

PRZEGLĄDY I RECENZJE
I. PRZEGLĄDY

Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich, XXXIX 1-2
PL ISSN 0084-4446

KATARZYNA SOKOŁOWSKA
Lublin

MINUTES OF THE 21ST INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE OF THE JOSEPH CONRAD SOCIETY
(U.K.) WITH THE HENRY JAMES SOCIETY OF
AMERICA AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT
AT CANTERBURY (July 6-9, 1995)

The Joseph Conrad Society (U.K.) in cooperation with the Henry James Society of America organized the 21st International Conference at the University of Kent at Canterbury from 6 to 9 July 1995 in memoriam of Juliet McLauchlan 1914-1994. The programme of the conference included 21 sessions devoted either to Conrad and James separately or to comparative papers on both writers.

The comparative analysis of various aspects of Conrad's and James's particular novels or short stories was presented by A. Fothergill, R. Sudbery, R. Hampson, E. Nettels, J. Paccaud, O. Knowles and A. Simmons, S. Jones, R. Hocks, M. Bell, E. Knapp Hay, P. Armstrong. Fothergill (Exeter) investigated the theme of personal relationship to time and experience of the past in Conrad's *Karain* and James's *The beast in the Jungle* and demonstrated that both stories explored the response of their heroes to reality and illusion as well as the role of the two types of experience (Erfahrung and Erlebnis) and memory (Gedächtnis and Erinnerung) in their perception of the past. Sudbery (York) took up a comparative analysis of *The Princess Casamassima* by James and *The Secret Agent* by Conrad. In his discussion he concentrated on the heroes' suicides which carry a different meaning: the Conradian heroine's suicide was an act of despair whereas the Jamesian hero's - a heroic sacrifice. Both in Conrad and James, suicide served to highlight the problem of human suffering and the writers' response to revolution and anarchism which they disapproved of. Hampson (London) drew

attention to the similarities between techniques of writing short stories employed by James in *The Lesson of the Master* and by Conrad in *The Partner*. These techniques involved presenting the germ of a story told to the writer by one of the characters and then the process of elaboration of this narrative raw material through the use of literary devices leading up to its final form. Paccaud (Ecully) pursued the interpretation of *The Shadow-Line* by Conrad and *The Turn of the Screw* by James in terms of Lacan's theory. Both of these stories contained the ghost element from gothic tales. In *The Shadow-Line* Conrad employed the supernatural element outside the genre convention of the fantastic and in *The Turn of the Screw* the ghost element served to diminish the fantastic. Armstrong (Eugene, Oregon) tackled the problem of the cultural identity of the main heroes in *Under Western Eyes* by Conrad and *The Ambassadors* by James. He emphasized the ambiguity of both Razumov's and Strether's cultural identity and their double consciousness. In *Under Western Eyes* Razumov is shown as unable to resolve the question of his identity and as wavering between East and West, which was related to the identity crisis of the Russian community. Similarly Strether experienced the incongruity which arose from the clash between these cultures and had to face the dilemma of the domination of one culture over the other.

Knapp Hay, Nettels, Jones, Bell, Knowles and Simmons detected general influences the two writers exerted on each other as far as their literary method was concerned and outlined the attitudes they adopted towards their literary output. Knapp Hay (Santa Barbara) discussed *The Princess Casamassima* by James in terms of a revolutionary novel which also influenced *Under Western Eyes*. James's major contribution to the conversion of the revolutionary novel was his presentation of the hero's doubts about revolutionary values. Conrad took over James's legacy of this ambivalent, superfluous hero and rendered James's vision of revolution even more complex. Nettels (Williamsburg, Virginia) investigated various types and functions of letters found in the fiction of James and Conrad. She argued that the two writers' method of weaving letters into the narrative testified to their modernism and enabled them to create a world full of secrecy, moral confusion and mutual distrust. Jones (Oxford) analysed *Chance* by Conrad as viewed by James and Leavis, both of whom were critical of Conrad's novel, particularly, its narrative technique, adjectival system and the presentation of female characters. She insisted on the affinity of James's literary method to that of Conrad in *Chance*. This method involved the use of the sophisticated

point of view, allowing the distinction between telling and showing and enabling to draw attention to the limitations of the viewer's perspective and the unreliability of the narrator. Knowles (Hull) and Simmons (Twickenham) conducted a workshop on Conrad's essay *Henry James*. Knowles gave a survey of the Conrad-James relationship which flourished between 1896-1904 and then began to fade and finally broke down because of tensions and the sense of rivalry generated by the publication of *Chance* and Conrad's growing popularity. James's envy of Conrad's success sparked off his attack on *Chance*. Simmons discussed the endings in Conrad and James, and Conrad's preoccupation with this subject as manifested in his essay. Simmons focused on the open-endedness of Conrad's and James's novels as a modernist feature and suggested that Conrad resorted to this strategy to make up for his weakness in devising endings. Bell (Boston) examined autobiographical fiction - *Personal Record* by Conrad and *Autobiography* by James and analysed the depiction of important facts and dilemmas in their lives. She concluded that their autobiographies, which were ambiguous and informed by complex purposes, were artistically akin to each other as far as language and structure were concerned. Hocks (Columbia) outlined his personal experiences of teaching James and Conrad at university. He adopted a comparative approach towards thematic, ideological and political problems of the novels which he discussed in pairs.

Some scholars addressed the problem of gender in James and Conrad. P. Walton (Ottawa) explored the theme of lesbianism in James's *The Other House* from a feminist critic's point of view. She asserted that the novel, created at the time of cultural anxiety over woman's sexual roles, presented the relations between heroes ambiguously and used a popular image of an odd woman in order to portray a lesbian. Thus, she discerned the lesbian sub-text in the novel which disrupted the heterosexual text. L. Person (Carbondale, Illinois) maintained that James in *The Bostonians* handled the question of masculinity in racial terms, displacing the slave owner's power to the power of the northern gentleman over a woman. Thus, Ransom, who tried to escape the southern paradigm of masculinity, found himself in the same position when struggling to consolidate his masculine power over Verena. T. Middleton (Ripon) highlighted Conrad's vision of masculinity in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. This perception of masculinity, related to the British colonial and imperial identity, allowed the reassessment of Conrad's modernism. Middleton demonstrated that the writer, using narrative techniques, revealed the constructed nature of the subject in these two

works, for Jim was constructed from the clichés of heroic masculinity, the concept of honour, and Marlow - from the values peculiar to an English gentleman. S. Joy (Worcester, Massachusetts) pointed to Marlow's limitations as a narrator in his presentation of a woman in *Lord Jim* and *Chance*. His attitude towards Jewel and Flora betrayed sexism and inability to empathize with the heroines' suffering. However, Joy showed that Conrad's narrative strategies employed in these novels compromised the inadequacy of Marlow's perception of women. S. Teahan (East Lansing, Michigan) dealt with the gendered representation of the relationship between nature traditionally associated with the female and culture associated with the male in *The American Scene* by James. She examined how James reinterpreted this traditional dichotomy by assigning positive value to nature and the female and by bringing out the complexity of the relationships between the sexes.

The problems of James's art were tackled by G. Moore, G. Smith, M. Danova, B. Haviland, M. Williams, E. Haralson, Ch. Torsney, D. Mac Whirter, R. Martin, P. Walker, J. Halperin, M. Banta, P. Hollywood, P. Horne. Moore, Halperin, Banta and Haviland provided the biographical and cultural background for James's literary activity. Moore (Amsterdam) presented James's links with the Netherlands and his impressions from visiting this country and its museums. Moore mentioned James's admiration for Dutch painters, especially the work of Vermeer. Halperin (Nashville) related James's fiction to his life and some of its turning points, and discussed his attitude towards the American Civil War which generated his crisis of identity. Banta (Los Angeles) offered a sociological account of various social institutions such as hotels, hospitals, city and country clubs which existed at this time and James's perception of these places from the point of view of both a writer and a private individual. Haviland (Poughkeepsie, New York) dealt with James's personal experience of cultural dispossession after his return to America in 1904. She pointed out that this experience triggered off James's reflections on cultural differences between America and Europe. Particular aspects of James were analysed by other scholars. Haralson (Stonybrook, New York) examined the characters of the blacks in *The American Scene* where James attempted to highlight the political implications of the presence of the blacks in American society and the relationship between slave and owner. As Haralson pointed out, James, in his presentation of the blacks' fate, remained within the social discourse of his time. Hollywood (London) placed *The Princess Casamassina* in the context of anarchism which was appealing due to

its political discourse of personal liberty. Hollywood claimed that in this novel James explored the myths of political fiction and tried to discover a new artistic language to present revolution. Horne concentrated on the James's critical evaluation of Flaubert's *L'Education Sentimentale* and his discussion of Flaubert's unsuccessful presentation of the main protagonist in this novel. Horne emphasized James's ambivalent attitude towards Flaubert and suggested some personal dilemmas which might underlie this resentment. Smith (Portland, Maine) highlighted the affinity between Manet's paintings and James's art, both of which might be handled in terms of postmodern narrative. He isolated typically Jamesian elements, eg. the presence of the centre of consciousness on some of Manet's paintings and applied psychoanalysis to detect the woman's complex of castration implied in the centre of consciousness in both James's and Manet's art. Danova (London) discussed James's views on art with reference to the theory of epiphany which claims that a work of art alerts us to supreme moral and spiritual values. She analysed James's short story *The Figure in the Carpet* where the writer made use of the epiphany of framing to reveal life's hidden meaning. Williams (Johannesburg) examined the way James perceived America after his return in 1904 and his sense of alienation, highlighting James's use of the motifs of recollection and reminiscence in his prose. She analysed the transformation of this experience into fiction, especially in *The American Scene* and *The Ivory Tower* interpreting these two novels in terms of Bakhtinian dialogism and polyphony. Torsney (Morgantown, West Virginia) investigated the figure of translation in *The American* and suggested it defined the relationship between the French and the Americans. She maintained that translation functioned as an act of colonization which metaphorically reflected Newman's failure to enter a different culture and his following attempts to dominate this culture. MacWhirter (College Station, Texas) analysed *The Awkward Age* as a comedy of manners and a record of the historical changes taking place at that time and emphasized the obsessive historicism of the novel. Martin (Montreal) interpreted *The Portrait of a Lady* in terms of feminist criticism, asserting that in this novel James emerged as a defender of the patriarchal system. Walker (Kalamazoo, Michigan) pointed out the critical assessment of the romantic view of art and the artist in *The Tragic Muse* and demonstrated the influence of romanticism and postromanticism on James.

Some scholars devoted their papers solely to Conrad, concentrating on particular works of his whereas others explored philosophical or

mythical elements in his fiction or took up a comparative analysis of Conrad and such writers as Stevenson, Dostoevsky, Melville and Coetzee. S. Arkin (San Francisco) drew a parallel between Conrad's and Freud's discoveries about human nature and the unconscious. He emphasized that both Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* and Freud challenged conventional sexual behaviour and indicted European civilisation for the inadequate understanding of love as split into the sacred which ruled out sex and the profane which involved unacceptable sexuality. This dichotomy in the perception of love was illustrated in Conrad's women in *Heart of Darkness*. A. Gibson (London) argued for the importance of ethics in the reading of *Heart of Darkness* and insisted that its moral power arose from the fusion of ethical values and representation referring to Levinas's understanding of ethics and its relation to metaphysics and ontology. In *Heart of Darkness* Gibson discerned Kurtz's totalizing discourse and Marlow's metaphysical discourse which enabled Conrad to deconstruct the discourse of imperialism. Y. Okuda (Tokyo) examined buddhist elements in *Heart of Darkness*, especially one of the variations of Buddhism which requires men to recognize emotions in order to achieve enlightenment. She traced Marlow's journey and his accompanying spiritual metamorphosis which ensued from his work ethic fostering self-restraint and which manifested itself in his increased ability to empathize with others through the recognition of his own and others' emotions. G. Fincham (Cape Town) analysed the position of the narrator in *Under Western Eyes* who is caught in a mediation between Russia and Western Europe. The narrator, although the representative of the West celebrating the value of reason, moderated his rationalism with the capacity for sympathetic identification with Russian protagonists. She also examined various narrative strategies in the novel aimed at enlisting the readers' sympathy and revealing the limitations of Western Enlightenment values. K. Carabine (Canterbury) investigated the function of the graphic device of dots in *Under Western Eyes*. This device, by generating ellipses and aposiopeses, revealed novel's obsession with secrecy, brought out Razumov's ethical dilemmas, alerted us to the author's presence in the narration and forced us to construe the narration against the narrator himself. Carabine suggested that narrative strategies in this novel gave rise to two competing models for interpreting: the critical approach to things Russian and the sympathetic approach and he asserted that black dots encouraged the reader to pursue these two models in reading the novel. W. Krajka (Lublin) analysed *Karain* from an ethnological perspec-

tive, laying emphasis on the understanding of magic ritual performed by Hollis to restore Karais's emotional balance. Krajka detected patterns of shamanic activity in Hollis's magic-making which consisted of transforming an object - a coin - into an amulet, a protection against Matará's ghost. Also Krajka pointed out that the final scene of the story cast doubts on Hollis's success and cancelled out any indication of racial superiority implicit in the relationship between Karain and the gun-runner. He demonstrated that the shamanic performance depicted in the story brought out Conrad's vision of the world as *teatrum mundi* where the distinctions between fiction and reality were blurred. Hooper (Kwa Zulu, Natal) highlighted the functions of the frame narrator and of Kennedy as narrator in *Amy Foster*. She asserted that it was the frame narrator who conveyed the otherness of Yanko and who organized the raw material of events into a story. Kennedy's articulateness stood in contrast to Amy's silence which was crucial to his narrative and which was justified because it marked her refusal to share in unreliable narration. M. Levenson interpreted *The Secret Sharer* in terms of the relationship between power and authority, with the captain as the symbol of political order. He detected the connection between the problem of authority and Conrad's emotional crisis experienced at the time of writing the story and demonstrated how Conrad related the figure of the captain and his control over sailing the ship to himself and his activity of writing. N. Victor-Corrie (London) discussed *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* as a mixture of comic and tragic elements which were embedded within the pattern of an exotic novel shaping the structure of these works by Conrad.

I. Holland and J. Putman (Davidson, North Carolina) relied on the 19th century theories in their discussion of *Lord Jim*. They distinguished between the theory of Darwin and the theories of Wallace who, in contrast to Darwin, insisted on the inadequacy of natural selection to explain mental evolution, and of Lamarck who claimed that features were transmitted through society, not biologically by genes. They applied these theories to interpret Jim's death which might appear as heroic and creative in terms of mental evolution postulated by Wallace and Lamarck, but totally futile from a Darwinian point of view. A. Roberts (Dundee) explored the problem of value in Conrad, the constant interplay of absolutism and relativism, and the opposition between the process of evaluation and the operation of particular values in *Lord Jim*. Although Conrad in *Lord Jim* manifested the desire for fixed values, he nevertheless called them into question since he recognized the

importance of value itself and, thus, he can be referred to as a moralist infected with modern ethical dilemmas. W. Kozak (Lublin) discussed the function of myth as a factor which brought order into the reality depicted in Conrad's marine fiction. He pointed out parallels between the community of sailors and tribal community and showed that the mythical imagery used by Conrad contributed to creating a vision of an ordered community emerging triumphant from the struggle with destructive forces.

H. Epstein (London) examined Conrad's perception of Stevenson as a writer of romance and adventure and pointed to the features their art shared, eg. multiple narration. He drew a comparison between particular aspects of Conrad's *Victory* and Stevenson's *The Ebb Tide* - the characters who were embodiments of evil, the motifs, the composition, the elements of grotesque, parody and travesty. Ch. Wang (Chon Buk) undertook a comparative analysis of the theme of the doppelganger in Conrad and Dostoevsky. This theme which reflected the inner struggle of man's psyche also enabled the two writers to dramatize their personal problems and the split in their personalities. Wang emphasized their dialogical imagination which determined the way Conrad and Dostoevsky handled the theme of the doppelganger. G. Watson (Edmonton), in his analysis of *The Secret Agent* by Conrad and *Billy Bud* by Melville, relied on Girard's theory of the sacrificial crisis which postulated the emergence of human society from the collective murder of the scapegoat and the transformation of the victim into God. Watson interpreted Stevie and Billy Bud in terms of a scapegoat, pointed out their duality - the attribute of a sacrificial victim and distinguished between legitimate and illegitimate violence informing the relations between protagonists. A. de Lange (Potchefstroom) investigated the presentation of race and gender in *Lord Jim* by Conrad and *Foe* by Coetzee. In *Lord Jim* the hero's racial isolation, enhanced by spatial isolation in Patusan, led to his failure and was related to his misreading of gender and the break-up of his relationship with Jewel. De Lange insisted that *Foe*, which made use of the thematic pattern established in *Robinson Crusoe*, was built on the gender and race oppositions similar to the one in *Lord Jim*.

During the conference J. Lothe (Bergen) gave a short report on the recently published volume *Conrad in Scandinavia*, the fourth volume in the series *Conrad: Eastern and Western Perspectives* ed. by W. Krajka and published by East European Monographs, Boulder and Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin.

The conference organizers arranged a trip in Conrad's footsteps in Kent and the conference participants could visit Conrad's grave in the Canterbury cemetery and the houses the writer lived in: The Pent and Oswalds, and Ford's house in Rye. The day was crowned with a visit to the Canterbury Museum which houses the Conrad Collection.