with oneself – as an ego. Here we witness a distinction between the identity formed through the kind of phatic communion of fishermen and sailors, using language to work together or to exchange ritualistic greetings, and the deeper, more complex identity engendered by the composure and display of a full-fledged narrative.

Since *Heart of Darkness* is a document produced in part to explore various linguistic and narrative modes of character in order to build character, it is no accident that we witness an array of characters using or attempting to use language as a tool with which to justify their actions and to mark off their identities as separate, specialized or, conversely, as "one of us." At the same time, we witness various failings of language and narrative, failures that illuminate the constitutive power of language with a greater brilliance than the common light all books shed since they highlight the consequences of that failure. Furthermore, the novella's insistent exploration of the mind-body dichotomy which is exemplified by a pre-occupation with such competing forces as words and voice, civilization and savagery, or restraint and desire, betrays a further interest in that creative moment in which the grey matter of the brain becomes the abstract entity of the ego, a moment inaugurated and sanctified by the entry into the generative community of language.

In fact, the narrative in *Heart of Darkness* traces a whole series of negotiations, some successful, some less so, of linguistic boundaries. Marlow begins his tale by recalling the Romans' encounter with an earlier "incomprehensible" (*Youth* 52) Britain before relating his own series of negotiations. He crosses the Channel to that "whited sepulcher" (58) of a city on the Continent before making his way through what might be likened to several circles of hell to encounter "the great man himself" (59). This isn't God or the Devil, but the director of the Company: "He shook hands, I fancy, murmured vaguely, was satisfied with my French. *Bon*

[3] See Conrad's "Outside Literature" in *Last Essays* (1926) and the 1901 letter to Gissing (*CL2*).

voyage" (59). The man does not quiz Marlow regarding his accomplishments as a sailor but simply murmers at him and judges Marlow on the quality of his French. Here we see the proper presentation of a linguistically judged identity. By successfully communicating, with an acceptable accent, Marlow represents himself as educated and perhaps of a class commensurate with the station for which he is applying. This, combined with his Aunt's "special recommendations," secures him the job (147). The proper use of language, the providing of the password, so to speak, gains Marlow entry into a select group of individuals just as the earlier subversion of an expected linguistic style marked him off as different from your average sailor. He uses his language as a sort of badge, speaking his identity either to align himself within a certain group or to mark himself off as unique. Again, Marlow enacts Malinowski's phatic communion, establishing a bond with essentially meaningless utterances. The use of speech as act mimics that of the bond of work, on the one hand empty in terms of its power to symbolize the existence of a complex inner self, on the other, pure in its vitality. If the "claim of distant kinship affirmed" (131) by the helmsman in his moment of death seems so much more vital than the hollow kinship of intellectual discourse, the Director's judgment of Marlow based on his accent constructs Marlow as an expendable tool. If it is precisely the point of Marlow's tale that empty words and bonds mean little when one is literally up a creek, we should remember that the tale itself is written in an English rife with masterfully poetic passages for *Blackwood's Magazine*, a publication for gentlemen's clubs of the patriotic type (Jones 6), so that it too serves as a sort of linguistic badge, presented by Conrad for inclusion into English letters while at the same time claiming kinship with the kind of men who distrust eloquence.

What follows, in the novella, are more linguistic boundaries crossed, from the Swedish captain's English of "great precision and considerable bitterness" (*Youth* 67), to the chief accountant's occupation-specific register of "correct entries" and bottom lines (75), to Marlow's "speech in English with gestures" to his carriers (77), to the "philanthropic pretense" of the pilgrims (84), to the Russian "cipher" in the margin of Towson's book, to the cry "as of infinite desolation" uttered by Kurtz's men (111), to the "short, grunting phrases" of the cannibals (112), and finally to Kurtz himself, "a gifted creature" whose position as "remarkable man" is built upon "his ability to talk, his words – the gift of expression" (124). In fact, this rather lengthy list misses many other instances of what is essentially a story of linguistic conflict, whether between registers, dialects, or national tongues. After all, the only reason that the "initiated wraith" Kurtz "honoured [Marlow] with its amazing confidence before it vanished altogether... was because it could speak English to" him (128). Nonetheless, these shifts in tongue are largely unspoken and often elided in the text, so that it is not so much translation which seems to be the problem, but the very malleability of language itself.

We begin to see that Marlow's skill at negotiating shifts in language comes with the price of concurrent shifts in identity. His narrative, built from the very language he so distrusts, begins to reveal an anxiety about the consequences of an amorphous self revealed to be mutable through its dependence on a language forever changing. What happens to the self when one is confronted by a failure or a lack linguistically? A simple answer is, on the level of register, that we will begin to feel and to be perceived as being out of the group, as no longer "one of them." Although our essential identity might be unimpaired, our identity within the group using that register will be threatened – as we saw with Marlow in front of the Director, although he passed successfully, as Marlow is wont to do. Of course, no single linguistic disjunction, no matter how extreme, will result in any serious assault on one's identity. What *will* have disrupting consequences is either a steady array of linguistic disjunctions or a prolonged encounter with a group using alien linguistic forms. Imagine constantly being forced to switch modes of signification or, imagine living for long periods of time in a place in which one could not understand the language. Both experiences would surely result in a loss of secure identity.

As we have seen, Marlow narrates a nearly continuous traversal of linguistic boundaries and there are hints that, as a result, his sense of himself suffers. As a wanderer, he's missing the kind of anchored self embodied on the *Nellie* in "the Accountant," "the Lawyer," and "the Director of Companies" (*Youth* 47–48). These very solid monikers may diminish the men's individuality, but they serve to highlight the rooted nature of their social being. Any individuality would, in this case, dilute their identity as defined by what they do. Once in Africa, Marlow meets others whose security of identity is signified by their generic names: another accountant, "the Manager," the Maker of Bricks, Pilgrims, Pilots, Agents, Cannibals, and Firemen.[4] Although the men of the *Nellie* share a past with Marlow that "hold[s their] hearts together" (48), the fact that they too are named only by their occupations implies a surface identity akin to the "hairdresser's dummy" accountant (73), the "papier mâché" brickmaker (87), or the Manager with "nothing within him" (80). Marlow alternates between maintaining his bond with his yacht-mates and gently castigating them for sharing the sort of somnambulance exhibited, for instance, by the Agents at the station: "faithless Pilgrims bewitched inside a rotting fence" (82). Like the men in the Congo who are identified with and refuse to see beyond their occupations, those on the *Nellie* perform on their "respective tightropes" for "half-crown a tumble" (101) and step "delicately between the butcher and the policeman" (127), never facing the "precarious grip on existence" (113) that would be revealed by a stripping away of their titles.

[4] It is equally valid to see Marlow as simply refusing to name most of the people he meets in Africa as a way to diminish both their individuality and their humanity. "Individuality" is, counter-intuitively, damaging to a secure identity since it makes the named subject unique, incomparable, and thus unknowable.

Of course, Marlow himself clings to work in the Congo as a way to maintain his sanity and as an antidote for the empty rhetoric and fruitless plotting he sees and hears around him. Nevertheless, it is neither his title as captain nor his identity as one of "the gang of virtue" (*Youth* 86) that he finds "redeeming" about the "facts of life" as he calls them, but "work for its own sake" (98). If he too performs his tumbles to avoid staring into the bleak reality of his own emptiness, he does it with a degree of self-awareness lacking in both the men of the *Nellie* and the men of the "Continental concern" (56). It is a self-awareness both caused by and arising out of his capacity for linguistic and cultural negotiation, and it is a self-awareness that leaves him rootless, not just with regards to his place of domicile but with regards to his very understanding of himself. While his open-mindedness leaves him capable of empathy and particularly able to understand the world of things in a holistic or undimished way, that same lack of pre-defined categories can all too easily slip into a kind Kurtzian orbit – kicked "loose of the earth" (158), free from pre-conceived notions but rapidly fading from the community of man.

Marlow's fear of lies (Stewart 319–331), which he says have a "flavour of mortality" (*Youth* 89), is linked to this tenuous grasp on identity. This tenuousness is, of course, masked by the kind of surface identity maintained by phatic communion and the camaraderie of work, an identity recognized and respected by the readers of *Blackwood's Magazine*, but it is an identity too shallow to satisfy either Marlow or Conrad. Both seem, on some level, to ache for a true voice, some anchor in the wilderness, perhaps some universal voice or language that will have the power to cement existence in a way that will surpass linguistic, occupational, and cultural boundaries. The tentative result of Marlow's search for some inner substance that will resist change yet still allow for difference is "an idea; and the unselfish belief in the idea" (53) or, "your power of devotion not to yourself but to an obscure, back-breaking business" (128). This core belief is subtly different from the blind devotion to work practiced by the sailors and accountants of the story since it is work backed by "an idea." However, that idea cannot be some philanthropic principle since those are apt to "fly off at the first good shake" (105). Instead, it is the idea of work for work's sake, a kind of Protestant work ethic divorced from any notion of Heaven or the Elect. We can see echoes of this in Marlow's criticism of Kurtz for having "no method at all" (151). However, without the religious underpinnings of Protestantism, this ideal of work back by a belief in work is in danger of collapsing in on itself. Without the ultimate, defining voice of God or the saving text of the Bible, Marlow's saving text is *An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship*. Although he finds it "luminous with another than a professional light" (108), its priest is a "harlequin" far from any connection to a transcendent reality whose "face [is] like the autumn sky, overcast one moment and bright the next" (134) and whose God, Kurtz, has "taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land" (127).

Nevertheless, it is Kurtz who Marlow believes might wield the voice, the language that will finally cement him to some absolute meaning, some absolute identity: "Kurtz discoursed. A voice! a voice! It rang deep to the very last. It survived his strength to hide in the magnificent folds of eloquence the barren darkness of his heart" (*Youth* 161). If Kurtz, as he fades, loses his ability to interweave his base greed and unchecked desires within a camouflage of high-toned rhetoric, whatever he says, no matter how "contemptibly childish" (162) retains a kind of powerful subtext – the underlying, bodily substrata of language which resists abstraction. His voice has a kind of primal power which taps into a time, whether pre-historic or infantile, in which language, the body, and the world were all once more closely intertwined (Kristeva 22–105).

Kurtz, of course, is the other major named character and this helps to break him free from the limiting and self-defining "tightrope" of social roles. He is more than "a first-class agent" (*Youth* 74) or "the chief of the inner station" (85), or, in any event, Marlow insists that he be defined in terms that supercede such stable but limiting categories. While Kurtz is still "that man," unnamed by the pilgrims, Marlow imagines him as perhaps "just simply a fine fellow who stuck to his work for its own sake" (98). However, as he travels up the river, Marlow begins to see Kurtz as indefinable, as a chameleon like himself. He begins to believe in Kurtz "as one of you might believe there are inhabitants in the planet Mars" (88). This disjunction between an occupation – "brickmaker" – and a name – Kurtz – again illuminates the arbitrary nature of language. Since most names originally come from occupations, kinship, or religion,[5] the difference between calling Kurtz by his surname or by the title, "Chief of the inner station" really should not matter. In fact, the kind of disconnect Marlow points to when he protests that "Kurtz" tells him nothing is the same disconnect which infects all words. The problem with proper names is that they have no correspondence to the object named. *Kurtz* provides no information as to who or what this man, so talked about, might be. But how much does *apple* tell us about the fruit? Indeed, Marlow's fascinated confusion about Kurtz as *Kurtz* leads to a similar instability concerning all language, since few words but onomatopoeias any have anything but symbolic and thus essentially arbitrary connections to the things they signify. Because Kurtz is "just a word" – a name rather than a description – he can be anything: "an enchanted princess sleeping in a fabulous castle" (116), "a gifted creature" (124), "an initiated wraith" (128), a reporter for the "International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs" (129), "an emissary of light," "a painter who wrote for the papers," "a great musician," "a splendid leader of an extreme party" (169), "a spoiled and pampered favorite" of the wilderness (126).

Faced with a loss of self due, in part, to a confusion of tongues, Marlow imagines Kurtz's voice as "the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating,

[5] http://www.behindthename.com

the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness" (*Youth* 124). This voice, then, incorporates both good and evil; it is a kind of all-encompassing speech that seems to Marlow to be something that will underpin every facet of existence. If it is bewildering and illuminating, exalted and contemptible, true and false, it seems no more so than any moment of speech. After all, voice is physical, emanating from the body, therefore true, but it enunciates language, an abstraction of arbitrary symbols, therefore false. Voice is exalted in its borrowings of the power of God who uses words to create his magic, yet it is contemptible in its association with the very body that makes it true. Voice is bewildering as it slips into inarticulation and illuminating as it succeeds in reproducing the cultural code. Nevertheless, Kurtz's voice is imagined as a kind of pure voice, his speech, a sort of urspeech, the concentrated pinnacle of eloquence which always already comes from the gut. For this reason, after the steamer is attacked and Marlow believes he will be denied a chance to hear this voice, he feels as if he had "been robbed of a belief or had missed [his] destiny in life" (125). Kurtz, in Marlow's mind, wields the new voice that must supercede the absolute truth of the Biblical word which has become untenable; it is a modern voice then, which will knit together transcendence and despair, the noble and the beastly, the mechanistic and the organic, the body and the mind. Although he impugns Kurtz for "presiding at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites" (129) Marlow himself is prepared to worship Kurtz, despite his lack of restraint, because "he had something to say" (165). But is it really that he had something to say? Or is it, in fact, that Kurtz speaks in a language still somehow connected to reality?

Certainly, by the time Marlow reaches the upper station and finds "that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of various lusts" (*Youth* 143), Kurtz's eloquence, his vocabulary of noble deeds and shining values, has lost all meaning. The harlequin, "Kurtz's last disciple" (144), who claims Kurtz "enlarged my mind" (153), is a man who has had exactly what Marlow thought he himself had wanted: hours of intimate conversation with Kurtz. However, Marlow sees that this "be-patched youth" is "thoughtlessly alive" and "unreflecting" (138). In short, he is the kind of "fool" that is "too dull to know [he is] being attacked by the powers of darkness" (129). As such, he is hardly evidence for the kind of exhalent transcendence Marlow had imagined might issue from Kurtz – a "gift of expression" that might bridge the gulf between body and mind, ideals and reality.

Nevertheless, this "man of patches" (*Youth* 149) can be seen as an extreme version of Marlow – chameleon-like with his multi-colored coat, changing visage, and facility with many tongues. Like Marlow, he is so prone to change that he is in danger of disappearing: "His existence was improbable, inexplicable and altogether bewildering... While he was talking to you, you forgot that it was he, the man before your eyes" (138). He seems a kind of warning to Marlow, not only of what Marlow might become if he continues to remain uprooted, but of what might have

happened if he had heard the Kurtzian voice in its prime: Kurtz had "filled [the Russian's] life, occupied his thoughts, swayed his emotions" (140). However, we learn through him that Kurtz too is liable to lose his identity without the false but reassuring matrixes of a society and language he can comprehend, that he would "forget himself amongst" the native peoples (142).

Finally, Marlow begins to see the fantasy of Kurtz's all-encompassing voice as just that, a fantasy. He discovers that Kurtz too is empty – rather than a shell of ideas and ideals, of language without substance, he has become consumed by voice – substance without articulation, in a sense. He is made up of "various lusts" (*Youth* 143), a kind of "pure, uncomplicated savagery" (144), no more a complete self than the consumed Russian, the hollow accountant, the lawyer on the Nellie, or the chameleon, Marlow. Although Marlow describes his voice as disembodied, it is actually as if his body has been absorbed by his voice. Skeletal, he has become an "atrocious phantom" of animal voice and bodily desires thinly covered with a layer of linguistic abstraction and "the occasional utterances of elevated sentiments" (162). Still spewing out fragments of stale speech, tirades "for the furthering of [his] ideas," Kurtz finally returns to that undifferentiated state before language with "a cry that was no more than a breath" (162).

This appears to be what gives Marlow's "inconclusive experience" its value (*Youth* 54). Kurtz dares to name that undifferentiated mass. He dares to apply language to "the whole universe... all the hearts that beat in the darkness" (165). Death, the moment each of us withdraws from human community, "that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the invisible" (166), is the moment we relinquish language, just as life, the moment each of us enters into human community, is the moment we carve ourselves out of "an impalpable greyness" with language (165). Somehow, at the moment of dissolution, at the very time when all of us are consumed by pure body, by the One of a universe without time, language, or separation, Kurtz manages to have "something to say" (165). It is this that helps Marlow to remain "loyal to Kurtz to the last" (166).

Still, it is difficult to see how this pronouncement, "the horror," can be "an affirmation, a moral victory" (*Youth* 166). If Kurtz has taken the paths of "abominable terrors" and "abominable satisfactions" (166), allowed himself to be consumed by a truth without the saving illusion of language, it is unclear why his final pronouncement, his retreat, in a way, back to the world of men and words represents a victory. What serves to shed light on the victory of this pronouncement is, of course, the coda of the story, in which Kurtz's "magnificent eloquence [is] thrown... from a soul as translucently pure as a cliff of crystal," the Intended (166).

That soul is "neither rudimentary nor tainted with self-seeking" (130) and it is "blind to anything but heavenly sights and sounds" (128). It is a soul belonging to a woman, a soul which hints at a final chance at reconciliation between the personal desire for a transcendent, all-encompassing voice and the social demands for a constructed, delineating language. Just as Marlow's story is described as "a glow"

that "brings out a haze" (51), the Intended's "fair hair," "pale visage," and "pure brow" are described as "surrounded by an ashy halo," the darkness of the room (172). In this way, the Intended herself becomes the embodiment of the tale, the word made flesh as it were. The physical and the abstract, the material and the immaterial, are joined: "I saw her and him in the same instant of time – I saw her sorrow in the very moment of his death. Do you understand? I saw them together – I heard them together" (173). It is as if Marlow wishes to eclipse his own tale with the physical brilliance of the Intended. If it is the "light of belief and love" (174) that succeeds in illuminating the darkness, that manages to combine in a redeeming fashion the materiality of the Intended with the disembodied voice of Kurtz, it seems to succeed because it shines from the visage of a woman. As a woman, the Intended is a being valued precisely because of her physicality yet she is still a model for faith, nobility, beauty, and similar "burning noble words" (130), words which are the very sort of "exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence" that leave Kurtz kicked "loose of the Earth." Simultaneously admired for their physical beauty and revered as symbols of the home, nineteenth-century images of women waiting by the home fires served as emblems of civilization, as epitomized in Coventry Patmore's "The Angel in the House" (1854–1863). At the same time, it was their physicality, whether as mothers or lovers, which made them what they were. For Marlow, these two seeming opposites are exactly what he struggles to negotiate in the Congo – the saving, civilizing power of ideas and the explosive vitality of life. Kurtz's "magnificent folds of eloquence" and ideas are just what Marlow finds so useless when faced with the "the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention," a "stillness of life," "plants, water, and silence" (101). It takes a woman, specifically a Western woman, to combine the "horror" of life-force with the "shining lies" of idealism. No matter that Marlow insists woman are "out of touch with truth" or that the world would "go to pieces before the first sunset" if left to them (63). However much Victorian English society covers women over with the bodice and lace of polite society and noble ideals, it cannot completely encase the primal power of their bodies – objects of desire and nurturers of life.

Marlow's "lie" then, may hold more truth than he cares to admit to his shipmates. The Intended, subject of oil sketches, longing, and photographs, placed on a pedestal where she combines sexual desire with the ideals of an empire, knits together abstract belief and material life-force. As such, she is a reminder in the minds of men like Kurtz and Marlow, whether they are aware of it or not, of a primal, undifferentiated state of self-dissolution when voice and language were one, when the savage and the civilized had yet to become separate through the abstracting force of language. As such, she too is "the horror," but a horror that must never be named. Should her connection to a primal reality be revealed, the "house" might indeed "collapse" since what keeps that social world together is the language of separation (*Youth* 177). Whether "the horror" is the new-yet-old,

encompassing, modern language Marlow longs for and glimpses in the voice of Kurtz, or another way of pronouncing "woman," it will subvert the Biblical word, pronounced by the Father. This is a word that separates body and mind, that incorporates individuality, and that ultimately stitches together all of society through the letter of the law and the gossip of our neighbors. In the end, Marlow refuses to utter the truth and take down that world by laying bare the discontinuity between what women are and what they stand for. Instead, he affirms the existing social order, imbuing women with the constitutive force that keeps society together no matter how dark they are or what percentage of the horror they retain in their physicality. Better to keep the light of the abstract than to face the horror of the one... that would be, indeed, "too dark, too dark altogether" (178).

WORKS CITED

Austin, John L. *How to Do Things with Words.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975.

Benveniste, Emile. *Problems in General Linguistics.* Transl. Mary Elizabeth Meek. Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971, 195–229.

Clifford, James. "On Ethnographic Self-Fashioning: Conrad and Malinowski." *Reconstructing Individualism.* Ed. Thomas Heller, Morton Sosna, and David Wellbery. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1968, 140–162.

Conrad Joseph. *Outside Literature. Last Essays.* London: Ayers, 1926.

_____. *Youth.* London: J.M. Dent, 1917, 1–46.

_____. *Heart of Darkness. Youth.* London: J.M. Dent, 1917, 47–178.

Deacon, Terrence W. *The Symbolic Species.* New York: Norton and Company, 1997.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures.* New York: Basic Books, 1973, 3–30.

Jones, Susan. *Conrad and Women.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.

Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language.* New York: Columbia UP, 1984, 22–105.

Lacan, Jacques. *Ecris: A Selection.* New York: Norton and Company, 1977, 1–107.

Malinowski, Bronisław. *Magic, Science, and Religion and Other Essays.* Glencoe: The Free Press, 1948, 228–276.

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

Simmons, Alan H. "The Art of Englishness: Identity and Representation in Conrad's Early Career." *The Conradian,* 29:1 (2004): 1–26.

Stewart, Garrett. "Lying as Dying in Heart of Darkness." *PMLA,* 95 (1980): 319–331.

THRESHOLDS OF AUDIBILITY: CONRAD'S SOUNDINGS

Jacek Gutorow
University of Opole

my voice comes and goes in a very entertaining manner
Conrad in a letter to John Galsworthy (*CL4*, 362)

I

As is well known, F.R. Leavis had serious objections to Conrad's excessive use of such adjectives as "inscrutable," "inconceivable," and "unspeakable" (246). "The actual effect – writes Leavis – is not to magnify but rather to muffle" (247). It was equally obvious for Leavis that adjectival excesses veiled the novelist's apparent inability to articulate his intended meanings, or even his uncertainty as to what his intended meanings actually consisted in. As the critic puts it, "[Conrad] feels that there is, or ought to be, some horror, some significance he has yet to bring out" (248). Leavis's real objection is that Conrad tried to hide the complex epistemological obscurity of his texts, and that he wanted to provide a rationale for the ostensible vagueness of his intentions: "[Conrad] is intent on making a virtue out of not knowing what he means. The vague and unrealizable, he asserts with a strained impressiveness, is the profoundly and tremendously significant" (248).

The argument seems strained. It is true that sometimes – especially in his late novels (with the notable exception of *The Rover*, one of Conrad's most disciplined and balanced texts) – the sentences are mannered and unnecessarily bombastic. But in his greatest novels and short stories, and these inform Leavis's negative arguments, Conrad is evidently in full control of his rhetoric, and he seems to be perfectly aware of the effects he tries to achieve. Like E.M. Forster, who also accused Conrad of linguistic untidiness, Leavis stresses the importance of clarity and logical coherence, and he seems to neglect and dismiss moments of rhetorical inflation, of intended obscurity, and of fragmented narrative, as redundant and spoiling the overall effect. Now, as many critics have noted, Conrad's apparently slovenly language

is obscure to the point the novelist wanted it to be obscure. As I would like to show, moments of vagueness and uncertainty are part of Conrad's elaborate rhetoric, and they add to the general impression of tentativeness and haziness that the novelist attempted to impose upon his readers.

II

In 1966 Edward Said refuted Leavis's critical remarks:

> it is not enough, I think, to criticize these imprecisions as the effusions of a writer calling attention to himself. On the contrary, Conrad was hiding himself within rhetoric, using it for his personal needs without considering the niceties of tone and style that later writers have wished he had had ... If at times he is too adjectival, it is because he failed to find a better way of making his experience clear. That failure is, in his earliest works [why only earliest? – J.G.], the true theme of his fiction. (Said 1966, 3–4)

There are many examples of interpretations in which Said's suggestions have found their way into practical criticism. Robert Haugh and Zdzisław Najder have convincingly demonstrated that, and how, the apparent inconsistencies and obscurities of *Lord Jim* are perfectly understandable in the light of Conrad's strategy of distorting and even suspending his narratives.[1] Said himself has shown us that with Conrad rhetoric is as important as intention – the trouble of articulating intention is one of the themes of his fiction. Or another example: in one of the latest issues of *The Conradian* I found Allan Simmons's fascinating study of *Lord Jim*, in which the critic compares Conrad's narrative technique to that of James in *The Turn of the Screw*, and concludes that a dramatic "slippage between narrative levels" (44), as when the actual narration is undermined by fictitious and imaginary narrative existing in Jim's mind, is not the novel's fault but reflects ambiguities and ambivalences surrounding Marlow's, Jim's, and the reader's quest for epistemological and existential certainty (46).

It is Tzvetan Todorov's classic essay on *Heart of Darkness* which remains the most powerful refutation of the Leavisite point. Todorov himself refers to E.M. Forster's obscurity argument, and remarks: "That the process of acquiring knowledge unfolds in an irreproachable matter in no way proves that the object of this knowledge may be reached; one is tempted to say indeed that just the opposite is true" (258). And: "It is not an accident that countless analogies are set up between the two narratives, the embedded tale and the framing tale... between Kurtz and Marlow the narrator... between Marlow the character and his listeners" (258). To-

[1] R. Haugh, "The Structure of *Lord Jim*." *College English*, (December 1951): 137–141. Z. Najder, "*Lord Jim*: A Romantic Tragedy of Honour." *Conrad in Perspective. Essays on Art and Fidelity*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997, 81–94.

dorov's conclusions have become almost canonical – the apparently obscure narrative encapsulates Marlow's inability of pinpointing and validating the surrounding reality, and the stress being put on moments of incomprehension is due to his frantic attempts at rationalizing and legitimizing his adventures in Africa. Having lost his belief in the mimetic presentation of events and our perception of them, Conrad instinctively turned to rhetoricity hidden in the apparently realistic presentation – but his questioning of the latter (done in negative terms) paradoxically aims at a more realistic rendering of a story: we are involved in reality, we are fragments of it and thus we are limited and not so fully reliable narrators; we multiply our own versions of reality and thus fictionalize much of it. Such phenomenological distortions of the actual world – so distinctly and distinctively investigated and analyzed by Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, to mention only the most significant names, require a different type of novelistic realism: the one which would reflect processes of its own forming and framing. I think Conrad was aware of this, and he made great efforts to reveal the modes by means of which his stories are voiced, transmitted and mediated.

III

I have always been puzzled and fascinated by one fragment of a letter sent to Edward Garnett. The letter was written on September 29th, 1898, and is otherwise a typical example of Conrad's boring matter-of-fact style (from the same letter: "I got back today. Nothing decisive happened in Glasgow," etc.). There is, however, the passage which gives us an amazing glimpse at Conrad's inner world. Let me quote it in full:

> All day with the shipowners and in the evening dinner, phonograph, X rays, talk about the secret of *the* universe and the nonexistence of, so called, matter. The secret of the universe is in the existence of horizontal waves whose varied vibrations are at the bottom of all states of consciousness. If the waves were vertical the universe would be different. This is a truism. But, don't you see, there is nothing in the world to prevent the simultaneous existence of vertical waves of waves at any angles; in fact there are mathematical reasons for believing that such waves do exist. Therefore it follows that the two universes may exist in the same place and in the same time – and not only two universes but an infinity of different universes – if by universe we mean a set of states of consciousness; and note, *all* (the universes) composed of the same matter, *all matter* being only that thing of inconceivable tenuity through which the various vibrations of waves (electricity, heat, sound, light etc.) are propagated, thus giving birth to our sensations – then emotions – then thought. (Said 1983, 94–95; all italics J.C.)

The passage invites all kinds of discussion: about Conrad's interest in science, about reality as one mode among others (and here we can refer back to Simmons's point about fiction and fiction-within-fiction), about our cognition of reality, about mediation and representation, and even about origins of language and thought.

What is more, there are two words that Leavis would find unacceptable: "secret" and "inconceivable." As a matter of fact, in the light of the just quoted passage the whole Leavisite argument seems misplaced. Conrad admitted a hypothesis of multiplicity of voices – the words quoted provide us with sufficient evidence – understood both as different voices articulated by different characters and as different narrative levels (characters, narrators, Conrad himself). Conrad was sensitive not only to voices, but also to their reverberations and echoes. One narrative encapsulated within another narrative; one narrative around and about the other ones – with Conrad such rhetorical devices are never simple because the novelist believed that a voice is always subjected to the law of its own acoustics, and also that it is crossed by other voices.

In his study of Joyce's *Ulysses*, Jacques Derrida has a nice image of a huge switchboard room which connects all the telephone calls of the world.[2] The above quoted passage of Conrad's letter is pretty similar: parallel universes coexist one next to another, and they exist in the same place and in the same time. Conrad's crucial words are those about different universes being in fact different states of consciousness. Or rather different frequencies, just as we have different frequencies of sound waves or different tonalities and intonations. There are, for example, sounds that we cannot hear – but it is just because they are emitted at a different frequency. The same logic governs Conrad's texts. His ostensible obscurity is often a hard-won awareness of various levels of narrative volume and audibility. Take *Heart of Darkness*. There is a dominating voice of the enigmatic narrator; there is an excited and sometimes failing voice of Marlow; and there is Kurtz and his silence which, loaded in significance, is a voice as well. These are not merely three voices – we have three different tonalities, in fact three different frequencies, and three different modes of being (states of consciousness, if you will). How can you do justice to this vocal multiplicity? Mimetic representation will not do. You have to modulate and channel your voice. And in his greatest novels and short stories Conrad does it masterly – more cleverly even than Joyce.

My point here is that voice is a figure – a metaphor and a metonymy at the same time – which stands for Conrad's work, and also for Conrad himself. I realize this is not an original proposition. Many scholars and critics have analyzed the function and complexity of the rhetoric of voice and sound as used by the novelist, and done so in a splendid way.[3] It is, however, high time we considered and defined, or at

[2] J. Derrida, "Ulysses Gramophone. Hear Say Yes in Joyce," *Acts of Literature*. Ed. Derek Attridge. New York and London: Routledge, 1992, 256–309.

[3] E.g. A. Fogel, *Coercion to Speak*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard UP, 1985. G.M. Moore, "Chronotopes and Voices in *Under Western Eyes*." *Conradiana*, 18:1 (1986): 2–25. C. Watts, "Bakhtin's Monologism and the Endings of *Crime and Punishment* and *Lord Jim*." *The Conradian* [*Lord Jim*: Centennial Essays]. Ed. Allan H. Simmons and J.H. Stape. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003, 15–30.

least sketched, something that I would tentatively call the philosophy of voice in Conrad. This would involve comparing critical notes and combining records, and (I believe) would help us hear some elusive and intangible tonalities of Conrad's voice, if only to get rid of Leavis's nonsense accusations. Obviously enough, such a project would be far from homogenous. On the contrary, it would have to do justice to all those polarities and ambivalences that inform Conrad's narrative devices.

All I can do here is to suggest a few paths which might be taken, and that I would like to take in future. One might call them *notes toward a philosophy of voice in Conrad* as I think what we have now are basically fragments: the few frequencies we have managed to tune in to.

I would like to suggest three overlapping and parallel paths:

1. One might start with Conrad's early letters. As Edward Said has shown, the letters written in the mid-1890s are importance evidence that already at the beginnings of his writing career Conrad was deeply troubled by what he considered an unbridgeable gap between intention and articulation. Said writes: "Taken in their entirety, Conrad's letters present a slowly unfolding discovery of his mind, his temperament, his character – a discovery, in short, that is Conrad's spiritual history as written by Conrad himself" (Said 1966, 5). This discovery was being made at the threshold of Conrad's voice – that is, it was emerging in a negative way, at those moments when Conrad felt he lacked words and was unable to voice his thoughts. As such, it marked a growing awareness of the mediated character of any, be it spoken or written, statement, and conviction that speech is already translation and distortion of ungraspable "deep thoughts."

A few examples. In a letter to Edward Noble (17 June 1895): "I thank You with all my heart. Letters like yours are rewards of all trouble... It is made up of doubt, of hesitation; of moments silent and anxious when one listens to the thoughts – one's own thoughts – speaking indistinctly deep down somewhere at the bottom of the heart" (*CL1* 230). This letter is almost archetypal as it contains most of the phrases recurring in other letters: bottom of the heart, mute thoughts, moments of doubt and hesitation. A letter to Edward Garnett (2 February 1898): "It is bad with me when the thought does not unfold itself easily... I feel I am boring you with this letter – and yet don't wish to stop. I can't say half the things I want to say. I want to hear you speak... I want to come in contact with your thought" (*CL2* 33). And a letter to W.E. Henley (18 October 1898): "...in the morning I shall discern clearly what tonight I am trying to interpret into writing – which remains. Let it remain, to show with what thundering kick the gods of life shut the door between our feeling and its expressions" (*CL2* 109). In another letter Conrad speaks of a "mentally deaf person" (*CL2* 136) – an interesting phrase implying that thinking is another type of speech (which should not surprise us – in the first quoted letter Conrad defines consciousness as "vibrations of waves").

It is worth noting that more or less at the same time Conrad wrote his celebrated preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*. I read this text as one more letter, ad-

dressed and sent to the reader. As is well known, the preface is an ardent critique of, among others, realism. Instead, the novelist opts for plasticity which would replace the "commonplace surface of words, of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless usage" (x). The painting metaphor – or is it metonymy? – dominates, but it resonates as well: language understood as mimetic representation is no longer effective and what we need is a different tonality. I can imagine that one can accuse here Conrad of being a bit bombast and operatic. Yet there is an obvious difference between being bombastic and being obscure. In the preface the novelist makes clear that the artist differs from the philosopher and the scientist in that his voice is "less loud, more profound, less distinct, more stirring" (viii). Incidentally, one can note that art is described here in terms of speech and voice – the artist "speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives" (viii). Anyway, the point is clear: the voice of the novel has its own distinct frequency and that is why the problem it poses is not of obscurity but of audibility and thresholds of audibility.

There is an important letter to Carlo Placci, written on 26 October 1911, that sums up some of Conrad's insights concerning articulation as failure. Here is the crucial fragment:

> On the great question of form there really is no defense to offer. An explanation I believe may be given. In that involved form of narrative which so often seduces me away from the straight path what I am looking for is the effect of the living word. That quest fascinates me against my better judgement ... What leads me astray is the ineradicable conviction that it is in the living word *que l'on saisit le mieux la forme du reve*. Therefore with stupid obstinacy I am always trying for the effect of the living word in the hope of coming as near as possible to that fleeting, ever elusive form. (*CL4* 494)

This is one of the few personal passages in Conrad's letters. A touching passage. The phrase "living word" is repeated and underlined. Also, it is placed in the context of Conrad's narrative technique – the living word fascinates and seduces the novelist who feels he cannot, as a novelist, follow a straight path of linear and unproblematic narration. One can hear biblical echoes but these are, I think, rather distant reverberations. In my (tentative) interpretation, the living word marks an imaginary language that would articulate one's identity. Conrad's inability to express his hidden thoughts is synonymous to his inability to grasp his own self. Thus, the problem of articulation is also a problem of identity (I will return to this). Conrad dreamt of as precise wording of his intention as possible because he felt his identity was buried beneath his thinking ego. Identity as far away and cut off – this insight always troubled Conrad. And what do you hear when you tune in to the fantastic frequency of identity? Conrad could have answered: the living word.

Thus, Conrad's early letters and novels pose the problem of articulation, or rather inarticulation. And this is strictly related to the problem of voice. Is it possible to give voice to one's deepest thoughts? What kind of voice? A voice-over,

perhaps? Or a structure of voices? How render the acoustics of the place? Or is it the acoustics of the novel?

2. *Heart of Darkness* provides us with most of the metaphors and images that are needed to construct a philosophy of voice in Conrad. First of all, the story is narrated by a voice – it is dark and Marlow is "no more than a voice" (39). This voice tells us a story of another voice since this is how Marlow describes Kurtz: "A voice. He was very little more than a voice. And I heard – him – it – this voice – other voices – all of them were so little more than voices" (69). There are constant references to sounds: the coast is mute (19), life is "soundless" (43), there are shrieks and faraway drums. There is a significant moment when Marlow accidentally overhears people talking about Kurtz – the people are walking along a deck and the volume of their voices varies from perfect audibility to complete inaudibility – and what we have here is a short recapitulation of Conrad's narrative method: certain facts and events are referred to as inscrutable merely because our ears and eyes cannot perceive them.

The structure of the story is puzzlingly built around images of mouth and moments of speaking. The first and the last scenes take part near the mouth of the river Thames. The river episode starts at the mouth of the river Congo and leads Marlow toward Kurtz's mouth open wide: "A deep voice reached me faintly. He must have been shouting" (86). Geoffrey Galt Harpham analyzed the parallels and came to the conclusion that the image of the river's mouth connects the text with its mode of presentation: "*Heart of Darkness* is not just an oral narrative but a narrative of orality in which Kurtz's omnivorousness... is channeled through the mouth" (125).

This is an important statement as it shows a play of dependencies between reality and language, object and its perception. *Heart of Darkness* is a typical example of how reality is mediated and channeled. The Kurtz scenes are crucial. Kurtz's voice, as heard and described by Marlow, is the first modulation, a kind of psychological interpretation: "The volume of tone he emitted without effort, almost without the trouble of moving his lips, amazed me. A voice! A voice! It was grave, profound, vibrating" (86). Note that for the nameless narrator of the story Marlow is a voice as well. For his part, the nameless narrator modulates Marlow's voice as he introduces his own pauses, and adds his own comments some of which address Marlow's narrative technique (we learn, for example, that Marlow's story is inconclusive, 10). Finally, Conrad himself envelopes all of the narrative levels. His voice is apparently inaudible but it is in fact heard at the crossings and intersections of subsequent frames of reference – he is the author, and he can be seen and heard in all those moments when his text betrays its own textuality and fictionality.

The structure of mediations has a vocal and acoustic character – like sound waves, the subsequent mediations are further and further away from the centre. And, to a certain degree, the centre is empty, "hollow at the core" (83). J. Hillis Miller interpreted this in the strongest possible way:

> The speaker to is spoken through. Kurtz's disembodied voice, or the voice behind voice behind voice of the narrators ... these are in the end no more direct a testimony of the truth than the words on the page as Conrad wrote them. The absence of a visible speaker of Marlow's words and the emphasis on the way Kurtz is a disembodied voice function as indirect expressions of the fact that *Heart of Darkness* itself is words without person, words which cannot be traced back to any single personality. (217)

This does not, however, mean that the story is a linguistic reverie and nothing else. Earlier in his essay Miller describes *Heart of Darkness* as a parable and quotes another crucial passage from the story:

> The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical ... and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine. (8)

This might sound a bit mystical but is in fact a precise formula of Marlow's and Conrad's narrative technique: instead of the realistic and mimetic representation (described here as a "direct simplicity"), the narrator decides to voice his intention by experimenting and playing with different planes and modes of narration. All the more because reality reaches us in the same way – as perceptions, as phenomena, as mediations. And, once again, the figure of voice seems to me crucial and unavoidable. If the meaning of the story is like a haze or like a misty halo surrounding the tale, then it is not so much in the words and sentences that Marlow articulates but rather in the articulation itself, in Marlow's – but also Kurtz's, nameless narrator's, and Conrad's – voice, in its volume, intonation and frequency. I find reading *Heart of Darkness* a bit like taking soundings: you can hear so many tonalities and sound out so many depths. And the same may be said of other texts written by Conrad. They are meaningful in a special way, the message being rather emanated than implied.

Heart of Darkness poses the problem of the significance of the rhetoric of voice in Conrad. My contention is that with Conrad the vocal rhetoric is indeed fundamental – it informs various levels of his fictional narrations, and constitutes both structures of narratives and their complex frames of reference.

3. Finally, Conrad's lifelong preoccupation with voice and speech as ultimate modes of narration was a result of his desperate, at times traumatic, search for identity and for his deepest self, no longer divisible or questionable. This ordeal has been splendidly described by Edward Said for whom much of Conrad's work is due to his will to speak or, as Said himself writes, of his "wanting-to-speak" (Said 1983, 104). The idea was expounded in the crucial essay *Conrad: The Presentation of Narrative*, in which the Palestinian critic meditates on the function and the place of oral narrative in Conrad, and tries to prove that both the novelist and his characters aim to "vindicate and articulate his imagination" (110) by resorting to direct

and living speech which does not represent but incarnates Conrad's intentions – that is why the shift from the written to the oral should be understood as a shift from the metaphorical, which attempts to translate intention, to the metonymical which ideally partakes of intention: unlike linguistic codes, voice is a part of the body and as such it is a part of indubitable presence "here and now."

Said's insights parallel Jacques Derrida's remarks on Husserl's phenomenological project. In the sixth chapter of his Husserlian book (*Speech and Phenomena*, 1966) Derrida shows that voice has always been perceived as the ultimate test of one's presence: "When I speak, it belongs to the phenomenological essence of this operation that *I hear myself at the same time* that I speak. The signifier, animated by my breath and by the meaning-intention... is in absolute proximity to me" (77, emphasis J.D.). And: "the voice is the being which is present to itself in the form of universality, as con-sciousness: the voice is consciousness" (79–80). The instinctual impulse to privilege voice over writing – voice over narrative – is found everywhere in Conrad. As Said notices,

> we can conceive of Conrad's narratives abstractly as the alternation in language of presence and absence. The 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 (or unseen) to his listeners as he speaks. Conrad's goal is to make us see, or otherwise transcend the absence of everything but words, so that we may pass into a realm of vision beyond the words. (Said 1983, 95)

Conrad's presentation of Marlow as a pure voice is a good example of this. Marlow's voice is a guarantee of his metafictional stance: here I am, I am speaking, I am here and now – this is not just a story, this is a story incarnated, made flesh, presented directly rather than represented. Incidentally, it would be interesting to analyze Marlow's and Conrad's obsession with voice in the light of Henri Meschonnic's fascinating studies of voice as transcending the human condition and broadening and redefining the boundaries of the speaking subject. Unlike Derrida, who sees voice as split inside, Meschonnic echoes Conrad in perceiving in speech a confirmation of one's presence:

> When you hear the oral, you do not hear sound, you hear the subject, from the physiological to the historical and cultural elements that compose the continuity of rhythm that constitutes that specific mode of signifying. When the subject prevails, whether it be in written or in spoken language, there is the oral. (qtd in Wesling, Sławek 169)

What is stressed here is that modes of signification are constituted by existential modes of being, and that the latter are realized by means of speaking. This does not imply privileging voice over sign because written signs may be also voiced, as in Conrad's stories. By putting stories into the mouth of, say, Marlow or the nameless narrator of *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad makes sure that the written is in fact spoken and thus individualized: each voice is its own tonality, its own intonation (maybe

the novelist would use here the Polish word *zaśpiew*: a distinct melody of one's voice characteristic of the region or even social stratum). If the individual voice is absent in anonymous writing, then Conrad's reversing back to the oral narrative may be seen as an attempt to regain and revive one's unique identity. The latter is indeed untranslatable into writing, and it seems mute. Yet Conrad manages to demonstrate that the idiomatic and unique can in fact be articulated – not directly, by way of mimetic presentation, but through narrative junctions and storeys. What the reader needs is an awareness of different voices and frequencies, and ability to revive in his mind, or rather ears, those modes of being that are normally silent. Thus, reading becomes an existential exercise, even a task.

As we know, this was the way Conrad viewed literature, too. Geoffrey Harpham voiced the common impression by referring to Conrad's "obsession with identity" (107). Indeed, and perhaps paradoxically, the novelist's multiplying of voices and of narratives-within-narratives (voices-within-voices) aimed at discovering the unique voice which cannot be reproduced as such – precisely because it is unique and disappears in an act of reproduction – but is implied in the polyphonic structure of some of his short stories and novels. Thus, for Conrad, the voice became synonymous with identity. We can constantly hear this association in his early letters, and it is given a vent in *Heart of Darkness* which might be called the culmination of the early phase of Conrad's literary career. I think it was also connected with his status of a foreigner. Unable to grasp his deepest identity in language, he instinctively turned to the physiological moment of producing speech and further managed to work out a sort of voice argument for the existence of identity. I think I can hear Conrad's perplexity over such arguments in the letter I quoted at the beginning of this paper – ostensibly about the secret of the universe, the letter is about the secret of Conrad's own universe and about its inaudible and invisible dimensions.

In his evaluation of Wallace Stevens, Frank Kermode called him once a "poet of thresholds." By this he probably meant the poet's obsessive uneasiness about any given fact, including the fact of one's existence. I think such uneasiness is a trade mark of Conrad's work. Like Stevens later on, he was a master of tentativeness and suspense which apparently do not lead to any conclusions. But the one strong conclusion to be drawn from Conrad consists in reviving the moments of transgression when one's own reality collides with someone else's, and when one voice keeps at bay – but also preserves – one's original and unique self. For Conrad, such collisions and transgressions can be voiced. However, Conrad's voices are most often troubled and sometimes silenced. This does not mean, as F.R. Leavis suggested, that Conrad does not know what he wants to say. Rather, it points to the novelist's urgent awareness of the complexity and ambiguity of human existence which announces itself as a task, a mode, a frequency, and not as a stable and unfailing voice.

WORKS CITED

The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad. Vol. 1. 1861–1897. Ed. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983. (*CL1*)

——. Vol. 2. 1898–1902, 1986. (*CL2*)

——. Vol. 4. 1908–1911, 1991. (*CL4*)

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness.* London: Penguin Books, 1994.

——. "The Nigger of the 'Narcissus.'" *The Works of Joseph Conrad.* Vol. 3. London: William Heinemann, 1921.

Derrida, Jacques. *Speech and Phenomena. And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs.* Translated, and with an Introduction by D.B. Allison. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973.

Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. *One of Us. The Mastery of Joseph Conrad.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Leavis, F.R. *The Great Tradition* [excerpts] *A Practical Reader in Contemporary Literary Theory.* Ed. P. Brooker and P. Widdowson. Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, New York, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo, Singapore, Madrid, Mexico City, Munich: Prentice Hall, 1996, 244–250.

Miller, J. Hillis. "*Heart of Darkness* Revisited." *Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism. Joseph Conrad: "Heart of Darkness." Complete, Authoritative Text with Biographical and Historical Contexts, Critical History, and Essays from Five Contemporary Critical Perspectives.* Second Edition. Ed. R.C. Murfin. Boston, New York: Bedford Books, 1996, 206–220.

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

——. "Conrad: The Presentation of Narrative." *The World, the Text, and the Critic.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1983, 90–110.

Simmons, Allan H. "'He was misleading': Frustrated Gestures in *Lord Jim.*" *The Conradian* [*Lord Jim*: Centennial Essays]. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2003, 31–47.

Todorov, Tzvetan. "Heart of Darkness" [excerpts, transl. Catherine Porter]. *A Practical Reader in Contemporary Literary Theory*, Ed. Peter Brooker and Peter Widdowson. London, New York, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapore, Madrid, Mexico City, Munich: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996, 251–260.

Wesling, Donald, and Sławek, Tadeusz. *Literary Voice. The Calling of Jonah.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

HAUNTING *UNDER WESTERN EYES*

Cedric Watts
University of Sussex

> He felt, bizarre as it may seem, as though another self, an independent sharer of his mind, had been able to view his whole person very distinctly indeed.
> Joseph Conrad, *Under Western Eyes*

I

Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* is a remarkably haunted text. First: it is haunted in the sense that it is pervasively influenced by *Crime and Punishment*, so that Razumov seems a *Doppelgänger* of Raskolnikov. Secondly, within *Under Western Eyes*, the uncanny haunting of Razumov by Haldin is an important factor inducing Razumov's eventual confession, an act in which Raskolnikov is emulated. Thirdly, the narrative is haunted by a fictional narrator who varies between visibility and invisibility. Thus, the extratextual and the intratextual are remarkably entangled, the former having variously helped to generate the latter. Discussion of haunting entails consideration of the Gothic elements in this diversely palimpsestic novel. Of course, the semantic range of the verb 'to haunt' extends from the secular (as when Tekla, being a regular visitor, "haunted [Razumov's] bedside") to the supernatural (as when Razumov, obsessed by Natalia's image, "would say, addressing the dead man, 'Is this the way you are going to haunt me?'"); and frequently the verb's connotations are ambiguous.

The writing of *Under Western Eyes* resembles an attempted exorcism during which the aspiring exorcist was obliged to recognise that he himself remained partly possessed. Conrad was seeking to exorcise these: the imagined spirit of Dostoyevsky; the Slavonism with which he, Conrad, had repeatedly been identified by Edward Garnett; his imputed betrayal of his native land; the seductions of stereotyping; and the darkly irrational. The personal result, however, was a nightmarish

phase of breakdown and derangement.[1] The *Doppelgänger* had multiplied: Raskolnikov as double of Razumov, *Crime and Punishment* as double of *Under Western Eyes*, and, fearsomely, Dostoyevsky (who had died in 1881) as double of Conrad. It's no wonder that, even after death, Haldin seems to pursue Razumov.

The ensuing thematic discussion briefly evokes or engages various matters of narratology. These include: mimetic, congruent, and adversarial relationships between texts; the contrast between "intertextuality" and "transtextuality;" predictive sequences and covert plotting; such Janiform features as the tension between Gothicism and realism; the much-discussed rôle of Conrad's "unreliable narrator," the teacher; Bakhtin's claim that only Dostoyevsky practised "dialogism;" ethical mystification; and the politics of techniques.[2] I suggest that some well-known features of *Under Western Eyes* combine more craftily than is usually recognised. Like a protean wraith, the theme of haunting pervades and informs both the novel and this essay.

II

Conrad called Dostoyevsky "that grimacing terror haunted creature" (*CL6*, 78); but Dostoyevsky was amply avenged, for *Under Western Eyes*, a novel about a haunted protagonist, is itself haunted, as has long been recognised, by *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye*: *Crime and Punishment*. Having stereotyped Dostoyevsky as the barbaric Slav (in contrast to the civilised and Europeanised Turgenev, for whom he expressed great admiration), Conrad was painfully obliged, when writing *Under Western Eyes*, to replace the stereotype by a more truthful complexity, and to recognise that his own imaginative nature had more in common with that of the detested though tormented Dostoyevsky than with that of the relatively restrained Turgenev. Many factors contributed to Conrad's psychological breakdown on completing *Under Western Eyes*; but one was the inner conflict generated during its writing. He could no longer sustain his sweeping hostility to Dostoyevsky and to the Russian state. When appraising messianic Russian nationalism, Conrad would have perceived its resemblances to his father's messianic Polish nationalism: Dostoyevsky's Polonophobia and advocacy of Holy Russia resemble distorted reflections of

[1] Conrad's breakdown after completing *Under Western Eyes* has been amply documented and analysed by biographers. On the legitimacy of biographical approaches to literature, see J.C. Carlier, "Roland Barthes's Resurrection of the Author and Redemption of Biography." *Cambridge Quarterly*, 29:4 (2000): 386–393; reprinted in *Roland Barthes*. Ed. Mike and Nicholas Gane. London: Sage, 2004, III, 115–122.

[2] Janiformity, transtextuality, predictive sequences and covert plotting are discussed in Watts 1984. Bakhtin's claim is made in Bakhtin 1984. On the problematic language teacher, see (for example) Hawthorn 1979, Lothe 1989 and Carabine 1996.

Apollo Korzeniowski's Russophobia and advocacy of Holy Poland. Conrad was "homo duplex;" Dostoyevsky described his own "dualism" as "a great torment, but at the same time also a great delight." (*CL3* 89, Magarshack 11)

The relationship of Conrad's novel to Dostoyevsky's is mimetic, congruent and adversarial. It is "mimetic," in the sense that various features of Conrad's work clearly derive from Dostoyevsky's; it is "congruent," when both writers appear to agree on certain matters; and it is "adversarial," in that some features of Conrad's work offer contrasts, perhaps deliberately and challengingly, to Dostoyevsky's.

Each novel depicts a guilt-tormented young Russian who eventually confesses. In temperament, in his bitter alienation and in his eventual confessional accession to the claims of truthful humanity, Razumov resembles a twin brother of the lonely Raskolnikov. Near the end of *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov, the former student who lives in St Petersburg, is impelled towards his confession by the influence of the idealistic and loving Sonia. Her appearance reminds him of Lizaveta, whom he had killed. Near the end of *Under Western Eyes*, Razumov, the former student who had lived in St Petersburg, is impelled towards confession by his attraction to the idealistic and loving Natalia. In a telling parallel, her appearance reminds him of Victor, for whose death he bears responsibility. Both Raskolnikov and Razumov are intelligent, introspective, neurotic, bad-tempered, and sardonically contemptuous of others. "[M]orose, gloomy, proud": the adjectives for Raskolnikov fit Razumov; "He flings out continually these flouts and sneers": it's said of Razumov but fits Raskolnikov. Both men acquire but discard stolen money. Both undergo repeated interviews with an astute investigator; and, in each case, the interviewer is considerably more perceptive than the exasperated interviewee expects. Raskolnikov contrives a philosophical and political rationale for murder; Razumov contrives a philosophical and political rationale for lethal treachery. A dramatically unexpected plot-feature appears in both works. Raskolnikov seems to be fortuitously freed from suspicion when the workman Nikolay confesses to the crime; and Razumov seems to be fortuitously freed from suspicion when the carter Ziemianitch hangs himself and is deemed the betrayer of Haldin. In each case, the unexpected development aggravates the burden of moral choice borne by the protagonist, and appears to confer greater moral merit upon his subsequent decision to confess.[3] The confessions, however, seem to be motivated by the confessors' impulsions to resolve their inner divisions rather than by remorse for their victims. Finally, both men are faithfully tended by female Samaritans.

As numerous commentators demonstrate, Conrad derived details of imagery and even of phrasing from Dostoyevsky. While deciding to proclaim the truth, Raskolnikov becomes drenched with rain; and Razumov, with consciously symbolic phrasing, declares himself "washed clean" during a thunderstorm between his con-

[3] In Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novel *A Grain of Wheat* (haunted by *Under Western Eyes*), Karanja, wrongly deemed the betrayer of Kihika, is saved when Mugo confesses to the act of treachery.

fession to Natalia and his confession (as he stands "dripping with water") to the conspirators. Jocelyn Baines (370) long ago pointed out some of the verbal resemblances. For example: Razumov's question, "Do you conceive the desolation of the thought – no one – to – go – to?," recalls Marmeladov's "Do you realize... what it means when you have nowhere to go to?;" and Razumov's "In giving Victor Haldin up, it was myself, after all, whom I have betrayed" may echo Raskolnikov's "I killed myself, and not the old hag." Paul Kirschner (1996, xvii–xviii, xx–xxi, xxx–xxxi, lxii,) has cited numerous echoes. Here, for instance, is Razumov's outburst to Sophia and Nikita: "'Enough of this... I will have no more of it... Inquire, investigate! I defy you but I will not be played with... I won't have it!' he shouted, striking his fist into the palm of his other hand." And here is Raskolnikov's outburst to Porfiry: "'I tell you, I won't put up with it!... I can't and I won't! Do you hear? Do you hear?' he shouted, again banging the table with his fist... 'Arrest me, search me, but... don't play with me!'" Particularly telling are the repeated use of the fist for emphasis and the echo of "don't play with me" in "I will not be played with." As Kirschner (1996, xxxi) remarks, such repetitions of tiny details "suggest not 'intertextuality' but unconscious mimesis arising from imaginative saturation." ("Intertextuality" unhelpfully invokes an automatically ubiquitous cultural plenitude: "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations," according to Julia Kristeva's mosaic.[4]) Even the name "Razumov," which, appropriately for a reflective student, means "Son of Reason" (*razum*, in Cyrillic *pazym*, being Russian for "rationality, reason, mind"), is haunted by the name of Raskolnikov's friend Razumikhin: a surname which, another character remarks, "deriv[es...] from the word 'reason'." The root of "Raskolnikov," *raskol* (Cyrillic *packol*) appropriately means "split" or "division," the man being divided between bad and good, between arrogant egotism and humble altruism. Conrad told Edward Garnett (*CL6* 77) that he did not know Russian, but evidently he was sufficiently familiar with it to allocate some significant names. Ziemianitch (the "town-peasant") has a name which means "son of the soil (or land)."[5]

The "congruent" aspect of the relationship between *Under Western Eyes* and *Crime and Punishment* is extensive. Certain features of the later novel appear to endorse kindred features of the earlier; and this seems a matter not of derivation but of similarity in outlook and knowledge. In both works, St Petersburg is a location of splendour and squalor: beneath the nobility and beneath the respectable apparatus of the state, with its bureaucracy, officialdom and police system, there exists a populace in which poverty seems widespread and drunkenness is common. Both works mock Rousseau's *Confessions*. Again, "History not theory" is one of Razumov's formulations; and, when Raskolnikov is redeemed, the narrator comments: "Life had taken the place of dialectics." Both works suggest that

[4] Kristeva, 146. (I translate her French: "tout texte se construit comme mosaïque de citations".)

[5] The previous two paragraphs draw on Watts 1991.

a propensity for theorising may sap an individual's conscience and moral nature. The love of a good woman is the key to the redemption of each protagonist: love provided by Sonia, or love for Natalia. Meanwhile, in such characterisations as Lebezyatnikov and Peter Ivanovitch, both authors satirise the exaltation of women. Dostoyevsky treats communist ideas as impractical, naïve, and open to exploitation by the cynical or debasement by the stupid, a thesis repeated with variations by Conrad's language-teacher and Razumov. Lebezyatnikov, one of the "progressives" who likes to expound plans for a commune, is "a bit stupid" and is one of those "semi-literate half-wits" who "caricature every cause they so sincerely serve." Razumov sees "an ominous symptom of the time" in the fact that Kostia ("this simple and grossly festive soul") has "fallen too under the revolutionary curse." Eventually, Raskolnikov, guilty of two brutal murders, receives only an eight-year sentence, and Razumov, though deafened and crippled, is allowed to live in peace and is respected by revolutionaries. (Historically, violent death would have been a more likely end for an unmasked police informer.)

Such likenesses throw into relief the adversarial features of the relationship between the texts. Dostoyevsky thought that Russian superiority was threatened by western ideas; Conrad's narrator feels that western superiority is threatened by Russian ideas. Conrad discriminates finely not only between the conservatives but also between the revolutionaries, so that, while Peter Ivanovitch is an arrogant egotist, Sophia Antonovna has a seasoned integrity. The teacher's claim that "revolutionary success" betrays hopes and caricatures ideals is memorably answered by Natalia's epigraphised wish to "take liberty from any hand as a hungry man would snatch at a piece of bread." Conrad's "Author's Note" is witheringly scornful of revolutionary hopes, but the implied author is more circumspect. (Ironically, *Under Western Eyes* first appeared in 1910–1911, a time of violent political turbulence in Great Britain.) Both novels contain anti-Semitic details, but only *Crime and Punishment* clearly endorses anti-Semitism. Its implied author describes thus the "little man" who witnesses Svidrigaylov's suicide: "His face wore that everlastingly peevish and woebegone look which has been so sourly imprinted on all the faces of the Jewish race without exception" (522). In contrast, when Razumov, spitting, denounces Laspara (who is "bold-nosed" and "almond-eyed") as "a cursed Jew," the narrator apologises for this "expression of hate and contempt" by saying that Laspara may not have been a Jew, and in any case "this is not a tale of the West," as if to suggest that he is recording an anti-Semitism which Westerners may dislike but which is relatively normal in Russia. Razumov elsewhere says "in a sneering tone": "To be sure my name is not Gugenheimer... I am not a democratic Jew" (208).

A much larger dialectical feature is that the confessional garrulity of many of Dostoyevsky's characters is implicitly criticised by the relatively economical dialogue of Conrad's. "[M]y chief literary defect is – *verbosity*," conceded Dostoyevsky (Magarshack 329). The language-teacher's strictures on the Russians'

"extraordinary love of words" seem more valid as a comment on Dostoyevsky's Russians than on Conrad's. Again, Dostoyevsky, after his youthful radicalism, became a devout Christian and loyal Tsarist, as is evident. In contrast to Dostoyevsky's concluding Christian emphasis on confession as the key to redemption and joyful regeneration, Conrad more sombrely depicts confession as a key to the restoration of personal integrity. ("It's lucky I don't believe in another world," thinks Razumov.) *Under Western Eyes* concludes with a secular emphasis on disillusionment and withdrawal from struggle. Partly as a consequence of their differing emphases, strategies, and dates of composition, Conrad's relatively short and economical novel probes Russian politics more deeply than does Dostoyevsky's lengthy and loquacious novel. In the complexity of its political discussion, it ambushes proleptically Bakhtin's monological advocacy of Dostoyevsky's "dialogism".[6]

Numerous works contributed to *Under Western Eyes*. They include Dostoyevsky's *Diary of a Writer* and *A Raw Youth*, Turgenev's *Smoke*, *Rudin* and *On the Eve*, France's *Le Lys rouge*, and possibly Herzen's *From the Other Shore* and Stepniak's *Career of a Nihilist*. Nevertheless, it is only *Crime and Punishment* which offers a sustained parallel in a plot centred on a guilt-laden imperilled character, and thus maintains an extensive haunting in addition to providing local materials.

III

Paul Kirschner (1968, 252) says: "Conrad's antipathy to Dostoyevsky, like many antipathies, carries a strong suggestion of secret kinship." Hence, while writing *Under Western Eyes*, Conrad was haunted by Dostoyevsky, a formidable but appalling "secret sharer." In combating Dostoyevsky, he was furthering him. There emerged not only a novel with a hero haunted by a *Doppelgänger* but also the tale *The Secret Sharer*, a literary *Doppelgänger* in which the lethal fugitive is not betrayed but protected.

Within *Under Western Eyes*, modes of haunting inform the plot, the thematic structure, and the ironic meshwork. This novel presents the largest and most complex instance of Conradian Gothic. Works in the Gothic tradition exploit the *Doppelgänger* motif: a person is strangely linked to some "double" who bears both similar and contrasting characteristics. The Gothic work gives prominence to the "hero-villain," a major character who is intense, charismatic, saturnine, broodingly attractive, dangerous, powerful, and possibly corrupt. The Gothic repeatedly features hauntings of various kinds, and generates a sense of the uncanny. A location may be haunted by a phantom from the past. A person may be haunted by a pursuant spirit, by a ghost of the dead, or by an inner dæmon. The atmosphere of Gothic

[6] Bakhtin argues that Dostoyevsky was unique in his "dialogism" and "polyphony." (Bakhtin rules out Shakespeare and does not mention Conrad.)

is often dark and ominous, the familiar and the everyday being threatened by the uncannily incursionary. All these features may be found in *Under Western Eyes*.

Elements of the Gothic tradition may be traced back to the Bible and the Homeric epics; and some of its features gained prominence in the Elizabethan and particularly the Jacobean eras; but the tradition became clearly identifiable in the period 1750–1830. Some Gothic novelists openly endorsed the supernatural: Horace Walpole in *The Castle of Otranto*, for instance, and M.G. Lewis in *The Monk*. Other Gothic novelists, while offering the *frisson* of the possibly supernatural, preferred to let the events be finally explicable in secular terms. Examples are Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Of course, even if events are "finally explicable in secular terms," that may not expunge a lingering atmosphere of the strange and uncanny, and on the journey to the secular explanation there may have been a strong sense of the seemingly supernatural. Indeed, sometimes the uncanny sequence is so coherent as to resemble a supernatural covert plot which entwines the secular overt plot and haunts it with strange resonances. Works of Conrad which can be related to the Gothic tradition include *Karain*, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* *Heart of Darkness* (probably influenced by Bram Stoker's *Dracula*), *The Secret Sharer*, *The Inn of the Two Witches*, *The Shadow-Line* and *Victory*. The early tale *Karain* anticipates *Under Western Eyes* in being a narrative of betrayal, subsequent guilt, haunting, confession and exorcism.

In *Under Western Eyes*, the main "Gothic" sequence of haunting verges on the supernatural and evokes the *Doppelgänger* motif. It is inaugurated in the first chapter, when Haldin tells Razumov: "'Men like me leave no posterity, but their souls are not lost. No man's soul is ever lost... What will become of my soul when I die in the way I must die – soon – very soon perhaps? It shall not perish... My spirit shall go on warring in some Russian body till all falsehood is swept out of the world.'" (22) This is fruitfully ambiguous. While referring to "soul" and "spirit" as though they are synonymous, his statement equivocates between the secular and the supernatural. At a secular level, the sense is that his revolutionary idealism will not perish with him but will endure. Next, there is an intermediate sense: a person's spirit, in the sense of character, may be hereditarily transmitted. Finally, at a supernatural level, he is saying that his innermost nature, his "soul" and "spirit," will be reincarnated in some Russian individual. That he does not speak of its living on in "others," which would be more appropriate to the secular meaning, but specifies rather "some Russian body," implying a single reincarnation within a succession of reincarnations, sways the emphasis towards the supernatural. Then, in an obliquely proleptic passage, Haldin says that his sister, who has trustful eyes, may marry well and "may have children – sons perhaps." Emphasising the hereditary sense of "haunting." Haldin says that whereas his father was obedient, he himself is an avatar of a rebellious uncle (who was shot in 1828). The reference to the "sons per-

haps" reminds us that the present version of the novel is haunted by its earlier and largely-superseded plan. Part of that plan was as follows:

> "The Student Razumov meeting abroad the mother and sister of Haldin falls in love with that last, marries her and after a time confesses to her the part he played in the arrest and death of her brother... The psychological developments leading to Razumov's betrayal of Haldin, to his confession of the fact to his wife and to the death of these people (brought about mainly by the resemblance of their child to the late Haldin) form the real subject of the story." (*CL4* 9)

The "resemblance of their child" could be not only secularly realistic, a natural consequence of heredity, but also uncanny, a fulfilment of Haldin's prophecy that his soul would live on in a Russian body.

When Razumov fails to awaken the drunken carter, Ziemianitch, and contemplates betraying Haldin, he experiences a vivid hallucination of Haldin lying on the snowy pavement, "stretched on his back right across his path." Razumov walks "over the place where the breast of the phantom had been lying." (Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov had remarked that superior beings may be obliged "to step over a corpse.") When Razumov returns to his room, Haldin's body "seemed to have less substance than its own phantom." He even muses of it, "Was this, too, a phantom?" Haldin says: "They can kill my body, but they cannot exile my soul from this world;" and he declares that "the oppressors of thought" and "the destroyers of souls" alike "shall be haunted." Razumov bitterly reflects, "A slippery customer[,] this fellow with a phantom." On the afternoon of Haldin's execution, Razumov sees "the familiar phantom" standing before him in sharp detail, even the leather strap round the Tcherkess coat: "[t]he illusion of that hateful presence was so perfect;" but "the vision" vanishes when Razumov advances menacingly towards it. Haldin is "a mere phantom," Razumov tells Mikulin; "The whole affair is... [a] comedy of errors, phantoms, and suspicions." "Did you say phantoms?," asks Mikulin; "I could walk over dozens of them," replies Razumov.

When Razumov first meets Natalia, Victor Haldin seems to be haunting her and speaking through her. Natalia's opening words to Razumov are: "Can't you guess who I am?... Victor – Victor Haldin!" No wonder he "positively reeled." Furthermore, although she is femininely attractive, the resemblance to Victor is heightened by some peculiar traits: strangely, she has a "deep," "slightly harsh" and "masculine" voice. This is not merely a matter of guilty projection by Razumov: the language-teacher has noted independently that her "unfeminine" voice is "deep, almost harsh," her glance is "as direct and trustful as that of a young man," and she has a handshake of "exquisite virility." After his final interview with her mother, Razumov feels that "[t]he phantom of Haldin had been indeed walked over," but he reflects of Natalia: "It was she who had been haunting him now." Eventually, Razumov decides that he will venture out to confess to the revolutionaries at midnight (when ghosts walk), at the time when he had betrayed Haldin. Events of that past night are controlling his present actions: "[T]he facts and words of a certain evening in the past were timing his conduct in the present. The sudden power Natalia Haldin

had gained over him he ascribed to the same cause. 'You don't walk with impunity over a phantom's breast,' he heard himself mutter. 'Thus he saves me,' he thought suddenly. 'He himself, the betrayed man'" (362).

Accordingly, entwined in the plot-material of *Under Western Eyes* is a Gothic sequence which equivocates between the supernatural and the secular. At a secular level, the "haunting" of Razumov by Haldin occurs simply because Razumov's guilty conscience and vivid imagination confer on his remembrance of Haldin a power which influences conduct. This influence is compounded by the evocation of Haldin in Natalia: uncanny features of resemblance are potently evocative. Of course, a sister may naturally resemble her brother. (In *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov's mother says to his sister: "[Y]ou're the spit and image of him, not so much in face as in spirit.") Nevertheless, the abundant imagery of hauntings and phantoms, the repeated evocations of Haldin lying across Razumov's path, and the emphasis on those strangely masculine characteristics of Natalia, give a supernatural aura to events. The impulsion of Razumov through guilt to confession may seem the revenge of Haldin and the vindication of his pledge to haunt this earth after his death. Sometimes the supernatural is strongly suggested; more frequently the secular dominates; and often there is marked ambiguity. The ambiguity is that of the "psychologised uncanny." In other words, the effect of haunting may be explained psychologically as a consequence of Razumov's guilty and superstitious imagination; but such a psychological characteristic could in turn can be explained as the way in which Haldin's spirit supernaturally impinges on the living. Although there is always an adequate non-supernatural explanation of events, the postulated supernatural sequence is consistent and is nowhere refuted. Haldin prophesied that his soul would survive on this earth; and it indeed appears to survive in the sequence of events of haunting registered by Razumov and aided by the language-teacher (as when the latter independently notes those masculine features of Natalia). The teacher says that "the dead can live only with the exact intensity and quality of the life imparted to them by the living." This seems secular: an eloquent way of phrasing the impious notion that the dead survive only in the remembrance of the living. The narrative, however, surpasses such a secular notion insofar as Haldin's prophecy of his postmortal existence seems to have been uncannily rather than conventionally fulfilled. Such mystification of Razumov's guilt makes Razumov resemble a victim rather than a victimizer.

Another Gothic (and rather melodramatic) element becomes explicit in Razumov's declaration to Natalia that he had contemplated "the unpardonable sin of stealing a soul." "I was possessed!," he exclaims, and even alleges that the language-teacher, by talking of Natalia's lonely, helpless state, was urging him on like a Satanic tempter: "Could he have been the devil himself in the shape of an old Englishman?" Since Natalia was so attractive and trustful, Razumov had felt love for her, and recognised that she could love him. (This recalls Conrad's earlier in-

tended plot-sequence, cited above, in which they marry and produce a son.) Eventually, though, her "pure brow searched [his] heart": Razumov comes to feel that he can declare his love for Natalia only after confessing that he and not Ziemiamitch was the betrayer of her brother: a confession which will alienate her and leave his love unfulfilled.

Ingeniously, the Gothic theme of the power of the dead over the living is also played by Conrad in a satirically discordant minor key. Madame de S–, the necromantic adviser of Peter Ivanovitch, is so grotesquely decrepit as to resemble "a galvanised corpse out of some Hoffmann's tale," yet, ironically, she believes that she can conjure the spirits of the dead to help the revolutionaries. She trusts that "evoked ghosts" will aid a campaign in which "rivers would part like Jordan, and ramparts fall down like the walls of Jericho." Razumov remarks of Haldin: "I am not sure that he is beyond the influence of one woman at least; the one over there – Madame de S–, you know. Formerly the dead were allowed to rest, but now it seems that they are at the beck and call of a crazy old harridan." (In the Château Borel, Razumov aptly jests, the seeker of a cup of tea may find only "the cold ghost" of it.) The Gothic material receives a further recessive irony from Conrad when Razumov hears that Ziemianitch has hanged himself. He reflects: "It's a perfect, diabolic surprise," and is then informed by Sophia Antonovna that Ziemianitch, "in the last weeks of his life, ... suffered from the notion that he had been beaten by the devil."

In the event, the result of all the scheming led by Peter Ivanovitch and Madame de S– appears to be no more than "an abortive military conspiracy" when "a steamer with a cargo of arms and conspirators... invade[s] the Baltic provinces." Presumably Razumov's letter to the authorities helped to render the invasion abortive. The necromantic supernaturalism of Madame de S– thus proves worthless, while the psychologised supernaturalism of Razumov is made more plausible by contrast. Of course, as Conrad knew, the mystical faith of Madame de S– is a parody of the credulity of the historical Tsarina Alexandra, wife of Nicholas II, who was influenced by a succession of bizarre mystical advisers, ranging from Matronushka the Barefooted to the notorious Rasputin. A deleted passage of the holograph of the novel makes explicit this implication: "[T]he revolutionary activity of the Chateau Borel, must have had a superior manner, an intellectual manner, a quasi-spiritual tone, helped out, if rumour is to be trusted, by spiritualistic manifestations: – the very court and palace of the Revolution parodying in its own lurid way the seclusion, the follies and perhaps also the fears of another court and another palace – the Imperial centre of Autocracy." (Higdon and Sheard 173) Furthermore, Dostoyevsky once stated that he believed in "real, literal, personal resurrection... on earth" (Magarshack 465).

IV

The narrative of *Under Western Eyes* as a whole is haunted by the fictional narrator, the language-teacher. At the outset, he is a substantial character, clearly depicted as an "inconsistent narrator." To call him "unreliable" without qualification may be misleading: generally we *do* rely on him, for we have little choice but to do so; and his predominant reliability renders conspicuous by contrast his occasional lapses into unreliability or inconsistency. After the outset, he sometimes resumes his early substantiality as he participates in conversations and becomes a visible witness of events. For part of the time, we may forget him, since the narrative then seems to be unfolding in a manner consistent with a knowledgeable disembodied narrator or "implied author." Nevertheless, the intermittent reminders that the teacher is supposed to be narrating everything make him resemble a ghost haunting the story: a spectral presence, sensed but often transparent; a nominal but neglected agent who only occasionally (and then disconcertingly) assumes substance. As the teacher says: "I produced, even upon myself, the effect of a dumb helpless ghost."

He is rapidly established as inconsistent or partly-unreliable. In his fourth paragraph he tells us, at considerable length, that Russians are led astray by words, but then has to curb himself: "I must apologize for this digression," he says, appearing to be guilty of the linguistic vice of which he had accused the Russians. Later, he says that the key to the Russian character, whether of the maintainers of the autocratic state or of the foes of that state, is the word "cynicism." He develops this idea, but once again curbs himself: "I must apologize for the digression." On a third occasion: "But this is a digression indeed." Not only is he sometimes guilty of the verbosity for which he had rebuked Russians (and even Razumov, criticised by Russians for his "English" reserve, says "Russians are prone to talk too much"), he also exhibits the cynicism which is his own hallmark. It is expressed in sweeping pejorative generalisations. This language-teacher is a traitor to his own vocation when he cynically remarks: "Words, as is well known, are the great foes of reality;" "man appears a mere talking animal not much more wonderful than a parrot." It is after declaring "I have no comprehension of the Russian character" that he proceeds to state confidently his comprehension that it is grounded in cynicism.[7]

Such inconsistencies seem to be designed by the implied author, both to augment the novel's ironic patterning and to criticise the habit of imposing simple stereotypes on a complex actuality. Other inconsistencies, however, call in question the methods of the implied author and the integrity of the work. "I have no art," declares the teacher, explaining that he depends on reports and on Razumov's diary. He insists that "this is not a work of imagination; I have no talent." If he were truth-

[7] Razumov himself curiously claims that Russians are "children," "sincere; that is – cynical." Is the English teacher sincere, cynical or confused when he says that Razumov's features lack all sharpness (5) but are exceptionally clean-cut (179)?

ful there and consistently in charge of the narrative, it would be flatly unimaginative. To the extent that it gathers a richly imaginative quality, either the narrator is guilty of false modesty or the implied author has abandoned consistency in the interests of vividness. The latter seems more likely. When Razumov's journal is the supposed source, it cannot have been sufficiently elaborate to include all the sensitive detail that we are given; and sometimes the account offers details of which Razumov could not have been aware (e.g. pedestrians dodging him as he stares, preoccupied, at the ground while walking). Furthermore, to provide us with information about important matters, the language-teacher is given implausibly easy access to the conspiratorially secret and the emotionally intimate. It is highly implausible that the conspirators would let an outsider such as the teacher (a foe of their aims) see the very "map of the Baltic provinces" which reveals the location of their plotted insurrection. Later, when Razumov, although witnessed by the teacher, makes his confession of guilt to Natalia, his eventual astonished question, "How did this old man come here?," alerts us to the improbability that Razumov could have failed to see this attentive observer who is conspicuous in the "glaring light" of the ante-room. Unlike Aristophanes' *The Frogs*, Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* or Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* is not a postmodernist text, but theoristic critics (defying the Razumov who says "I am not a young man in a novel") may conjure from it a postmodernist spirit of self-consciousness.

When the teacher's presence is only spectral, transparent, we often see through him to fictional events without maintaining the "quotation marks" (the sense of his reportage) or the sceptical caution which awareness of him would cause us to preserve. Sometimes, when he materialises, intervening explicitly, he disrupts the sense of the narrative's immediacy by reminding us of his theoretically ever-present mediacy. At those moments we are forced into kinship with the Razumov who is dismayed by the tendency of Haldin to materialise unexpectedly and disconcertingly in his path. *One form of haunting imaginatively validates another.* (In this respect, Conrad's artful narratology has been neglected.) We, too, encounter a character who can challenge and modify our imaginative endeavours by his capacity to appear and then fade into invisibility, to be solidly present and then be forgotten. Like Haldin, the teacher presumes the acceptability of his opinions. This narrator is variously self-effacing, intrusive, unseen, seen, transparent, solid, proficient, clumsy, lubricant and impedimental; he is omnipresent fact and questionable contrivance; and, for good measure, while one critic has argued that he is Satan, another suggests that he is Divine Providence.

Razumov, about to confess, says that he has difficulty in resisting "the superstition of an active Providence... The alternative, of course, would be the personal Devil..." (350). Frank Kermode's essay on *Under Western Eyes*, "Secrets and Narrative Sequence," long ago drew attention to the profuse imagery of the supernatu-

ral, and argued that the ostensible narrator, the language-teacher, is really Satan. Razumov speculates that the teacher may be "the devil himself." Kermode (153) claims that "the secrets of the book are phantoms, inexplicably appearing, ignored, trampled down, turned into lies by the father of lies, a diabolical narrator." In contrast, Keith Carabine declares that "Kermode entirely misreads the novel": the language-teacher is a benign agent of Providence, whereas Satan is incarnate in Councillor Mikulin. As Carabine (244) puts it: "[T]he old teacher (inadvertently) functions as a secret agent in Conrad's novel, working to release the protagonist from the false identity imposed on him by Mikulin, 'the Enemy of Mankind,' who is the truly satanic tempter in this text."

Kermode seems to have taken too literally, and extended too allegorically, Razumov's understandably-hostile rhetorical outbursts. To Razumov, the teacher seems devilish because he facilitates a closer relationship (which could have dire consequences) between Razumov and Natalia. Nevertheless, that teacher is an all-too-human mixture of qualities, compounded by his conflicting functions during the author's endeavours to control a difficult narrative. If he were truly Satan (or even merely satanic), he would have greater insight into events and motives. He would not be fooled by events. Not until the teacher overhears Razumov's confession does he realise that he has been misled, like others, by Razumov's performance as a double agent. In this, the teacher has the fallibility of a mortal and not the knowledge permitted to a devil.

To postulate, on the other hand, that the teacher embodies or promotes a benign Providence runs the risk of Christianising a character who is a sceptic and, again, of according him a better insight into events (and greater power over them) than the teacher possesses. Indeed, the political plot has anti-religious aspects: we are shown that religion sustains not only the oppressive Tsarist autocracy but also the violently destructive revolutionaries. An agent of Providence customarily works diligently and benevolently (often behind the scenes, in an unrecognised way) to bring about a constructive end which is harmonious with Christian values. Ransome of *The Shadow-Line* could be construed as such a figure. Similarly, an agent of Providence seems to have an instinctive or intuitive knowledge of what the given situation needs. So, once again, it is the teacher's ignorance of the true state of affairs, combined with his very limited capacity for influencing the course of events, which seems to disqualify him for the rôle of Providence. One can concede that he, by furthering Razumov's relationship with Natalia, aids Razumov's progress to confession; but the outcome of that confession is very mixed and includes some long-term suffering. In any case, Razumov reflects that both Laspara and himself could be deemed chosen agents "of Providence."

Kermode and Carabine have admirably recognised that secular interpretations of *Under Western Eyes* tend to neglect its eldritch or uncanny features and its intermittently strong rhetoric of the metaphysical and theological. These critics have

then overstated, by rendering too specifically allegorical, certain Gothic-cum-theological elements which indeed are explicitly evoked and which contribute distinctively to the atmosphere of this fictional world in which metaphysical ironies abound. Arguably, modes of mystification aid the novel's strategy of subordinating politics to ethics.

V

In the brilliant film by Graham Greene and Carol Reed, *The Third Man* (1950), Orson Welles played a charismatic criminal, Harry Lime. (The name was a self-referential jest by the author, whose first Christian name was Henry: Lime is, so to speak, a Shade of Greene.) Supposedly dead and buried, Lime repeatedly reappears to the friend who will betray him. Welles, a great admirer of Conrad's works, contributed to the film a memorable passage of self-justifying dialogue by Lime:

> "In Italy for thirty years under the Borgias, they had murder, warfare, terror, bloodshed; but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love, five hundred years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo-clock." (Watts 1997, 189)

An old Romantic and Gothic paradox is being evoked there: the paradox of the virtue of intensity. More precisely: the Romantic and Gothic traditions incorporate the thesis that ontological intensity, even if combined with corruption or evil, is superior to decent moderation. (Bertrand Russell feared that D.H. Lawrence's enthusiasm for "blood-consciousness" could lead "to Auschwitz"; [Russell 22]. A peculiar feature of *Under Western Eyes* is the consistently pejorative presentation of Geneva, of Switzerland, the Swiss people, and democracy. Whether the observer is the language-teacher or the reported Razumov or, at times, the implied author, the Genevan setting is insistently associated with the humdrum, trivial and vulgar, with "mediocrity," the "odious" and "dreary," with "dull people" and "deplorable banality," "hypocritical respectability and... inexpressible dreariness." It is "the respectable and passionless abode of democratic liberty, the serious-minded town of dreary hotels, tendering the same indifferent hospitality..." (Dostoyevsky deemed Geneva "gloomy and boring," "a horror," and "Gehenna"; Magarshack 278, 387) Russia can then seem, by contrast, a region of intensities where people, however misguided or oppressed, can live more fully. "You have either to rot or to burn," says Sophia, advocating ardour. Natalia, Peter Ivanovitch and Razumov resemble the older Dostoyevsky in that they detest liberalism and democracy; they desire a strong leader. Thus, the partly-theological Romantic-Gothic imagery associated with Russia and the Russians helps to confer intensity (if tragic) on them, an intensity systematically withheld from the land associated with democracy.

The reader's sense of fair play, aided by other features of the novel, may impute a degree of snobbish hypocrisy to these exiles (English and Russian) who scorn democratic Switzerland while gladly accepting its hospitality and liberty. The evolution of democracy, in Switzerland as elsewhere, inevitably entailed its battles, tragedies and sufferings. (In 1315, Swiss peasants fought heroically for their freedom.) At its best, *Under Western Eyes* criticises the habit of stereotyping, the habit of making sweeping generalisations about complex actualities; so it may thereby render conspicuous and questionable those cynically-reductive descriptions of the Swiss location. When Razumov is injured, the local people (hitherto allegedly "dull" and "idle") express natural "alarm, horror, and compassion," and convey him efficiently to hospital. Thus Razumov himself, the inconsistent language-teacher, and even the inconsistent implied author, may implicitly be rebuked for their previous readiness to suggest that Switzerland and its population are mediocrity breeding the mediocre.

If *Under Western Eyes* can be located in a Romantic-Gothic tradition, it can also be related to a tradition of political satire. We expect works in this tradition to be not scrupulously fair but intelligently polemical. In his "Author's Note," Conrad said: "The obligation of absolute fairness was imposed on me historically and hereditarily... in addition to my primary conviction that truth alone is the justification of any fiction which makes the least claim to the quality of art." Perhaps, we may reflect, "absolute fairness" is a goal which is admirable to seek but impossible to achieve; while truth may be served obliquely and dialectically by works which not only inform but also provoke. Grim irony haunts this novel, and various characterisations are strongly inflected by the spirit of satire. Madame de S–, Peter Ivanovitch and the odious Nikita are the obvious instances, but the broadly negative treatment of politics evokes a sense of "the vanity of human wishes." One may, therefore, regard the often pejorative treatment of Switzerland as evidence that a Romantic tradition and some satiric animus have partly subverted an avowed authorial desire for "absolute fairness." Just possibly, such a treatment may obliquely serve the cause of fairness by raising questions about the value of achieved peace, security and prosperity, as against the value of passionate commitment to struggle. Perhaps, though, the Swiss have the last laugh: the conspiracy in the novel dissolves like a chocolate teapot; and, historically, the Russian Revolution engendered new tyranny (fulfilling Conrad's predictions), while Switzerland remained free. Haunted by the past, *Under Western Eyes* haunts posterity.

WORKS CITED

Baines, Jocelyn. *Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*. Ed. and transl. Caryl Emerson. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984.

Carabine, Keith. *The Life and the Art: A Study of Conrad's "Under Western Eyes."* Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1996.

The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad. Vol. 3. Ed. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988. *CL3.*

——. Vol. 4, Ed. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. *CL4.*

——. Vol. 6. Ed. Laurence Davies, Frederick R. Karl and Owen Knowles. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. *CL6.*

Conrad, Joseph. *Under Western Eyes.* London: Dent, 1947. My quotations from this novel derive from this edition.

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *Crime and Punishment.* Transl. David Magarshack. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951; rpt. 1966. My quotations from this novel derive from this edition.

Hawthorn, Jeremy. *Joseph Conrad: Language and Fictional Self-Consciousness.* London: Arnold, 1979.

Higdon, David Leon, and Robert F. Sheard. "Conrad's 'Unkindest Cut': The Canceled Scenes in *Under Western Eyes.*" *Conradiana* 19:3 (Autumn 1987): 167–181.

Kermode, Frank. "Secrets and Narrative Sequence." *Essays on Fiction, 1971–1982.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.

Kirschner, Paul. *Conrad: The Psychologist as Artist.* Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1968.

——. Joseph Conrad, *Under Western Eyes.* Ed. Paul Kirschner. London: Penguin, 1996.

Kristeva, Julia. *Semeiotike.* Paris: du Seuil, 1969.

Lothe, Jakob. *Conrad's Narrative Method.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989.

Magarshack, David. *Dostoevsky.* London: Secker & Warburg, 1962.

Russell, Bertrand. *My Autobiography,* Vol. II. London: Allen and Unwin, 1968.

Watts, Cedric. *The Deceptive Text: An Introduction to Covert Plots.* Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984.

——. "Introduction" to Joseph Conrad: *Under Western Eyes.* London: David Campbell ("Everyman's Library"), 1991.

——. *A Preface to Greene.* Harlow: Longman, 1997.

WAS CLOETE A DUTCHMAN? DIFFERENT WAYS OF TELLING A STORY IN *THE PARTNER* AND *BECAUSE OF THE DOLLARS*

Mario Curreli

Università di Pisa

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Hans van Marle, the unforgettable Dutch scholar who would undoubtedly have been ready to answer the question: "What was he – a Dutchman?" The professional narrator of *The Partner*, who has asked this question, soon learns from the novice storyteller that the ambiguous Cloete came off "a ship in dock from the States – passenger" (93).[1] Whether or not he is a Dutchman,[2] this crafty Cloete must have spent some time in the States, since he uses such American expressions as "this cozy little show" (95), or "Morality is mostly funk, and I think you're the funkiest man I ever came across" (101–102). Besides, in saloon bars Cloete likes "to talk to all sorts there; just habit; American fashion" (103), and he is even insulted by the murderous villain Stafford as "You low Yankee fiend" (125). As regards Cloete's possible "original," Stephen Donovan has recently suggested that for the creation of his character Conrad might have been inspired by "the case of Lawrence Wood Cloete, whom the *Daily Graphic* reported in February 1891 as found guilty of promoting fraudulent companies (including a South American silver mine)."[3]

Joseph Conrad was well aware that the four tales collected in *Within the Tides*, in so far as they do not constitute an organic whole, cannot aspire to the unity of artistic purpose of, say, the *Youth* volume. In fact, as he wrote, these tales are "not so much art as a financial operation." Even so, these minor productions can be of some

---

[1] Hereafter all quotations come from the Medallion Edition of *The Shadow-Line* and *Within the Tides* (London, Gresham, 1925), whose pagination, the same as that of Dent's Collected Edition, was adopted by the indispensable *Concordances to Conrad's 'Typhoon and Other Stories'* and *Within the Tides*. Ed. Kirsten and Todd Bender. New York & London: Garland, 1982.

[2] This name, of clear Dutch origin, is shared by the South-African writer Stuart Cloete (1897––1976), known for his novel *The Turning Wheels* (1937), dealing with the Boer conquest of South African territories, promptly translated into Italian as *Le ruote girano*. Milano: Bompiani, 1939.

[3] Donovan 86 and 89 respectively.

value to the reader, since, as the novelist stated in several letters, their diversity of setting, subject, and treatment offers an interesting essay in craftsmanship, as a deliberate attempt at four different ways of telling a story – so much so as to elicit from an anonymous reviewer the comment that in this collection Conrad displays "an aristocratic disdain of convention."[4]

In March 1915, Conrad was quick to answer his old friend and fellow writer John Galsworthy, who, having received the gift of a signed copy of *Within the Tides*, had praised its artistic merits: "you make too much of such qualities as it may have. *The Planter* est bien manqué. I had no time to wait for better inspiration. The others – well! You see my dear Jack this vol is not so much art as a financial operation." And, to show how remunerative this minor work had been, the writer, sill bemused by the unhoped-for success of *Chance*, added: "You have no idea how much these second rate efforts have brought in. *The Planter* alone earned eight times as much as *Youth*, six times as much as *Heart of Darkness*. It makes one sick" (*CL5* 455).

In these terms, a somewhat embarrassed author talks of the main story of his new volume, a story that is pleasant enough but, artistically speaking, light years away from the last two masterpieces Conrad quoted in his letter; not to mention the fact that *The Planter of Malata* is told with a rather conventional technique by an anonymous, omniscient narrator. Besides, when he came to make a single volume of the new tales in *Within the Tides*, the last collection published in his lifetime, Conrad was rather worried he might seem too prolific, since one novel (*Victory*) was about to be published, and another (*The Shadow-Line*) was in the pipe-line. Nevertheless, as Zdzisław Najder has pointed out in his outstanding critical biography of Conrad, the new volume of tales was also well received by the press, since our Anglo-Polish author was by now judged by the critics more on the basis of the reputation he had built up for himself, than by the close reading of his latest works (Najder 407).

Indeed, in a volume such as *Within the Tides*, it would be useless to look for that "unity of artistic purpose" which – according to what the ageing author wrote in 1917 in his "Note" to the *Youth* volume, and repeated in a 1924 letter to Doubleday, his main American publisher – was the trade-mark of each of his collections of short stories.[5] Nor can it be said, as Conrad did about the *Youth* volume, that the tales collected in it had their roots in the same sort of "moral idea." In no way do these four stories, previously printed in magazines between 1911 and 1914, and published by Dent in London on February 24th 1915, form an organic whole of themes and style, even though, in his preface to the *Shorter Tales*, Conrad claimed

[4] See "Books: Fiction" in the London *Spectator*, CXIV (6 March 1915), 338–339.

[5] *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters*, 2 vols. Ed. G. Jean-Aubry. London: Heinemann, 1927. Vol. II, 338.

to have "welded the diversities of subject and treatment into a consistency characteristic, in its nature, of a certain period of my literary production."[6]

In spite of these late claims, the narrative techniques and the subject matters seem to differ widely from one tale to another, not to speak of the inconsistency of settings: from contemporary domestic ones we go on to islands in distant oceans, to move back, both in space and time, to the Napoleonic wars in Spain. The only common denominator of the stories in *Within the Tides* might be said to be the display on the part of the author, with twenty years' experience behind him, of considerable workmanlike skill, able to turn out pleasantly romantic tales, ironic sketches in Gothic-like style, or harbour reminiscences set against a vaguely moralising background.

Moreover, this is precisely what, in January 1915, Conrad himself stated to the writer Iris Wedgwood, to whom, along with her husband Ralph, *Within the Tides* had been dedicated: "I don't know that these four stories will have any particular significance in the public eye, but I cherish a particular feeling for that volume as a deliberate attempt on *four different methods of telling a story*, – an essay in craftsmanship, which of course the public won't notice, but which to you, as a fellow-worker, may offer some interest" (*CL5* 439, emphasis added). The same awareness is also expressed in June of the same year when writing to the Scottish critic William Archer:

> The idea of that little vol. was, in fact, the *four different manners of telling a story*. The public naturally can not be interested in that kind of thing. But I am very much a craftsman and I was interested and amused while doing it: in this connection, I may tell you, I was especially pleased by Your remark that the Planter could make a play; for this, in my mind, was intended for the *specimen of the dramatic form of telling a story*.[7]

In 1920, too, in the "Author's Note" to *Within the Tides*, with reference to a reviewer's remark that in this volume "the whole was greater than its parts," Conrad stated: "those stories which by implication seem to hold so well together as to be surveyed en bloc and judged as the product of a single mood, were written at different times, under various influences, and with the deliberate intention of trying *several ways of telling a tale*."[8]

One explanation for this fully conscious attempt to vary themes and narrative techniques is that Conrad, continually beset by chronic money problems, had taken

---

[6] These words, which first appeared in the "Preface" to *The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1924, vii), were later collected in the *Last Essays* volume, introduced and edited by Richard Curle (London: Dent, 1926), 208.

[7] *CL5* 483 (emphasis added). In 1898 Stephen Crane had invited Conrad to collaborate on a theatrical work, concerning a ship wrecked on an island, that should have been called *The Predecessor*. Although the project came to nothing, since the action would have been too melodramatic, many years after Crane's death this idea was used in *The Planter of Malata*, in which the story was told in a highly (melo)dramatic form.

[8] "Author's Note," ix (emphasis added).

the step of entering into favourable "commercial" and personal relationships with publishers such as Lord Clifford (a discreet portrait of whom he had already sketched in *The Inheritors*), or with collectors like John Quinn (the well-known New York lawyer, patron of the arts), or, in another context, with friends and colleagues (Ford and Galsworthy, for instance). With these he made the rights of the Great Writer felt (threatening Methuen with the withdrawal of *Chance* from his catalogue), or stated he was ready to revise "serious" works that publishers, interested exclusively in sea stories and pure sensationalism, had been hesitating to accept.

Writing in March 1912 to one such person, Austin Harrison, the editor of the *English Review*, Conrad had already mentioned the "craftsmanship" he was later to talk about in his letters quoted above to Wedgwood and Archer, and finished by stating something nobody would wish to contradict: "I know my business – I mean to say my craft, mon métier – as apart from any quality I may have as a writer of prose – artist if you like. And I am not a superior person. I don't disdain even the lowest side of craftmanship" (*sic*, *CL5* 44).

The haphazard mixture of themes contained in the 1915 volume is, moreover, the outcome of a number of factors: for example, *The Partner* had originally been meant for a different collection of stories, *'Twixt Land and Sea Tales*, but, "fortunately" as Najder reminded us, it was eliminated from that company (Najder 380). And the title of the new volume would seem to be incongruous, astutely promising something the book only partly provides: sea tales. But, there again, the same had already happened in the case of a political novel, *Nostromo*, more about the land than about the sea, contrary to what its subtitle, *A Tale of the Seaboard*, might be deemed to imply.

Indeed, to more than one reader, the title *Within the Tides* appeared to be not only incongruous but downright enigmatic. In his comment in the prestigious edition of Conrad's complete works in the Pléiade Collection, Philippe Jaudel puts forward this conjecture as to the origins of the title: in *Because of the Dollars* Captain Davidson moors near Bamtz's sheltered creek, quite rightly taking advantage of high tide, and is unable to leave again with the next high tide. While this detail cannot fail to remind us of a similar situation on board the *Nellie* in the narrative frame of *Heart of Darkness* Conrad himself had provided support for Jaudel's hypothesis when, committing a significantly revelatory mistake in a letter to a very dear friend of Cunnninghame Graham's, he called the volume *Between the Tides*,[9] whereas, in another letter to Jean Aubry, alias his self-styled "official" and "definitive" biographer, he stated Gide liked *En marge des marées* as a title.[10]

[9] To Elizabeth "Toppie" Dummett, 31 December 1917 (*CL6* 162).

[10] J. Conrad, *Œuvres*, Ed. Sylvère Monod, 4 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1989, Vol. IV, 1223, n. 1. In Italy the title was translated by Alda Politzer as "In margine alle maree" (*Tifone e altri racconti*, Milano: Mondadori, 1949), whereas both in the Bompiani (1963) and Mursia collected editions (1967) we

A similar interpretative key of the title *Within the Tides* may be used observing that, in *The Partner*, the ambiguous Cloete, American swindler or Dutch profiteer, is confined on a ship in danger, the *Sagamore*, by now no more than a wreck, waiting for the next high tide (*Tide rising* 113). And in the last tale, *Because of the Dollars*, Captain Davidson, too, "as he had to wait a couple of hours for the tide, he went ashore himself to stretch his legs" (180), and then, again, "the tide turned" (191) and "the tide was out" (200).

In both stories, too, as had happened in the framework of *Heart of Darkness*, the lapse of time between one tide and the next contains crucial events, ranging from the deaths of Laughing Anne, of the maimed Frenchman, of good and honest Captain Harry Dunbar, to the scuttling of a ship in order to cheat the insurance company, as well as episodes of great cowardice (by Stafford) and as many remarkable examples again of dedication and courage (by Anne and Captain Dunbar). Trials and ordeals, in any case, that Conrad's heroes and antiheroes must necessarily face up to in darkness: from the night of the shipwreck for Cloete and Captain Dunbar, to the night of the man-hunt in the forest for Davidson, who lets the *Sissie*, loaded with cases of silver dollars, "drift up stern first with the tide, silent and invisible in the impenetrable darkness and in the dumb stillness" (190), to say nothing of the nightmarish night in the den of the two witches, where again silver is the root of all evil.

Those prove to be moments of greatest tension, when one finds oneself alone, face to face with one's own responsibilities, in a universe dominated by the rule of chance. A universe so random and purely spectacular that, when all is said and done, the shipwreck of the *Sagamore*, with scepticism that appears to extend from the narrator to the author, may be indirectly attributed to Divine Providence, or with ironic indifference, to the Devil: "Saved! God's providence ... First God's mercy—then devil's work. Turn and turn about...." (127). The title would seem, then, to allude to those events, sensations, and resolutions that are needed or are taken, or, in spite of oneself, are experienced once the *routine* of the voyage or journey is interrupted and, in an atmosphere of unreal calm, one is placed face to face with the Other, with Evil, or with the most secret of inner emotions.

As for the order of composition of these stories, it was the second story in *Within the Tides* that was written first. *The Partner* was begun in October, 1910, and finished the following March. It was then published in Harper's the next November, and praised by an early reviewer as "the best tale of the book" but dismissed by Lawrence Graver, according to whom it is "melodramatically similar to 'The Brute'" and adds "nothing new to our knowledge of Conrad's achievement as a short story writer."[11] While, with a few exceptions, critics have paid very slight

find *Entro le maree*, the title I too adopted for my own Mursia edition of these tales in a separate volume (1990).

[11] Lynd 642, and Graver 158–159.

attention to this story so far,[12] it is valuable as a metanarrative and self-reflecting ironic comment on how a writer "cooks up" stories for printing in magazines. The episode of the sabotaging of the anchor cable, which results in the wilful sinking of the *Sagamore* and the death of Harry Dunbar – a typical, albeit as yet but rough copy Conradian seaman, strongly loyal and dedicated to duty – is in fact told by a colourful "master stevedore" (128) who has the look about him of "an old adventurer" (89) and a "contemptuous beggar" (91). Described as "essentially a taciturn man" (90), this "imposing old ruffian" (90 and 128), another loquacious sort of Ancient Mariner (just like Fussy Joe Mitchell in *Nostromo*), insists on his knowing more than anyone else, and manages to buttonhole a writer (his privileged listener) in the smoking parlour of a "small respectable hotel" in Westport, a Channel coastal town. As Ugo Mursia in pre-Genette times observed:

> The writer imagines the tale as having been given to him by another person, the storyteller, who narrates in the present tense facts to which he was not witness but which he in turn got from various sources. In addition, this storyteller has a characteristic manner of narrating in very short, fragmentary and jumpy sentences. What results is a prose which is highly intricate in texture, to the point of being not easy to disentangle in places, but that produces a singular effect all its own.[13]

This storyteller, who has the same occupation as Nostromo, is related in a fairly distant way to the more sophisticated Charlie Marlow, hieratic Oriental idol and narrator of the true masterpiece *Heart of Darkness*, who sits in the lotus position like a statue of Buddha. The look of this parallel figure when immobile is in fact "really fakir-like and impressive" (90), or at another point is described as "this statuesque ruffian enhaloed in the black rim of his hat, letting all this out as an old dog growls sometimes, with his head up and staring-away eyes" (91), thus appearing as a lesser version of his more celebrated forebear and, possibly, also of Coleridge's aggressively exalted ancient mariner. But by no means does he possess Marlow's capacity for philosophising and introspection, limiting himself on the whole to commenting on the story through exclamations and scattered bits of bad language – "be hanged" (90), "Rot" and "Damn silly yarn" (91). Dunbar, on the other hand, seems to have a bag-ful of advice to offer the patient and rather sceptical writer, his professional interlocutor, to whom he would actually like to teach how a story should be told: "There's no sea life in this connection ... he guessed

---

[12] Apart from my own introduction to *Entro le maree* (Milano: Mursia, 1990), v–xvi, expanded and updated as "*Within the Tides*, ovvero 'Quattro diverse maniere di raccontare una storia'" in *Anglistica Pisana*, 2:1–2 (May 2005), 77–99, one should now see two recent revaluations by, respectively, Donovan (72–95), and Hampson 123–146. Among other valuable observations, Robert Hampson, who considers *The Partner* as "probably the most neglected of Conrad's stories," offers three interesting interpretations of its title, seeing a "partnership between two businessmen," another "between the writer and the stevedore", and a third one in the "unequal partnership between writer and reader" (124–126).

[13] Mursia xxxix–xl (my translation).

story writers were out after money like the rest of the world which had to live by its wits" (92). Writing for money would doubtless be the obvious label to attach to an operation like that of *Within the Tides*, undertaken for reasons of need, while at the same time being made a target for the author's irony.

Beyond this, metanarrative indications can be drawn from comparisons between the method the novice storyteller employs in claiming that what he is recounting is the "true story" of the shipwreck, and the professional narrator's assessment of that method:

> When he began to speak again, I discerned his intention to point out to me, in his obscure and graphic manner, the influence on George Dunbar of long association with Cloete's easy moral standards, unscrupulously persuasive gift of humour (funny fellow), and adventurously reckless disposition. He desired me anxiously to elaborate this view, and I assured him it was quite within my powers (96–97).

This method has its own rudimentary effectiveness, trapping the reader's interest as though with lures cast more or less haphazardly. So an intradiegetic narrator, now sure of holding his listener's attention, can allow himself the luxury of being ironic about the fact that there is no scene of seagoing life in the story, and can invite anyone who wishes to make one up (109). What one evidently has here is the playfulness of a great writer being tongue-in-cheek about how to slap together a work to grip a readership, merely dictating it to a patient Miss Hallowes.[14]

The final paragraphs are of exquisitely metanarrative and self-referring import: "I did not thank him very effusively for his material. And then it was not worth many thanks in any case. ... This story to be acceptable should have been transposed to somewhere in the South Seas. But it would have been too much trouble to cook it for the consumption of magazine readers. So here it is raw, so to speak – just as it was told to me – but unfortunately robbed of the striking effect of the narrator" (128). The ironic tone here, and the tone of what is practically a self-justification at the level of discourse, surfaces at different places in reference to the story told. For example, considering the frequent references to the contemptibility and unscrupulousness of individuals like Cloete, whose business is the sale of patent medicines, it is almost as if, from the sailor storyteller's viewpoint, one were dealing with an obvious class of criminal.

Even if the story re-presents the familiar theme of an asocial individual who undermines group solidarity and puts the ship at risk (something that takes place aboard the *Narcissus*), it must be admitted that in this case the extraordinary tension of a tragedy at sea is not recreated. Here, doubtlessly due to the rather conventional game played between the two narrators, what prevails over the tragic element is the

[14] On this faithful secretary see Simmons and Stape (205–244). New light on Conrad's efficient typist was shed by David Miller in his "Amanuensis: A Biographical Sketch of Lilian M. Hallowes," a paper presented at the Amsterdam Conrad Conference on 9 July 2005, and published in *The Conradian*, XXXI:1 (Spring 2006): 86–103.

ironic element tending toward absurdity, despite the fact that the wife of the irreproachable Captain Dunbar helplessly witnesses (as spectator to a shipwreck) the sinking of her husband's ship ("our home" 113), as though these two – man and ship – were one and the same (just like Falk and his towboat in the eponymous tale), and even though the disaster stuns her nearly to the point of madness (as happens to the tragic and Wagnerian ship-child in *Freya of the Seven Isles*).

Irony prevails both in the manner of representing the wheeler-dealer Cloete's schemes for making millions and in the time-serving morals of the captain's brother, the vile opportunist George Dunbar. This time-serving too is inspired by pure circumstances – chance – the one and only, true sovereign presiding over the logic of *The Partner's* narration, as it does in the case of *Because of the Dollars* in which the narrator, Captain Hollis, recounting the "preliminaries of it", stresses how it is "accident – mere accident" that plays a part in this story (174), and again "accident, mere accident, put in its work" (185).

Mere chance also presides over *The Inn of the Two Witches*, the third, and least original, story of *Within the Tides*, about which I have written elsewhere,[15] and which springs from the same interest for the Napoleonic period that inspired its author to write *The Duel* and *The Rover*, *The Warrior's Soul* and *Suspense*, the posthumously published, but, as recently shown by Gene Moore, not unfinished Mediterranean novel.[16]

Written at the end of 1913, *Because of the Dollars*, the last story in the *Within the Tides* quartet, was also published for the first time in 1914 in New York in the *Metropolitan Magazine*. It was originally to have been entitled *Laughing Anne*, foreshadowing the play of the same name based on the story and printed in 1923 by the Morland Press.[17] In addition to the usual verbal echoes and thematic nuclei evident in Conrad's major narrative works, this story introduces a character, Captain Davidson, "a really *good* man" (169), whom Conrad would return to presently and develop into Heyst's genial if only companion in *Victory*.[18] A novel, this, where we also find developed in Axel Heyst the typical qualities of moral aloofness and material isolation that proved fatal to Martin Decoud and Geoffrey Renouard, both destroyed by their infelicitous passions for high-principled women.

---

[15] See my "Collins, Reade e Conrad: Un'altra fonte per *The Inn of the Two Witches*" in *STIL: Miscellanea Filolologico Letteraria*, I, (1980): 151–164, and "Una nuova fonte per" *The Inn of the Two Witches. Studi di Filologia e Letteratura*, 4 (1980): 79–88.

[16] Moore 237–243.

[17] Later on there was also a film adaptation, *Laughing Anne* (Republic Pictures, 1954) with Wendell Corey and Margaret Lockwood, presented on placards as "Joseph Conrad's greatest sea story!" and described thus to allure cinemagoers: "More dangerous than raging monsoon seas, than greed-mad pirates with a lust for gold, were the kisses of the stowaway woman!" See *The Raymond M. Sutton Jr Collection: Part Two*, offered in *Catalogue Ten* by D.J. Holmes Autographs, Philadelphia, n.d. [1985], 29, and Moore (233–234).

[18] Other parallels with *Victory* were pointed out by Graver (173).

Starting from its title, *Because of the Dollars* bears another similarity to *Victory*, since the working title of Conrad's last great work was *Dollars*, as well as *Berg*. It also anticipates the theme of Captain Davidson's visit to an isolated couple: in this case the slippery Bamtz and Laughing Anne, while in *Victory* it is Heyst and the sweetly determined Lena. Furthermore, both Anne and Lena have redeemed themselves from their status as "fallen women": in the greater of the two works, [Magda]Lena, by virtue of her name, is ready to sacrifice herself for her partner (Heyst rhymes with Christ). Given the relationship between Heyst and his deceased father in *Victory*, it seems quite obvious that Conrad must have drawn on some kind of "original experience" in which the memory of his mother [Eve]Lina must have had its importance. This is borne out by the way in which she sacrifices herself for and together with her husband. However, this material is developed and utilised by Conrad in an original manner, despite the fact that he must have been reminded of the title of a play by his father, which in English can be rendered as *Because of the Money*.[19]

In the short story, the "I" narrator encounters his "source" down by the sea front in the figure of his friend Hollis, a seafaring chum from his days in the East. He settles down willingly to listen to his story in a quiet restaurant; this is similar to what happens in the "small respectable hotel" in *The Partner*, or again in the "river hostelry" mentioned in the frame of *Falk*, or the "river-side inn" at the beginning of *Chance*. Hollis' story explains the melancholy that darkens Davidson's affable face: he has been abandoned by his wife, a woman who is incapable of understanding his feelings of compassion and solidarity because she is excessively caught up in the Victorian emphasis on respectability, on what is proper and decent, and the importance of keeping up appearances.

There are some secondary characters of great vitality in this story of conjugal misapprehensions: the French scoundrel who is conventionally terrifying even without his mutilation,[20] and, above all, Anne, who is generous, sincere, and smilingly tragic. A character such as Bumtz – whose name fittingly bears more than a passing resemblance to "Bum" with its connotations of idleness, dissoluteness, and scrounging – is simply functional to the mechanism of the plot. As such he cannot be compared to the memorable figure of Heyst in the novel from the same period. This story, judged by Ugo Mursia to be "rather forced in its tragic particulars, but convincing in its portrayal of character and setting",[21] appears to have been conceived of quite simply as a piece of narrative geared to please.

---

[19] See Meyer (356), and the *Catalogue of a Memorial Exhibition of the Mss., Letters, Editions and Memorabilia of Joseph Conrad in the Everett Needham Case Library*, Colgate University, 3 August – 30 November 1974 = *Philobiblon*, 10 (Summer 1974): 18.

[20] In a February 1916 letter to the Sydney *Bulletin*, Conrad denies that his "Frenchman without hands," an old Sydney tobacconist, is the "M. Pierre of your correspondents," and affirms that "the episode of the poet on the hearthrug" of *The Planter of Malata* is, instead, a fact (*CL5* 554–555).

[21] "Nota alle Opere" in Mursia: 1967: lx (my translation).

In conclusion, Conrad himself did, with excessive modesty, refer to his work in the letter to John Galsworthy quoted above as being not so much art but merely the outcome of a financial operation. This does not, however, undermine the fact that we are dealing with a conscious, if only partially successful, technical experiment at different ways of telling a story.

WORKS CITED

Bender, Kirsten and Todd Bender, ed. *Concordances to Conrad's 'Typhoon and Other Stories'* and *Within the Tides.* New York, London: Garland, 1982.

Donovan, Stephen. "Magic Letters and Mental Degradation: Advertising in '*An Anarchist*' and '*The Partner*'". *The Conradian*, 28:2 (Autumn 2003), respectively pp. 86 and 89.

Lynd, Robert. "*Within the Tides*". *Publishers' Weekly*, LXXXIX (19 February 1916), 642.

Hampson, Robert. "Storytellers and Storytelling in '*The Partner*,' '*The Informer*,' '*The Lesson of the Master*' and *The Sacred Fount*," *Conrad, James and Other Relations*. Ed. Keith Carabine and Owen Knowles with Paul Armstrong. New York: Columbia UP, 1998, 123–146.

Graver, Lawrence. *Conrad's Short Fiction.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969, 158–159.

Meyer, B.C. *Joseph Conrad: A Psychoanalytic Biography.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1967.

Miller, David. "Amanuensis: A Biographical Sketch of Lilian M. Hallowes". *The Conradian*, 31. 1 (Spring 2006): 86–103.

Moore, Gene M. "How (Un)finished is *Suspense*?" *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures: Second Series, Papers from the International Conrad Conference.* University of Pisa (September 16th–18th, 2004). Ed. Mario Curreli. Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2005, 237–243.

——. *Conrad on Film.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997, 233–234.

Mursia, Ugo, ed. J. Conrad, *Tutti i Racconti e i Romanzi Brevi.* Milan: Mursia, 1967, 1979.

Najder, Zdzisław, *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle.* New Brunswick: NJ, Rutgers UP, 1984.

Simmons, Allan H., and J.H. Stape, eds, "L.M. Hallowes: Note Book of Joseph Conrad". *The Conradian*, 25.2 (Autumn 2000): 205–244.

CONRAD'S *LORD JIM* IN POLAND

Stefan Zabierowski
The University of Silesia, Katowice

And this is how it all began. On December 22, 1902, Joseph Conrad, whose name was yet to become famous, wrote a letter to his publisher in Edinburgh, William Blackwood, asking him to distribute several copies of his newly published book, *Youth and Two Other Stories*. As he specified, he wanted the third copy to be sent "to Poland for the very young lions of an extremely modern literary review in Warsaw, the *Chimera*. Let them chew it up and snarl over the flavour of the fossil" (*CL2* 466).

However, the awaited response from the leading modernist periodical in Poland did not appear until 1904, when the first Polish translation of *Lord Jim* was published. The translator, Emilia Węsławska, found it expedient to introduce the Polish reader to the novel and preceded it with her foreword, in which she wrote:

> Our compatriot's creativity is a stream – rapid and capricious, often silted and with myriad turns, after which precipitous waterfalls come. Conrad almost never heads straight for his destination, although he always pursues it with skill. He does not care in the least whether he bores the reader or confuses him. (Węsławska 33)

In contrast, another reviewer of the *Chimera*, Maria Komornicka (pen – name Włast), was very enthusiastic about *Lord Jim*. The two aspects of the novel which she emphasized in her praise were: the universality of its ethical subject matter and its innovative artistic form, in particular its "openness." Quite unlike the translator, she argued for "the constant concern for the reader:" Conrad, she said,

> is not an improviser singing to please but himself – rather, he acts with word as a conscious strategist of impression, a Machiavelli who always has our point of view in mind – as well as the degree to which he holds our attention, [he is] a cunning and inventive host at the symposium of the intellect, relishing the apparent but, in fact, thoroughly composed disorder; a magician dazing the reader with the swift rotations of one and the same but ever changing shape of phenomena, a master of conceit. (Komornicka, 740)

Also other critics wrote about *Lord Jim*, however, the qualities which they recognized: the fact that the novel was a modern work, written in a complex and

challenging form, containing universal ethical problems – failed to generate a wider interest among the Polish reading public.

It was only after a suggestion was put forward – according to which, under the guise of symbols, *Lord Jim* manifested Conrad's personal tragedy – that this interest began to sprout in Poland. This reflection was not new for the Polish reader, as it appeared a short time after the stormy debate about the "emigration of talent," which was recorded by the Polish weekly *Kraj* published in Petersburg. The voice which started this discussion was that of a renowned and highly respected Polish writer of that time, Eliza Orzeszkowa, who accused Conrad of desertion from homeland literature:

> And when it comes to books, I must say that this gentleman, who produces English novels, which read and pay exceedingly well, almost gave me a nervous attack. ... Creative talent is the very crown of a plant, the very top of a tower, the very heart of the nation's heart. And to take this flower, this top, this heart away from one's own nation – to give it to the Anglo-Saxons, who want for nothing in the world, only because they pay more for it! But one cannot even think of it – without shame! (Orzeszkowa 23–24)

A few years later, in the same periodical, another Polish writer, Wiktor Gomulicki, made his comment about Conrad, however, in a very different tone:

> I was about to close Conrad's book with a sense of complete dejection, I was already telling myself: 'No! This writer never *detached himself* from Poland – for he never belonged to her...' – when suddenly I heard something shouting in me: – And what if all this is only a symbol?
>
> This ship doomed to sink... these travellers, weary of their dream, with nerves exhausted by religious ecstasy... these egoists whose lust for life makes them abandon the ship entrusted to their care... and especially this young man, noble to the core, but lost among the mean and the wicked, and whose heart, for the rest of his life, will be torn by the promethean vulture of remorse... this nobleman, who found wealth, love and trust in the foreign land, and yet seeks the ultimate relief in voluntary death – is all this, in all its depth, merely what it appears to be to the *English* reader?... (Gomulicki 734)

The conclusion from this comment is straightforward: *Lord Jim* is a novel with at least two different addresses. One, the reader from the Anglo-Saxon culture, is able to recognize only the universal values of the novel; the other, Polish, reader can see through the veil of symbols, and it is to him that the author confesses his personal tragedy of leaving his homeland and entering an alien literary world. The readers saturated with Polish culture and familiar with its codes are, for this reason, better equipped for a deeper reading of Conrad's novel.

It is interesting that this hypothesis not only did not wane, but, on the contrary, strengthened considerably after Poland regained independence. Already in the early 1920s, Stefan Żeromski, a writer held in very high esteem in Poland, who personally met Conrad, stated: "Because only we can understand him completely, feel what he says openly and what he hides, what he conceals and covers with symbols.

We alone, because he is also a Polish writer, although he wrote in English" (Żeromski 1925, 166)

Żeromski applied this way of reading Conrad also to *Lord Jim*, which he regarded as "[t]he most beautiful and the strangest of his works." "What we have here" – he continued –

> is the development and progress of the trial of conscience in the inner torture cell of the spirit, driving the man from one place to another; from sea to sea, from bay to bay, from straits to rocky islands amidst the ocean; always with the same distress upon his forehead, the same inner torment.
>
> An enormous work!
>
> One of our most perceptive and subtle aesthetes, Wilam Horzyca, in a conversation about Conrad's writing, drew my attention to the mystery of *Lord Jim*, by asking the following question – is this work not, perchance, a symbolic confession? Is there not, under the form of a parable of a young man, unhappy in faraway lands, struggling with his conscience – a confession of events and spiritual experiences of quite a different nature? Is it not an ingenious story of an inner process different from the one described: [the process] of forgetting, renouncing, rejecting very different duties? (Żeromski 1924, 153–154)

This mode of interpreting the undercurrent meaning of *Lord Jim*, supported by Żeromski's authority, became the dominant pattern in interwar Poland and it was repeated – albeit with various modifications – by the contemporary writers and critics.

A significant breakthrough in the Polish critical reception of this novel occurred in the mid-1930s. Several factors contributed to it, but – from our point of view – the most significant one was the publication of a new translation of the novel, made by Conrad's cousin, Aniela Zagórska. The translation appeared in 1933 and was immediately recognized as outstanding. Its influential role has been thus described by Antoni Gołubiew:

> I remember the first time when I was reading *Lord Jim*, published in 'Biblioteka Dzieł Wyborowych' ('The Library of Select Works'), otherwise very beneficial for our literary culture, and how thanks to the appalling translation ... I could not wade through this masterpiece; and then the sudden revelation when I received the new version, translated by Aniela Zagórska and considered as masterly by many critics, as regards the expression and reflection of the work's atmosphere (Gołubiew 1971, 8).

The second determinant in the abovementioned shift was the fact that around 1932 a new generation, of those born ca. 1910, entered Polish cultural life and started to shape it in the second half of the two-decade interwar period. As one of its noted representatives, Kazimierz Wyka, put it: "My generation grew up with Conrad. Later other masters came. They came, many of them are gone" (Wyka 1964, 75).

Finally, the third element was the quite unexpected rise in importance of one of the novel's interpretations – proposing that it manifested the author's hidden psy-

che, above all his guilt caused by leaving his homeland. The most comprehensive expression of this view was given by a Swiss scholar, Gustav Morf. His monograph *The Polish Heritage of Joseph Conrad*, published in London in 1930, was met with great interest in Poland, and became the subject of numerous – although not always competent – comments in cultural and academic periodicals. In addition, the most distinguished Polish authority on Conrad's works, Józef Ujejski, referred to this book – albeit not without caution – firstly in a series of famed lectures at the University of Warsaw in 1933/1934, and later in his monograph *O Konradzie Korzeniowskim* (*On Konrad Korzeniowski*, 1936), in which he stated:

> We will not follow the example of G. Morf and will not claim that the *Patna* is Poland, Jim is Konrad Korzeniowski, and the position which Jim earned in Patusan is an allegory of the fame and English esteem enjoyed by Joseph Conrad. No. All that is called for is the realization that the moral situation in which Jim found himself after the unfortunate 'jump' seemed (maybe suddenly appeared?) to Conrad – to be in many ways analogous to his own inner situation at the time when his imagination was preoccupied with this character. (Ujejski 20)

Ujejski's book – commonly considered as the greatest achievement of this historian of literature – codified one of the main Polish modes of reading Conrad which were widely accepted before the Second World War. In this monograph, Conrad was cast on the model of the Romantic and Symbolic paradigm. He was not only an outstanding artist but also almost a "national bard" – a spiritual leader of his nation. In Ujejski's study, the context for Korzeniowski's works were the writings of the great Polish Romantics: Mickiewicz, Krasiński, Norwid...

It is worth noting, however, that the same period produced an alternative style of interpreting *Lord Jim*, which in the meantime became a widely read novel in Poland. This interpretation, proposed by the critics of the 1910 generation, suggested that all of Conrad's works, and *Lord Jim* in particular, constituted a great moral vision on a universal scale. To quote Bolesław Miciński: "Conrad was a writer of the sea and of adventure. In adventure he saw the image of life brought into focus, in the sea he saw the reflected face of man – the man he wanted to see: the moral man" (Miciński 97)

The importance of Conrad's writing for the formation of the collective consciousness – and especially the ethos – of the 1910 generation, may have been voiced most fully in the works of Ludwik Fryde, who said:

> We know today – unlike some literary reformers and revolutionaries – that a vital sense of the crisis of psychologism and of overcoming this spiritual trend was the issue of values. The point is how to save values from the depths of determinism and ethical relativism.
>
> And it is Conrad's writing that provides a solution to this. By overcoming the psychological causality in favour of ethical purposefulness – [his writing] has for us, for out transitory epoch, a didactic, liberating meaning. (Fryde 313)

But it was during the Second World War that Conrad's works received absolutely exceptional attention in Poland, a kind of reception which remains unique on a world scale. In those tragic years, reading *Lord Jim* not only formed beliefs but also inspired the actions of many Polish readers in the most testing of times. In the words of Leszek Prorok: "It was not Orzeszkowa but the translated works of the memorable deserter that shaped one of the most self-sacrificing and heroic generations of youth known to Polish history" (Prorok 148)

According to the surviving testimonies, *Lord Jim* was not merely read; the novel served not only as a source in which the Polish reader sought patterns of behaviour – but, at times, in critical moments, this novel was *lived* by the readers who identified themselves with the literary character. This is confirmed by a renowned writer, Jan Józef Szczepański:

> I knew a boy whose death was a direct result of reading *Lord Jim* (I must add: the first *Lord Jim*). The motif of this bulkhead that was about to burst, yet still held, longer than the nerves and courage of the unfortunate officer of the *Patna* – became for him an obsession. This was a very sensitive and nervous character... He repeated Jim's famous sentence: 'It is all in being ready' (*Lord Jim* 66) like a magical formula, a lesson which must be learnt by heart. Precisely this dread of a moment of his own weakness led him to an act of entirely needless bravado, for which he paid with his own life. (Szczepański 1957, 3)

After many years, Szczepański depicted the story of this boy in an essay "W służbie Wielkiego Armatora" ("Serving the Great Skipper"), included in his book *Przed nieznanym trybunałem* (*Before an Unknown Tribunal*, 1980).

A similar, although not as tragic, instance of self-identification with Conrad's fictional character has been recorded by Maria Młynarska, who took part in the Warsaw Uprising. Recalling her own experience, she wrote:

> For then the day came when I was overwhelmed by the fear of breaking down. ... And this is when Jim appeared. Just when it seemed to me that I could no longer fight my own fear, Jim suddenly stood there by my side and simply asked me if I could endure what, after the escape, would inevitably befall me. He reminded me his own misery and the price he paid for his one unguarded moment. With dread I looked at his lot, which appeared before my eyes as if by magic. I got it all confused, what was his and what was mine, I was not able to pull myself away from these visions. They terrified me more than anything else I was going through at that moment. (Młynarska 263)

Naturally, this way of reading *Lord Jim* was not solely the result of the Polish readers' individual contacts with the text – to a large extent it developed from those interpretations of the novel which were formulated in Poland between the two World Wars. It is interesting that, as far as it can be inferred from the surviving records of reading, the interpretation which appealed most to the readers in then-occupied Poland was the universalistic one, stressing the ethical message about values common to all mankind. Let us refer to J.J. Szczepański one more time:

> 'The Conradian condition' – especially that of *Lord Jim* – suited us so well as a definition of our own imposing threat, because it did not seem to be a ghetto condition. It was universal. And we did not want to yield to the paralyzing sense of the Polish doom. We did not want the cloak of that other Konrad, from the Basilian cell, nor Kordian's bayonet, nor the greatcoat of The Wandering Soldier.[1] (Szczepański 1980, 10)

A very different style of reading *Lord Jim* was prevalent among the Polish emigrants during the Second World War. Their dominant style of interpretation seemed to be psychological and autobiographical, which, to a large degree, was due to the fact that these readers' own existential situation resembled that of Conrad. Many of those who emigrated after the outbreak of the war chose Conrad for their patron and moral leader. The poet Kazimierz Wierzyński expressed this in his poem *Róża wiatrów* ("Wind Rose")[2], where he described the fate of "travellers," beset by death, "impatiently roaming" the expanse of the sea "under the Conradian sky," unable to reach the shores of their "Ithaca."

The moral position of many Polish emigrants after leaving their country seemed to them to echo the experiences of Conrad's hero after his "jump" from the *Patna*. This can be illustrated with the words of the emigrant writer and critic, Wit Tarnawski:

> It began immediately after leaving Poland. Especially in the Romanian Black Sea (where mass and safe departure from the country must have had, for many, at least an intuitive aftertaste of escape), the figure of Lord Jim, the tragic deserter, impressed itself on the conscience and the imagination of the emigrants.
>
> '*Lord Jim* – the book of the refugee' was the suggestive title of one of the first lectures given in Ploieşti, at that time a vibrant emigration center. Wit Tarnawski, its author, went far beyond the sole problem of escape in his actualization of *Lord Jim*. For him, as for many of his listeners, Jim – who was so amazingly Polish in his spirit, both in his unfathomable collapses as in his unexpected victories – grew into a fascinating and acute exposition of the Polish character. Fascinating, because the issue of character comes to the fore when the existence of a nation is under threat. (Turno 267)

Thus, quite unsurprisingly, during the war and soon after it ended, Polish emigrant critics focused on this autobiographical and psychological aspect, one of the

---

[1] The three metonymic figures represent the model of Romantic patriotism and come from the works of A. Mickiewicz, J. Słowacki and S. Żeromski, respectively [Translator's note].

[2] K. Wierzyński. „Róża wiatrów." *Róża wiatrów*, New York: Rój in Exile 1942.

Z mimicznych znaków świata, z naiwnej legendy,
Jakże blisko do serca i jak często każdy
Pod niebem Conradowskim własnej szuka gwiazdy
I płynąc, chciałby z wiatrów odgadnąć – którędy.

Podróżni po bezmiarach, w łodzi byle jakiej,
Pod żaglem podniesionym albo i bez żagla
Błądzimy niecierpliwie, śmierć wciąż nas ponagla,
A wybrzeża ojczystej nie widać Itaki.

main motifs in the interpretation of *Lord Jim* dominant prior to 1939. Perhaps the fullest expression of this view can be found in Wit Tarnawski's foreword to *Lord Jim* published in Jerusalem in 1946:

> But most broadly speaking, the content of *Lord Jim* is: a dream of heroism, which started in childhood – and ended in an escape. Is this not Conrad's problem as well? Jim escaped and Conrad – left. And the rehabilitation of Patusan and showing what Jim can do, what he is capable of in favourable conditions – does it not bring to mind England and Conrad's triumph in literature? (Tarnawski 75)

This viewpoint clearly mirrors – in a stereotypical version – the main ideas of G. Morf and J. Ujejski.

The end of the Second World War and its consequences for Poland after the Yalta Conference opened up a new phase of Polish discussions about Conrad's works in general, and *Lord Jim* in particular – both in Poland and abroad. Immediately after the war, the new communist authorities, as well as the intellectuals aligned to them, persistently fought against the so-called "Conradian attitude," since, in their eyes, it reflected the moral background of anticommunist opposition and internal emigration, especially among the intelligentsia. As the Marxist critic, Stefan Żółkiewski wrote in the weekly *Odrodzenie*: "Norwid or Conrad, and their interpreters: Przesmycki, Kołaczkowski or Ujejski – belong, not only physically, but especially spiritually to an irrevocably bygone era."[3]

Jan Kott, a well-known Polish critic and theoretician of the theatre, agreed in the monthly *Twórczość*:

> The Conradian faithfulness to oneself – in reality, in a concrete social reality – equals submission to the laws of the world which one inwardly despises, [and] a rejection of the right to rebel. The Conradian faithfulness to oneself is a faithfulness of slaves, since to heed a despised master, to care only for one's own inner integrity – is to be a slave. (Kott 1945, 160)

A very unequivocal reading of Kott's intentions was voiced in a polemical article by the writer Maria Dąbrowska:

> And since Kott, by denigrating Conrad's 'faithfulness,' is, in fact, denigrating the 'faithfulness' of the heroic Polish resistance movement, which for five and a half years fought with Germans, I will take the liberty to say a few words to explain this matter. Neither the soldiers of Armia Krajowa (the Home Army), nor the Poles, who – with unparalleled bravery – risked their lives and died, and finally took the fate of their beloved capital into their hands – were fools who blindly followed some orders. Those thousands of soldiers and civilians fought for Poland – truly free and truly democratic Poland.[4]

---

[3] S. Żółkiewski. "O pozytywny program kulturalny." *Odrodzenie* 37 (1945); cf. the self-comment made after many years – S. Żółkiewski, *Cetno i licho. Szkice 1938–1980.* Warsaw, 1983, 35.

[4] M. Dąbrowska. "Conradowskie pojęcie wierności." *Warszawa* 1 (1946) 154; cf N. Davies. *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw*. London, 2004, 525–526.

However, despite Dąbrowska's argumentation as well as many strong protests of other Polish writers and critics who also defended Conrad, the above opinions of the Marxist critics were only a prelude to the administrative decisions of the totalitarian authorities. Between 1949–1954, in the Stalinist period, it was virtually impossible to publish any of Conrad's works.

It is very telling that, while this was happening in Poland, Conrad's works met with an immensely enthusiastic reception among the Polish political emigrants in the West. Various initiatives were undertaken in order to experience this shared interest in the life and work of Joseph Conrad – not only emotionally and privately but in a social and organized form. It is worth noting that it was Polish emigrant circles that, in 1948 in London, founded Klub Miłośników Conrada – the first Conrad society in the British Isles. The biggest accomplishments of this organization include the monographic edition of the *Wiadomości*, a periodical published in London, devoted entirely to Conrad as well as a collection of articles *Conrad żywy* (*Conrad Alive*).[5] Both the magazine and the book contain valuable analyses of *Lord Jim*.

It should be emphasized that at this stage in history, which was extremely difficult for Polish culture, it was the emigrant intellectuals who maintained the continuity of the Polish reflection on Conrad's achievement. Some of the critical studies by these authors gained international recognition. It is noteworthy that these postwar emigrant scholars no longer limited their analyses to views centered solely on the Polish aspects of *Lord Jim*. On the contrary, many of them – especially Maria Kuncewiczowa and Stanisław Vincenz – successfully demonstrated how Conrad portrays a universal human condition in *Lord Jim*, through his undertaking of a dialogue with the main concepts of humanity present in 20th century culture.

As for the critical literary studies on Polish soil, any significant changes in the approach to Conrad had to wait till the events of October 1956, and the political changes related to the end of Stalinism (the so-called "thaw") which preceded them. An event which immediately became recognized as symbolic of these changes was the 1956 release of a new edition of *Lord Jim*, with an afterword by Jerzy Andrzejewski, a distinguished writer who, after the war, associated himself with the totalitarian rule. For him, as for a large proportion of the contemporary intellectual elite, reading *Lord Jim* became an opportunity to review his position in the Stalinist era. Below we can see how Andrzejewski compared his own, but widely shared, moral dilemmas with those which afflicted two symbolic literary characters, Hamlet and Lord Jim:

> The tragedy of Hamlet – the tragedy of a bankrupt worldview. The tragedy of Jim – the tragedy of the subjective guilt towards a worldview. Confronted with the crime and corruption rife at the royal court, Hamlet experiences a violent shock and a breakdown of the humanist ideas with which he was infused during his studies in Wittenberg. The world of his moral ideals and estimates really was 'out of joint.' ... On the other hand, Jim's tragedy results from his

[5] Cf. *Wiadomości* 33/34 (London, 1949); M. Dąbrowska, *Szkice o Conradzie*, 154.

> conscious and voluntary faithfulness to an accepted and consistently upheld worldview. Jim's imaginings of the elemental moral laws remain unchanged in him, uncontaminated by even a shadow of a doubt. The only thing that Jim desires is to be within their radius again – as a complete individual. (Andrzejewski 158–159)

It appears likely that it was Hamlet's rather than Jim's tragedy that – after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party in 1956, when Stalinist crimes were officially recognized – became the lot of those intellectuals who had previously supported the totalitarian rule.

The celebrations of the centenary of Conrad's birthday, in late 1957 in Poland, marked the beginning of a new stage in the Polish reception of this author's literary output. The process of systematic restoration of Conrad's works in Polish culture and of familiarizing the Polish readers with ever new elucidations was initiated – and can be said to still be in progress, albeit with varying intensity. The 1970s were a particularly fruitful period for the Conradian scholarship – for several reasons. Between 1972–1974, Zdzisław Najder edited a collection of Conrad's *Dzieła* (*Works*) – at that time the most complete in the world – comprising 27 volumes, with *Lord Jim* as Volume 5. This edition benefited from the expertise of captain Józef Miłobędzki, who was consulted on the subject of marine terminology.

However, at that time, the textual form was not the only way in which the novel existed in the Polish cultural life. *Lord Jim* was adapted for radio broadcast several times. In 1972, TV Katowice aired its adaptation of the book, directed by Lidia Zamkow. Four years later, Teatr Nowy (The New Theatre) in Łódź presented a play composed of fragments of the novel, entitled *Patna*, directed by Kazimierz Dejmek. In 1977, an opera *Lord Jim* written by Romuald Twardowski and directed by Maria Fołtyn was staged in Opera Bałtycka in Gdańsk.

Furthermore, *Lord Jim* became the subject of numerous critical studies, ranging from academic dissertations to more accessible popular articles, and thus addressing a wide range of readers. In this group, there are several authors whose works merit particular attention, such as: Andrzej Braun, Róża Jabłkowska, Zdzisław Najder, Barbara Koc, Aniela Kowalska, Przemysław Mroczkowski and Wiesław Krajka – to give but a few names.[6] At the same time, also in the 1970s, many important Western studies related or entirely devoted to *Lord Jim* were translated into Polish.[7]

---

[6] Cf. A. Braun. *Conrad – dotknięcie Wschodu*. Warsaw, 1970; A. Braun. *Śladami Conrada*. Warsaw, 1972; R. Jabłkowska. *Joseph Conrad 1857-1924*. Warsaw, 1961; Z. Najder. *Nad Conradem*. Warsaw, 1965; Z. Najder. *Życie Conrada-Korzeniowskiego*. Warszawa, 1980; B. Koc. *'Lord Jim' Josepha Conrada*. Warszawa, 1969; A. Kowalska. *Conrad 1896–1900. Strategia wrażeń i refleksji w narracjach Marlowa*. Łódź, 1972; P. Mroczkowski. *Conradian Commentaries*. Kraków, 1970; S. Zabierowski. "Pięć interpretacji *Lorda Jima*." S. Zabierowski. *Conrad w perspektywie odbioru*. Gdańsk, 1979; W. Krajka. *Izolacja i etos. Studium o twórczości Josepha Conrada*. Wrocław, 1988; A. Zgorzelski. "O kompozycji *Lorda Jima* uwag parę." *O kompozycji tekstu conradowskiego*. Ed. A. Zgorzelski. Gdańsk, 1978.

[7] Cf. e.g. J. Allen. *Morskie lata Conrada*. Transl. M. Boduszyńska-Borowikowa. Gdańsk, 1971; N. Sherry. *Wschodni świat Conrada*. Transl. Sz. Milewski and J. Szarski. Gdańsk, 1972; I. Watt.

In a sense, the culmination of this increased interest in this novel in Poland was reached in 1978, when the oldest existing Polish publishing house – The Ossolińskis National Institute (Ossolineum) – issued it in a prestigious, and highly valuable, series of "Biblioteka Narodowa" ("The National Library") with an extensive monographical introduction by its editor, Z. Najder.

It could be surmised that at the end of the last century, the Polish studies of Conrad's literary achievement came full circle: the same questions about *Lord Jim* which were noticed and discussed at the beginning of the century, but were later forgotten, began to be raised again. The main outcome of this revival has been a presentation of *Lord Jim* as an inventive work of narrative art which transformed 20th century fiction. It is indisputable today that this particular novel by the English writer born in Poland has become an inseparable part of the Polish cultural landscape, and that it belongs to the canon of Polish contemporary literature – so much so that, according to an unwritten rule, familiarity with this book is a prerequisite for the title of an educated Pole.

And, essentially, with this banal remark our present article could come to an end. This, however, would leave us with a deep sense of incompleteness, since – after providing an overview of various critical opinions on *Lord Jim* – there still remains a fundamental question which has yet to be answered, namely: why, out of all Conrad's works, is it this particular novel that became so important for Polish readers?

If we were to look for a tangible indicator of this importance, we would find it in sheer numbers: between 1904 and 1999 *Lord Jim* was published in 25 Polish editions, 24 of which appeared in Poland. Moreover, after 1999, two new translations by Michał Kłobukowski and Michał Filipczuk were released – in 2001 by the publishing house Znak and in 2004 by Zielona Sowa, respectively. It is difficult to gauge the number of copies in circulation, but there is no doubt that it was not small.

Therefore, what lies behind the mechanism of this book's success? The sociologist of literature, Alberto Memmi, claimed that a book becomes very popular with a given readership when "there is a correspondence between the main themes, values and socio-emotional patterns presented in a given work and certain themes, values and patterns which are deeply rooted in the recipient society" (Memmi 102).

What were, then, these themes and problems present in Conrad's novel – which met with such an approving response of several generations of Poles encompassing more than one century? As we can gather, there have been a number of these factors. First, *Lord Jim*, in many elements of its composition on many levels of the text's organization, is strongly interlinked with what is called the "Polish Romantic-Symbolic tradition." It needs to be added, however, that due to the spatial and tem-

---

Conrad w wieku dziewiętnastym. Transl. M. Boduszyńska-Borowikowa. Gdańsk, 1984; *Conrad w oczach krytyki światowej*. Ed. Z. Najder. Warsaw, 1974.

poral distance of the world presented in the work, this tradition is present in it *implicitly* and does not make itself directly felt to the average reader. Suffice it to say that the constitution and vicissitudes of the novel's protagonist so greatly resemble the well-known type of the Polish Romantic hero exemplified by Gustaw–Konrad, Jacek Soplica, or Kordian,[8] whose indecision in front of the tsar's bedroom seems to foreshadow the hesitation debilitating Jim.[9] It has been proved beyond any doubt that the narrative technique of *Lord Jim* was extremely original at the time of its creation – but even earlier Kazmierz Wyka indicated the connections between Conrad's art of story-telling and the Polish Romantic tale.[10]

The second aspect contributing to the success of *Lord Jim* among its author's countrymen lies in the novel's axiological dimension, where Polish readers can find references to the values known and close to them. It is evident that one of the main ethical problems addressed in the novel is the issue of faithfulness and betrayal. When Conrad undertook it, this matter was by no means new to Polish literature – in fact, it was very significant, particularly during the partitions, and was widely expressed in Romantic and modernist literature: from Mickiewicz's *Konrad Wallenrod* to Żeromski's *The Rose* (*Róża*); this problem is present also in contemporary literature.[11]

But the moral value which is endowed with truly special meaning in *Lord Jim* is, of course, the idea of honour. Derived from the chivalric ethos, passed on to the Polish nobility and their heirs: a great proportion of the intelligentsia – it still belongs to the set of crucial principles dear to many Poles.

Yet, the impact of Conrad's writing cannot be reduced to its references to the cultural and literary traditions recognized and shared by the Polish readers. Rather, what it truly consists of is Conrad's ability to translate these indigenous traditions into universal values and to show them in an entirely different temporal and spatial reality.

Finally, the last and perhaps the most important reason for the great acclaim earned by *Lord Jim* in Poland needs to be mentioned. It must be emphasized that the over one hundred-year-long discussions about this novel in Poland may well serve as a lens focusing the numerous and serious problems absorbing Polish society, and especially its artistic and intellectual elites. Many Polish scholars have associated the origins of *Lord Jim* with the debate about the "emigration of talent"

---

[8] The first two literary characters derive from A. Mickiewicz's *Dziady* and *Pan Tadeusz*, the last one is the eponymous hero of J. Słowacki's *Kordian* [Translator's note].

[9] Cf. J. Łoziński [S. Wyrzykowski]. "Lord Jim i ksiądz Robak." *Wiadomości*, 33/34 (London, 1949); M. Kridl. "Komentarz do 'Lorda Jima.'" M. Kridl. *W różnych przekrojach*. Warsaw, 1939.

[10] Cf. K. Wyka. "Czas powieściowy." K. Wyka. *O potrzebie historii literatury*. Warsaw, 1969; W. Tarnawski. "O artystycznej osobowości i formie Conrada." *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny*, 1/2 (1958).

[11] Cf. A. Busza. "Conrad's Polish Literary Background and Some Illustrations of the Influence of Polish Literature on His Work." *Antemurale* X (Romae–Londinii, 1966); S. Chwin. *Literatura i zdrada. Od 'Konrada Wallenroda' do 'Małej Apokalipsy.'* Kraków, 1993.

which was going on in the late 19th century.[12] The debate concerned the issue of the Polish artists' duties towards their nation – at that time forced to live in a partitioned country – as well as the question of the artists' right to be exempt from these duties. This problem was crucial for Young Poland, the modernist period in Polish art and literature. A significant contribution to this discussion was made in 1915 by Stefan Żeromski, who gave his famous lecture entitled "Literatura a życie polskie" ("Literature and Polish life"), which, to some extent, was inspired by Conrad, whom Żeromski met in Zakopane a year earlier.

For many decades *Lord Jim* fascinated Polish critics and readers as a kind of ciphered confession of guilt suffered by its author for failing to fulfill his patriotic obligations. In the interwar period, the novel became one of the arguments in another huge debate – on the subject of the interpretation of human behaviour. The question was whether human actions could be explained and, what is more important, evaluated in solely psychological terms or, rather, only in terms of ethics. Psychological interpretation was seen as leading to relativism; on the other hand, ethical interpretation was deemed to result in moral absolutism. In this context, Conrad can be regarded as one of the first representatives of the anti-psychological tendency in the European thought, and *Lord Jim* as one of the main cases referred to in the dispute between the supporters of psychological and ethical reasoning.[13]

Construing this particular novel by Conrad in terms of the ethics of honour and human fraternity rendered it especially attractive for the members of the Polish resistance movement during the Second World War, as well as for the Polish emigrants, both actual and internal, who sought a moral rationale for their opposition to the post-Yalta order in Europe and its consequences for Poland.[14]

As it is well-known, the situation in Poland changed after 1956, but Conrad's works inexorably continued to provoke reflections about issues which were particularly important for the Polish culture of that time. These included the Polish writers' struggle for artistic freedom and for maintaining contacts between domestic and emigrant literatures. In an article marking the centenary of Conrad's birthday, Maria Dąbrowska wrote: "Conrad proved brilliantly what artistic heights the Polish genius can reach, when it breathes freedom." (Dąbrowska 1957, 159) At the same time, she showed what a great role was played by Polish critics living in exile, in the process of exploring Conrad's writing:

> I dwelled on the works by Hostowiec, Miłosz, Dąbrowski so long, because – with or against the authors' will – through Conrad's tragedy, far-reaching suggestions spin out of

[12] Cf. P. Grzegorczyk. "Z dziejów J. Conrada-Korzeniowskiego w Polsce." *Ruch Literacki* 5 (1927); J. Ujejski. *O Konradzie Korzeniowskim*, op. cit.

[13] Cf. L. Fryde. *Conrad i kryzys powieści psychologicznej*, op. cit.; Z. Najder. Introduction to J. Conrad, *Lord Jim*. Transl. A. Zagórska. Wrocław, 1978, BN II, no. 188, LXX–LXXIII.

[14] Cf. J.J. Szczepański. "Conrad mojego pokolenia," op. cit.; L. Szaruga. "Conrad 1983." *Szkoła polska, 1984*. Przedświt Publishing House.

> them, as it were, which could lead to 'long nighttime conversations of *neighbours*'[15] – the real ones, which the best people on both sides long for. (Dąbrowska 1959, 183–184)

As time went by, Conrad began to play yet another part in Polish culture. In the 1980s, in the final years of People's Republic of Poland, the author of *Lord Jim* became the patron of political opposition. When the fundamental Polish biography of Conrad, written by Z. Najder, was published for the second time, this time without the interference of censorship, the author was able to say in the preface:

> And when from 1975 onwards I was increasingly absorbed by the 'illegal' political activity – the scholarships abroad became a perfect opportunity to arrange meetings, smuggle matrices and printing ink, etc. I was convinced that Conrad would have enjoyed and been glad to see such a joining of matter. (Najder 1996, I, 7)

A significant change in the context of the reception of *Lord Jim* in Poland took place with the transformation of the political system from the turn of the 1980s through to the early 1990s. Thanks to numerous interpreters, Conrad's personality and a great deal of his literary output, and *Lord Jim* in particular, have been ingrained in the Symbolic-Romantic cultural paradigm in Poland. However, after the political changes following The Round Table Agreement signed in 1989, this cultural style has been visibly fading.

It might seem, therefore, that the novel which has established its position as a classic, and which, in fact, is imposed upon everyone by being placed on the compulsory reading list at Polish schools, would be likely to become alien to the most contemporary readers who belong to a very different society, all too often employing only utilitarian and pragmatic criteria in their everyday lives. The fact that this is not the case is confirmed by the relatively numerous recent translations and reissues of the novel, as well as by locating *Lord Jim*, alongside other Conrad's works, as number 19 in the ranking under the title "Kanon na koniec wieku" ("Canon for the End of the Century") carried out by the influential nationwide daily newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* in 1999.

However, it may be soundly assumed that the psychological, sociological and cultural factors which for over a dozen years have been contributing to the recognition of Conrad's work, and especially *Lord Jim*, in Poland, are – and most likely will continue to be – different from those operating prior to Poland's political transformation. For a few years now Poland has been successfully joining all the structures of the European Union, including, naturally, the domain of culture. It is in this area that Conrad, alongside a few other Polish writers, proves invaluable in showing the links between Poland and Europe. As Z. Najder put it:

---

[15] The phrase ("długie, nocne *sąsiadów* rozmowy") is a paraphrase of the famous line "long nighttime conversations of compatriots" ("długie nocne rodaków rozmowy") ending Mickiewicz's poem *To a Polish Mother* (*Do Matki Polki*, 1830) [Translator's note].

> In Conrad's novels and essays, in the form of references, allusions and quotations, all the major cultures (and especially literatures) of Europe can be found. Not only Polish, French and English, but also Italian, Spanish and Russian. And even German, although Conrad was clearly anti-German, or rather anti-Prussian. (Najder 2000, 179)

At the same time, it is important that Conrad's works – including *Lord Jim* – reflect those traditions in Polish culture which were allowed to resurface only after the political transformation, before which they had been suppressed for over half of a century. Conrad was a cultural heir of the Polish nobility and especially of their ethos whose central point is the idea of honour. The spectacular revival of the chivalric and noble traditions which has been noticeable during the last years creates a very auspicious atmosphere for the interest in Conrad's writing.

Conrad was born in the Polish Eastern borderland (in Berdyczów, now Berdychiv in the Ukraine). The ongoing restoration in contemporary Polish culture of the memory about this region and its heritage generates new and favourable conditions for the reception of Conrad's work. All the more so since Conrad's birthplace was exactly the space where many cultures blended together, and such coexistence and mutual understanding of different cultures is a distinguishing feature in Conrad – which he derived from home.

Conrad-Korzeniowski belongs to this class of writers who very clearly vocalize such fundamental issues as work ethos, honour and solidarity embracing all mankind – issues which give a deeper meaning to human existence. For this reason Conrad's works are particularly meaningful for those who advocate such values, as well as for those who seek them.

But for contemporary Polish readers, also the artistic form of Conrad's novels renders him a much-admired author. The fact that he provides no ready-made formulas, but – thanks to the narrative structure and complex story-telling techniques – involves the readers in the story, by giving them an active role in its formation, shows that Conrad's novels, especially *Lord Jim*, are addressed not to mere recipients but to partners who are taken seriously.

Conrad preceded *Lord Jim* with an epigraph taken from the German Romantic poet, Novalis: "It is certain any conviction gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it" Without doubt, this motto is still true for the Polish reader at the beginning of the 21st century.

Translated by Ewa Kowal

WORKS CITED

Andrzejewski, Jerzy. "Trzykrotnie nad *Lordem Jimem*". *Twórczość* 2(1956).

Braun, Andrzej. *Conrad – dotknięcie Wschodu*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Artystyczno-Graficzne, 1970.

_____. *Śladami Conrada*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1972.

Busza, Andrzej. "Conrad's Polish Literary Background and Some Illustrations of the Influence of Polish Literature on His Work". *Antemurale* X, Romae-Londini, 1946.

Chwin, Stefan. *Literatura i zdrada. Od "Konrada Wallenroda" do "Małej Apokalipsy"*. Kraków: Oficyna Literacka, 1993.

Conrad, Joseph. *Listy*. Ed. Z. Najder. Transl. H. Carroll-Najder, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1968.

_____. *Lord Jim*. Transl. A. Zagórska, Edited, with an Introduction by Z. Najder, Wrocław 1978, Biblioteka Narodowa, S. II, Nr 188.

The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad. Vol. 2: 1898–1902. Ed. Frederick Karl and Laurence Davies. Cambridge: CUP, 1986.

Conrad, Joseph. *Lord Jim*. London: Penguin Books, 1994.

Conrad Żywy. Ed. W. Tarnawski, Londyn: B. Świderski, 1957.

Dąbrowska, Maria. "Le vaisseau embrase de Lord Jim". *Pologne Litteraire* 3(1926). *Szkice o Conradzie*. Ed. E. Korzeniewska, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1974.

_____. *Conradowskie pojęcie wierności. Warszawa* 1(1946), *Szkice...*

_____. 1857–1957, *Nowa Kultura* 3(1957), *Szkice...*

_____. "Pożegnanie z Conradem". *Nowa Kultura* 21(1959), *Szkice...*

Fryde, Ludwik. "Conrad i kryzys powieści psychologicznej". *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* 30(1935) ed. Fryde Ludwik: *Wybór pism krytycznych*. Ed. A. Biernacki, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1966.

Gołubiew, Antoni. "Okruchy Conradowskie". *Tygodnik Powszechny* 50(1971).

Gomulicki, Wiktor. "Polak czy Anglik?". *Życie i Sztuka*, dodatek do *Kraju* (Petersburg) 1(1905), Conrad w oczach krytyki światowej. Ed. Z. Najder, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1974.

Górski, Konrad. "*Lord Jim* Conrada". *Verbum* 1(1934,) *Literatura a prądy umysłowe*. Warszawa: Rój 1938.

Grzegorczyk, Piotr. "Z dziejów J. Conrada-Korzeniowskiego w Polsce". *Ruch Literacki* 5(1927).

Hostowiec, Paweł [Jerzy Stempowski]. Bagaż z Kalinówki. *Conrad żywy...*, 87–91.

Jabłkowska, Róża. *Joseph Conrad 1857–1924*. Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków: Ossolineum, 1961.

"Kanon na koniec wieku". *Rzeczpospolita* 62(1999), suplement "Książki".

Koc, Barbara. *"Lord Jim" Josepha Conrada*. Warszawa: Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych, 1969.

Kott, Jan. "O laickim tragizmie". *Twórczość* 2(1945).

_____. Hamlet po XX Zjeździe. *Przegląd Kulturalny* 41(1956).

Kowalska, Aniela. *Conrad 1896–1900. Strategia wrażeń i refleksji w narracjach Marlowa*. Łódź: Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1973.

Krajka, Wiesław. *Izolacja i etos. Studium o twórczości Josepha Conrada*. Wrocław: Polska Akademia Nauk: Komitet Neofilologiczny, 1988.

Kridl, Manfred. Komentarz do "Lorda Jima". *W różnych przekrojach*. Warszawa: Rój, 1939.

Łoziński, Jerzy [S. Wyrzykowski]. "Lord Jim i ksiądz Robak". *Wiadomości* (London) 33/34(1949).

Memmi, Albert. "Problemy socjologii literatury". *Współczesna teoria badań literackich za granicą*. Ed. H. Markiewicz, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1973.
Miciński, Bolesław. "O przygodzie i o morzu". *Pion* 14–15(1939), 3. *Pisma. Eseje. Artykuły. Listy*. Ed. A. Micińska, Kraków: Znak 1970.
Młynarska, Maria [Tarnawska Maria]. "*Lord Jim* w Powstaniu Warszawskim". *Conrad żywy...*, 262–266.
Morf, Gustav. *The Polish Heritage of Joseph Conrad*. London: Sampson Low 1930.
Mroczkowski, Przemysław. "*Lord Jim*. A Novel of the Chase After Contrition". *Conradian Commentaries*. Cracow 1970, „Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego", 49–136.
Najder, Zdzisław. "*Lord Jim*; Romantyczna tragedia honoru". *Sztuka i wierność. Szkice o twórczości Josepha Conrada*. Transl. H. Najder, Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego 2000.
_____. "Conrad i tradycyjne pojęcie honoru". *Sztuka i wierność...*
_____. "Joseph Conrad jako pisarz europejski". *Sztuka i wierność...*
_____. *Życie Conrada Korzeniowskiego*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo "Alfa" 1996, vol. II.
_____. Ed. *Conrad w oczach krytyki światowej*. Warszawa: PIW, 1974.
Orzeszkowa, Eliza. "Emigracja zdolności". *Kraj (Petersburg)* 16(1899). Wspomnienia i studia o Conradzie. Ed. B. Kocówna, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy 1963.
Prorok, Leszek. "Wachta z Conradem". *Szkice bałtyckie i inne*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1972.
Sherry, Norman. *Wschodni świat Conrada*. Transl. Sz. Milewski i J. Szarski, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie 1972.
Szczepański, Jan Józef. "Conrad mojego pokolenia". *Życie Literackie* 49(1957).
_____. *Przed nieznanym trybunałem*. Warszawa: Czytelnik 1980.
Tarnawski, Wit. Wprowadzenie do *Lorda Jima. Conrad. Człowiek–pisarz–Polak*. London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna 1972.
Turno, Witold [Tarnawski Wit]. "Od Rumunii do Wielkiej Brytanii". *Conrad żywy...*, 267–272.
Ujejski, Józef. *O Konradzie Korzeniowskim*. Warszawa: Dom Książki Polskiej 1936.
Watt, Ian. *Conrad w wieku dziewiętnastym*. Transl. M. Boduszyńska-Borowikowa, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie 1984.
Węsławska, Emilia. Przedmowa do *Lorda Jima*, (transl. 1904) *Wspomnienia i studia o Conradzie...*
Wierzyński, Kazimierz. *Róża wiatrów*. New York: Rój in Exile, 1942. *W imię Conrada. Joseph Conrad w poezji polskiej*. Ed. T. Skutnik, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie 1977, 56.
Włast [Maria Komornicka]. "*Lord Jim* przez Conrada (K. Korzeniowskiego)". *Chimera* IX(1905). *Conrad w oczach krytyki światowej...*, 739–740.
Wyka, Kazimierz. "Wyspa na polskiej zatoce" (1964). *Wędrując po tematach*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1971, vol. 2.
_____. Czas powieściowy. *O potrzebie historii literatury*. Warszawa 1969.
Zabierowski, Stefan. "Pięć interpretacji *Lorda Jima*". *Conrad w perspektywie odbioru*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie 1979.
_____. "Jak czytać *Lorda Jima*". Katowice: Książnica 1997.
Zgorzelski, Andrzej. "O kompozycji *Lorda Jima* uwag parę". *O kompozycji tekstu Conradowskiego*. Ed. A. Zgorzelski, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie 1978.

Żeromski, Stefan. "Joseph Conrad", *Wiadomości Literackie* 33(1924). *Pisma literackie i krytyczne*. Ed. S. Pigoń, Warszawa: Czytelnik 1963.

Żeromski, Stefan. "Joseph Conrad", *Wiadomości Literackie* 33(1924). *Pisma literackie i krytyczne*. Ed. S. Pigoń, Warszawa: Czytelnik 1963.

_____. "Autor-rodak", *Naokoło świata* 2(1925). *Pisma literackie i krytyczne...*

Żółkiewski, Stefan. "O pozytywny program kulturalny". *Odrodzenie* 37(1945). *Cetno i licho. Szkice 1938–1980*. Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza 1983.

THE COLLECTED LETTERS OF JOSEPH CONRAD. VOL. 7, 1920–1922. Edited by Laurence Davies & J.H. Stape. Cambridge University Press, 2005, LXV + 656.

This monumental edition of Joseph Conrad's letters – done once for eternity – started to appear almost a quarter of a century ago in 1983. It badly stalled on two occasions: six years elapsed between volumes four and five – and then another six between volumes five and six! More recently, work has been gathering pace: volume six came out in 2003, volume seven (the one I am concerned with here) in 2005, and the two final volumes are well under way. Initially, the complete set was to have consisted of eight volumes, but it now appears that volume eight – covering the last two years of the writer's life – is to be published in 2007, while volume nine – which will gather up all the letters missed on the way and will include a complete index – is due to follow shortly.

Volume seven contains 759 letters, the large majority of which have never been published before. Conrad's most abundant correspondence is with his faithful literary agent, J.B. Pinker, and is a veritable mine of precious biographical data about Conrad's work and family affairs; letters to Richard Curle (his young and somewhat simple-minded admirer), G. Jean-Aubry (another young enthusiast and Conrad's first biographer) and Thomas J. Wise (a collector of manuscripts – later exposed as a crook, but honest as far as Conrad was concerned) form other important groups. These four correspondents were not as intellectually demanding as Edward Garnett and R.B. Cunningham in the earlier years and this is fairly characteristic of the content of the volume: most of the letters are technical or routine in nature; a great many report the writer's despondent mood or bouts of illness. From time to time, however, Conrad shows that he can rise to new challenges, be it in a letter to Bertrand Russell about his book *The Problem of China*, (22–23 Oct. 1922), or in an interesting letter about *Lord Jim* to the French translator of the novel, Philippe Neel, written the very next day (24 Oct. 1922) – or in a magnificent eulogy of Marcel Proust (17 Dec. 1922), which differs markedly in tone from so many of his evasively complimentary letters about sundry literary mediocrities.

In the early volumes of the *Collected Letters* Conrad's correspondence in Polish clearly posed problems for the editors, so – one is tempted to ask – what about vo-

lume seven? To begin with, there is the traditional spate of spelling mistakes: Władisław instead of Władysław, p. lvi, repeated on p. 29; Kosciuśko instead of Kościuszko, p. 83; Sliwiński instead of Śliwiński, pp. 225 and 655; *Glos* instead of *Głos*, p. 357; Nadjer instead of Najder [I never thought my name would be such a stumbling-block!] p. 454; Wolnia instead of Wołynia (p. 603). That said, however, the brief biographical notes about the addressees are precise and adequate, perhaps with the exception of Alfred Józef Potocki, who appears out of nowhere and then goes to places like Balliol and St. Petersburg, seemingly without ever passing through Łańcut. The annotations concerning Polish matters are generally both precise and informative and require only a few corrections. Thus the note to the letter to Aniela Zagórska of 24 Dec. 1920 says that "Najder suggests the Polish historian Artur Sliwiński [sic] (1877–1952)"; this refers to my *Conrad's Polish Background* (1964), but in *Listy* (1968) – which the editors know and also refer to – I corrected myself: the person in question is "Jan Effenberger-Śliwiński, musician and poet" (1884–1950), who visited Conrad together with Karol Szymanowski in December 1920. The Letters of 28 July and 22 September 1920 to the Polish Legation in London were published not in *Listy* [= ed. Z. Najder, Warsaw 1968], but in *Listy do Conrada* [= ed. Róża Jabłkowska, Warsaw 1981]. Volhynia (Volyn in Ukrainian, Wołyń in Polish) still is – not "was" – part of what is today the Ukraine (p. 603).

All in all, there are 31 letters to Poles and Polish institutions (such as the Polish Legation in London). The letters to the Zagórski sisters, Aniela and Karola, stand out as the most intimate. All their originals were destroyed during the 1944 Warsaw uprising; some had been published before 1939; the texts of most of them have been preserved only in a French translation done by Aniela Zagórska for the benefit of Jean-Aubry. These translations are kept at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. This complex situation is explained a little confusingly in the *CL*: some of the letters known only from Zagórska's fairly literal translation are described as "Text MS copy Yale. In French" (p. 387); others more precisely as: "Text MS copy Yale. The copy is a French translation from the Polish" (p. 603); yet another as: "Text MS copy Yale" with no mention that it is not a straightforward copy, but a translation. It is not easy to guess that the textual status of all these letters is absolutely the same.

As far as we know, Aniela and Karola Zagórskie (which is the correct plural) were the only (and fairly distant) members of Conrad's Polish family with whom he corresponded after 1914. Another interesting group of Polish letters (albeit written alternately in Polish, French, or English) form those written to Bruno Winawer, the author of a play called *Księga Hioba* (*The Book of Job*) – the only piece of writing Conrad ever translated. To me this translation seems to be a side-effect of Conrad's long-lasting, ever increasing and ultimately futile fascination with the stage during the later years of his life; it is very amply documented in volume seven in Conrad's correspondence about the stage version of *The Secret Agent*. The friendly exchange

with Winawer is also highly instructive with respect to the accusation of anti-Semitism that is sometimes levelled against Conrad (Winawer died in 1944 after escaping from the Warsaw ghetto). Among other Polish items there is one that stands out: a passionate, ringing appeal to the Americans, dispatched on 26th April 1920, for financial assistance (in the form of a loan) to the Polish Government for "help in rebuilding that outpost of Western civilization once overwhelmed but never surrendered."

For any scholar working on Conrad's later novels – *The Rescue*, *The Rover*, *Suspense* – volume seven of the *Collected Letters* will be of invaluable assistance, while for anyone who is interested in Conrad's biography it is, of course, simply indispensable. To give but one example: Conrad's letters to Thérèse Aubry (Jean-Aubry's mother), J.M. Dent & Sons, Edward Garnett, R.D. Mackintosh, S.S. Pawling, Eric Pinker and his father J.B. Pinker, Lillian M. Robins and Karola Zagórska, written between late January and late March 1921 – half of which have never been published – taken together allow us to chart with greater precision than ever before the route and timetable of the Conrads' expedition to Corsica, debunking some overly inventive stories about Conrad's activities at the time. More sadly, other letters offer an insight into the increasingly erratic career of Borys Conrad: his inclination to dissemble, overspend and run up excessive debts – which before long would lead to disaster – begins to make itself evident at this very time.

I have grumbled a little about spelling mistakes which betray a disregard for our much-loved Polish diacritics. These are indeed the bane of all typesetters West of the Rhine. However, this carping of mine must in no way detract from the truly magnificent scholarship that has gone into volume seven and to which I owe unstinting praise. Conrad's *Collected Letters* are getting better and better, setting an example for us all. To my colleagues I say only this: stay the course!

Zdzisław Najder

IN MEMORIAM SYLVÈRE MONOD

A large late nineteenth-century flat on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, exuding old-time elegance, with modernity squeezed into various nooks and crannies. Plenty of unused space, vacated by long departed children and by Anie, who died a few years ago. Walls covered with shelves containing row upon row of English classics, French classics and various books on history and art. And all the time a faint whirring and clicking that can be traced to one of the smaller rooms: Sylvère is working at his computer. Then a different sound: that of a text being printed. Hearing my steps, Sylvère emerges, with a rapid if uneven step: small, frail, slightly bent, though alert and attentive.

This was when I last saw him, in the summer of 2005. I was enjoying his hospitality for a couple of days, just before he was due to leave for his country place in Normandy – to devote more time to gardening and the making of preserves. He seemed to be a whole lot happier there than in Paris, in that flat inhabited by departed ghosts. In late 2005 a tumour was discovered in his larynx. He underwent various forms of treatment, both in hospital and at home, but continued working. He was patient and courageous, but the illness progressed inexorably. When I last spoke to him, on 6th August this year, he was too weak to see me.

Sylvère Monod – an eminent English scholar, a leading authority on Charles Dickens and the author of many studies on Joseph Conrad – was born on 9th October 1921 and died on 8th August 2006. He came from a distinguished Huguenot family in the South of France. One of his cousins was Jacques Lucien – a biochemist and the winner of a Nobel Prize; another was the legendary Théodore – an ecologist and traveller who wrote about deserts and the defence of human rights. Sylvère taught at the University of Caën and later, until his retirement, at the Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris. He nurtured a whole generation of English scholars in France, where the present high standard of English literary studies owes much to his years of teaching. In 1970 he published his *Histoire de la littérature anglaise de Victoria à Élisabeth II* and before that a book on Dickens. But he was best known as an editor and translator (of Charlotte Brontë, Conrad, Dickens, Poe and other prose writers) – and, above all, as a meticulous editor of translations of British writers, to which he added his own prefaces and commentaries. His five-volume edition of the works of Conrad in the prestigious Pléiade series (Paris 1982–1992) remains the best annotated collected edition in any language – an impressive work

of transnational scholarship (albeit – unfortunately and quite inexplicably – incomplete: it does not include Conrad's essays and newspaper articles). To a large extent it is thanks to Sylvère Monod that France has become the world's third greatest centre of Conrad studies, coming only after the United States and Britain (in that order).

Even after retiring from the Sorbonne he carried on his scholarly work – attending conferences, giving papers, translating, editing and lecturing. To the end he preserved his high standards of thoroughness of documentation, his impressive knowledge of historical and local varieties of English, as well as his critical finesse: his two last publications on Conrad: "Heemskirk, The Dutch Lieutenant," in *The Conradian*, vol. 31 (2005), No. 2, and the review of volume 7 of Conrad's *Collected Letters* (*The Conradian*, vol. 32 (2006), No. 1 can serve as eloquent illustrations of this.

Sylvère gave lectures as a special guest at the Bibliothèque Polonaise in Paris. He also attended all three international conferences organised by the Joseph Conrad Society (of Poland). In 1997 in Gdańsk he gave a paper on "The French Conrad", dealing with the French perspective on Conrad's work (*Con-texts*, 2/3, 1999); in 1999 in Cracow he spoke about "Conrad as a French Historical Writer" (*Con-texts*, 4/5, 2003), while in 2004 his paper at Opole University was about "Conrad and European Politics" (*Conrad's Europe, Yearbook of Conrad Studies (Poland)* 1, 2005). All three papers, with their synthetic sweep and careful documentation, are significant contributions to Conrad scholarship.

We have lost a good friend.

Zdzisław Najder