JOSEPH CONRAD AND HIS CRITICS

by

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PREFACE

This subject is an outgrowth of questions raised by Dr. E.M. Hopkins in a History of Criticism class concerning the tendencies of modern criticism. The high regard in which Conrad appeared to be held suggested his name as a likely one around which to center an investigation.

What do modern reviewers and critics do with a new writer? How long does it take for him to become 'known'? --- 'to arrive'? What seem to be the values upon which the critics and reviewers base their judgments? Does it appear that certain leaders are responsible for determining the judgment? Such were a few of the questions with which this study started. Perhaps the paper has developed into more of a study of Conrad himself than was at first intended, but an effort has been made to keep the original aims in mind.

It was planned to base this study on a complete bibliography of the editions of Conrad's works and on a complete or nearly complete bibliography of the critical material concerning him. It was impossible to secure either. The Kansas University Library does not have the late files of the British Museum Catalogue.
Several other important sources of bibliography were not to be had. In fact, a list of the English and Continental editions would have been impossible to secure. A complete list of American editions of Conrad's works could have been compiled; probably, but there seemed little point in compiling it alone. Therefore, except for a chronological table of first editions (which seemed of value in listing and comparing the reviews) only the actual editions used are given.

As for the critical material, the bibliography following this study is far from complete. For example; one of the common advertising testimonies to Conrad's genius is Mr. H.G.Well's boast that he wrote the first long appreciative review of Conrad's books. But in spite of a thorough search through such bibliographical sources as this library affords, it was impossible to locate the article to which Mr. Wells refers. Early files of many of the magazines needed are now owned by the Kansas University Library. Broken files of many of the common recent magazines also hindered the work. From the critical bibliography then (which in itself is only as complete as the sources subsequently listed would make it), there must be deducted a given number of articles which could not be found in this library. These are carefully indicated.
However, the long critical bibliography ---including articles not read for this study--- has been given that it might be seen upon what basis the study was made. The more number of articles is of some importance. The English and particularly the Continental periodicals are, as might be expected, scantily represented; but such articles as it was possible to secure showed no noticeably different trend from the trend of the American articles studied.

It would seem therefore that the some two hundred and fifty articles and reviews actually used offer representative material, at least, and that such deductions as are drawn may not be without value.

Acknowledgement is due to Dr. John H. Nelson who has guided this study.

B. Ferguson

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

"It would be easier," says one of Conrad's admirers, "it would be more decent to surrender criticism entirely and only breathe a quiet word of gratitude that his miracle should happen in our time." These are the closing words of a rebuke administered to a fellow critic who has failed in complete surrender to the idol. But neither the rebuked individual nor his fellows have acted on the suggestion, and our vaunted freedom of speech remains to the extent that our critics and those across the Atlantic have continued in the pursuit of such happiness as repeated attempts at solving the Conrad puzzle seem to promise them.

Be it the English love of the sea, be it the interest aroused by Melville in the South Seas and developed by Stevenson, or be it for any of a dozen reasons, Conrad's fame today is a demonstrable fact. The opening quotation is not the only example of near-deification that a survey of Conrad criticism reveals. Nor are all

(1) Dial, 69:191, August, 1920
such comments of late date. In fact, as early as 1911, his collaborator, Ford Madox Ford (Huoffer), noted with satisfaction the recognition Conrad had then received. But the quoting of one of these highly complimentary remarks will serve to suggest a line of study that the early stages of this investigation pointed out. Was it possible that critics gave utterance to such exalted convictions in all seriousness and expected them to stand as sober criticisms? Upon what did they base their judgments? Who and what was this Conrad, this new writer who aroused so much enthusiasm?

If this study is to defer to the critics, it must of necessity include some account of Conrad's life. The story is too romantic for writers to sacrifice many of its possibilities. The majority of the critics and reviewers find some opportunity to tell it or to refer to its outstanding features. Not that there is any reason why they should not. As many critics have remarked, the story of his life does offer a plausible explanation of much that puzzles the reader. Here in one individual is to be found a Polish child who read Shakespeare in


. . . If Conrad has not earned any huge material success, he has secured a recognition, even from the academic, that few men of his greatness have ever secured in their age and in their own day.
his father's translation and who know the horrors of
Russian exile, a competent sailor who explored the
far places of the world, and finally, an English
gentleman who lived peacefully with his neighbors and
wrote books. No wonder the critics revel in the ro-
mane his life story suggests. Here was a man, unac-
quainted with the English language until his nineteenth
year, who before his death was acclaimed one of its
greatest masters. What a subject for criticism! There
are those who exhaust themselves with exclamation
points, who are never tired of marveling at the unusual
features of the story. There are those--- and they are
increasing in number since Conrad's death has called for
a new evaluation of his work--- who turn to this story
with critical attention for all it may offer towards
an explanation of a personality that few are bold enough
to think they understand.

Conrad's official biography is by Richard Curle.
His book, Joseph Conrad: A short Study (1914) has re-
ceived some adverse criticism as a study or work of

(3) Lit. Digest, 88: 46, Sept. 15, 1924, "Conrad's
Greatest Romance, Himself."

(4) Mr. P.A. Hutchison is one of the few who has cried
"Murka." He finds the key in "Geography and
Some Explorers" lately republished in Conrad's Last
Essays. According to Mr. Hutchison, Conrad is the
"last of the great explorers"--an explorer, at
heart, when on the sea, and as an artist, an explorer
of men's souls. --N.Y. Times, March 28, 1926, p.3
criticism, but the fact remains that as far as the biographical statements are concerned the book has Mr. Conrad's authorization. From it most of the following brief outline of Conrad's life is taken.

Teodor Józef Konrad Korzeniowski was born in Ukraine in the South of Poland on December 6, 1857. In 1862 his father, who had been deeply implicated in the last Polish rebellion, was exiled by the Russian government. The hardships attending upon the exile hastened the death of Conrad's mother, and Conrad was sent back to Ukraine to stay with his maternal uncle. In 1869 Conrad's father was freed on the ground that he was too ill to be dangerous any longer, and his last days were spent in Cracow, the old Polish capital, with his son. After his father's death in 1870, Conrad was sent to a public school in Cracow. About this time he seems to have given utterance to his determination to go to sea, and in spite of the opposition of relatives he managed to sail from Marseilles in 1874. His intention from the first was to be an English sailor, but it was not until 1876 that he first landed on English soil. At that time he did not know a word of English, but constant employment on English ships gave him opportunity to master the language. He passed for second mate in 1879 and became a Master in the English Merchant Service in 1884.
In 1894 Conrad left the sea. The effects of a severe fever contracted on the Congo two voyages before had made a vacation imperative. His vacation was begun with no idea of quitting the sea; but with the acceptance of his novel, *Almayer's Folly*, which he had begun about five years before, this Polish seaman entered the field of fiction. Edward Garnett, upon whose recommendation Fisher Unwin had published the book, encouraged him to write another. And so his career as a novelist began. Conrad's life after leaving the sea, with the exception of brief visits to his old home in Poland or elsewhere, was spent in Kent; and it was at his country home in Kent that he died on August 3, 1924.

This is, briefly, the much repeated story of the man upon whom so much critical attention has been focused. This Anglicized Fale is the writer whose paths around the globe intrigue the imagination and whose continued interest in the ships upon which he sailed kept his sea experiences always before the critics. Conrad

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(6). "The 'Torrons': A Personal Tribute," first published in *The Blue Peter*, October, 1923, and now included in *Last Essays*, is only an example. Many of his stories deal with actual ships he has known, and he makes little effort to hide their identity. *A Mirror of the Sea* is an intimate and eloquent expression of his love for ships.
seems never to have been given to intimate personal revelations, but his friends have gathered many anecdotes. One they particularly enjoy telling concerns his uncle. It is worth mention as an indication of the curious nature of some of the paths which critical interest has taken. This uncle belonged to Napoleon's retreating army, and the gist of the story is that he helped to eat a Lithuanian dog. It is amusing to note how often biographers and critics have insisted upon this particular bit of biographical data. Of course they hasten to add something to the effect that the character Balk of cannibalistic memories has been discovered by penetrating critics, or possibly by highly imaginative ones, to owe his being to Conrad's sensitive musings about his uncle's experiences. Nothing seems too insignificant for the critics to seize upon.

The amount of critical material about Conrad's life, about Conrad the Man, about Conrad the Pole, about Conrad's personality, about Conrad and the sea, bulks so large in proportion to the attention which is given exclusively to his art that one is inclined to think our critics still contain enough of the common human interest in the unusual to make the failing excusable among ordinary mortals. In fact, so large a part does

(7). In the story of that name published in the volume Typhoon and Other Stories.
the interest in Conrad the Man play in the criticism that the fact that he is a writer — an author for whom the most extravagant praise has been piling up for the past thirty years — seems with some almost a secondary consideration.

Which may raise the question whether or not an enigmatical personality and a romantic history might not be among the most valuable qualifications for authorship.

There is no effort here to detract from the position to which Conrad has been assigned by his friends. Yet one might venture the statement that were he many times less the artist that he undoubtedly is, the personality of the man might still be enough to call forth a large share of the eulogistic comments. It seems necessary to emphasize the fact that whatever else the findings of this little study may indicate, this much is certain: little in the way of impersonal or detached criticism is to be expected while the charm of Conrad’s personality imposes itself between the critic and the material with which he deals. The story will always be unusual, but perhaps in time the flood of personal reminiscences, impressions, and interviews will have subsided sufficiently to make comparisons with other authors more sane.

In other words, instead of agreeing with Mr. Curle who feels that a new generation will not be able to
approach his books with quite the nicety of perception which his friends achieve, the thinking reader will see that it is from his friends that Conrad must escape if he is to have an impartial evaluation. Or, since he will not escape them while this study is under consideration, it is this personal element which must be considered as the X-quality, the element which is to be discounted in the final estimate, yet which it is impossible to set aside. Without attempting to discount the personal element in literature ---far from it--- one is tempted to say that if Mr. Conrad is to be compared with Shakespeare and Milton, with Flaubert and Turgenev, would it not be enlightening to have had their friends contribute sketches of their personalities ---living intimate sketches--- so that the 'nicety of perception' might be equally applied to all? Perhaps it detracts from the dignity of the study to preface it with the personal opinion that that elevated and scientific division of letters called criticism has succumbed to influences other than considerations of 'pure art'. But the method is defensible. At least we are in good company. Certainly no one will deny that it is a recognized bit of Canadian method to start in the middle.

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Conrad is first of all a novelist, and, including his two collaborations with Ford Madox Ford (Hueffer) and his posthumous novel which remains unfinished, he has seventeen to his credit:

Almayer’s Folly (1895)
An Outcast of the Islands (1896)
The Nigger of the “Narcissus” (1897)
Lord Jim (1900)
The Inheritors with Ford Madox Ford (1901)
Typhoon (1902)
Romance with Ford Madox Ford (1903)
Nostrono (1904)
The Secret Agent (1907)
Under Western Eyes (1911)
Chuma (1913)
Victory (1915)
The Shadow Line (1917)
The Arrow of Gold (1919)
The Rescue (1920)
The Rover (1923)
Suspense unfinished; posthumous (1925)

He has seven volumes of short stories, among which are some individual stories which many critics place above the best of his novels:

Tales of Unrest (1898)
Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories (1902)
Falk, Amy Foster, Tomorrow (1903)
A Set of Six (1908)
‘Twist Land and Sea (1912)
Within the Tides (1915)
Tales of Hearsay posthumous (1925)

Outside the realm of fiction proper are his two volumes of memoirs and impressions: The Mirror of the Sea (1906) and A Personal Record (1909). In England, A Personal

(9) Typhoon is counted here as a separate novel; this is the usual practice, possibly because in its first edition it achieved the dignity of standing alone.
Record was published as Some Reminiscences. To these may be added Notes on Life and Letters (1921) and, in some editions, Notes on My Books (1921). This last is a collection of Conrad's notes on the source and inception of his stories, notes which appear in late editions as prefatory matter. Lastly, with this class is the posthumous collection entitled Last Essays (1926).

The Nature of a Crime, a third collaboration with Ford Madox Ford (Quiller), first published in 1924, is difficult to classify. It comes near to belonging to the class of fiction known as the epistolary novel.

It remains only to mention the dramatization of three of his stories: The Secret Agent; One Day More, from the story "Tomorrow" in the volume with "Amy Foster" and "Falk"; and Laughing Anne, from the story "Because of the Dollars" from Within the Tides.

The list is not an imposing one if judged merely on a quantitative basis. Thirty or thirty-one volumes (depending upon the edition) and three of those, works of collaboration. True, they were all written after Conrad had passed his thirty-fifth year, but an average of little more than a book a year is not an astonishing rate of production. Yet, generally speaking, the critics are of one accord in giving Conrad high rank, much as they differ about detailed explanations. As to
what he has done, the answers are many and various, almost as numerous as the list of critics who have interested themselves. And each answer, if taken at face value, is in itself sufficient to make the Conrad question worthy of attention.

It is well to notice at once the distinguished names that go to make up the ranks of Conrad critics. As has been stated, Conrad’s first book was ‘discovered’ by Edward Carnett. His second, An Outcast of the Islands, brought him the friendship of Sir Hugh Clifford, a writer of several books on Malay life. H.G.Wells and John Galsworthy were among his earliest critics, and the years have added Hugh Walpole, William McFee, R.B.Cunninghame Graham, Ernest Rhys, William Lyon Phelps, H.L.Mencken, Robert Morse Lovett, Richard Curle, J.A.Macy, Arthur Symons, Richard Aldington, C.Jean Aubry, Edwin Björkman, Joseph Huneker, Henry Jones, and dozens of others. And all these bear testimony, in varying degrees of enthusiasm of course, to the greatness of Joseph Conrad.

The significant thing about Conrad critics lies in their number rather than in the amount that they individually have written. None of these critics has spoken at great length about Conrad. For most of them one or two articles have been sufficient in which to express all they have to say. Even Mr. Curle, who has
been perhaps the most active, has published only six articles since the publication of his study in 1914. Mr. Curle's book, *Joseph Conrad: A Study*, was the first of the books about Conrad to appear. It is true that six other books have now been published: Wilson Follett's *Joseph Conrad: A Short Study* (1915), Hugh Walpole's *Joseph Conrad* (1916), Ruth H. Stauffer's *Joseph Conrad: His Romantic-Realism* (1922), J.C. Sutherland's *At Sea with Joseph Conrad* (1923), C.F. Bendz's *Joseph Conrad: An Appreciation* (1923), and Ford Madox Ford's *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance* (1925). Yet none of the books is of imposing length. None is above some two hundred and fifty pages, if we except Ford Madox Ford's *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance*, which is not much more and which, of course, contains little actual criticism—or little else, for that matter, except references to the 'writer's' reactions to one thing and another. Some of the reviewers have spoken again and again, P.A. Hutchison of the *New York Times* and E.F. Nett of the *Boston Transcript*, for example. But, although their business requires that they give attention to new books by a writer of Conrad's rank, it does not insure that the reviews will contain a great amount of real criticism. And few of them do. Furthermore, such writers as have written more than one article, be they reviewers or critics, seem to have
retained their first impressions about Conrad. No significant change of attitude or opinion has appeared in the work of any critic. So only in the case of a very few of the critics is it the purpose of this study to consider their individual contributions. A more extended study would be of some interest, no doubt, but it would be beyond the scope of this paper. The aim here, as will appear plainly from the pages that follow, is to put before the reader, first of all, just what the critics as a body have said about Conrad. An effort will be made to show a little of what their methods have been and to indicate any tendencies in modern criticism which the study may reveal. But it is hoped that, in the main, the methods and tendencies will be evident from the digest which is offered.
CHAPTER II.

CONRAD, A FAVORITE WITH THE CRITICS

A study of the growth of critical opinion regarding Conrad naturally presents itself at first glance from two points of view -- from the point of view of the critics, and from the point of view of Conrad. Conrad’s side of the case is particularly interesting. There is a common conviction that modern criticism presents an unyielding wall before which the aspiring writer must halt and plan sensational 'stunts' if he is to attract attention from the indifferent powers on the other side. Conrad's literary history reveals nothing of this kind. For those who have bewailed the insensibility of critics, a search through Conrad's book notices will be illuminating. They may hunt for favorable or unfavorable judgments and for proof that the appreciation and interpretation is intelligent and sympathetic. They may want definite evidence that he is 'arriving'. In no case will they have for to 'look.'

A chronological survey seems of most value, and from the first the evidence is at hand. From the first his reception with the reviewers and critics was all that a writer could ask for. His first book, Almayer's Folly (1895), was greeted by the Bookman as "unmistakably
a serious and valuable contribution to literature," and the more conservative Academy believed such faults as were evident were "plainly faults of inexperience rather than incapacity." Mr. Hugh Walpole quotes this comment from an article which was published in the Spectator shortly after the appearance of Almayer's Folly:

The name of Mr. Conrad is new to us, but it appears to us as if he might become the Kipling of the Malay Archipelago. (12)

Mr. Walpole himself points out, "We had, therefore, encouragement of the most dignified kind from the beginning."

With the advent of Mr. Conrad's second book, An Outcast of the Islands (1896), the reviewers noted that his chief power was psychological, and the Athenaeum greeted it as "one of the strongest and most original novels of the year." This magazine further praised the "entire absence of all artifice or affectation in his method," and the subtle power of


(11). Academy, 47: 502, June 15, 1895

(12). The article thus referred to in the Spectator was not found.

(13). WALPOLE, HUGH, Joseph Conrad, p. 11

analysis and an intense and poetic appreciation of the beauties of tropical landscape."

The Nigger of the "Narcissus" (1897) curiously brought out more divided criticism than the first two novels. The Academy admits that "The human nature is presented with insight and sympathy and the sea pictures (15) are beyond praise," but qualifications follow.

Tales of Unrest was published in 1898 and divided the London Academy prize of that year (£750.) with Maurice Hewlett's Forest Lovers and Sir Sidney Lee's Life of Shakespeare. Perhaps because of this award the Academy insisted that Conrad "becomes a writer to (16) be reckoned with."

Lord Jim (1900), the first of the 'Marlow' stories, naturally enough perhaps drew so much attention to its form that most of the reviews had little space for attention to anything else. The reception of its form was by no means enthusiastic, nor has praise for its use in Lord Jim been usual among later critics. In general they admire the indirect method, this 'Marlow' form, in Chance but show considerable reserve when speaking of the book in which the method first appeared. But the public bolted. Lord Jim added to Conrad's fol-

(15). Academy, 53. Sup.1, Jan. 1:1, 1898
(16). Academy, 53: 417, April 16, 1898
loving, and the book continues to be a favorite with a large share of his readers.

With Typhoon and Youth both appearing in 1902, the critics waxed eloquent. The Athenaeum told the public that Conrad "has the true worker's eye, the true artist's pitilessness, in the detection and elimination of the redundant word, the idle thought, the insincere idiom, or even for the mark of punctuation misplaced." This reviewer "knows of no other instance in fiction of a storm at sea being so powerfully and poignantly presented." "One of our greatest craftsmen in fiction today," the Forum voted him.

Romance, published in 1904, Conrad's second piece of collaboration with Ford Madox Ford (Rueffer), received more favorable reviews than had The Inheritors in 1901. To us the interesting thing about the reviews of the two books is that most critics give Conrad the credit for the excellences, and blame the faults of both stories upon his collaborator. Good evidence of Conrad's reputation.

For Nostromo (1904) we find such terms as "a monument of realism," "impressive effect," and "an

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(17) Athenaeum, 1902, pt. 2: 824, Dec. 20
(18) Forum, 54: 400, Jan.-Mar., 1903
(19) Independent, 58: 557, Mar. 9, 1905
(20) Critic, 46: 377, April, 1905, by C. H. Dunbar
opera in prose." The Athenaeum spoke of the "seductive diction" of The Mirror of the Sea.

In 1908, John Galsworthy wrote:

The writing of these ten books [Conrad's output before this date] is probably the only writing in the last twelve years that will enrich the English language to any extent. (23)

The Secret Agent (1907) has had perhaps the most adverse criticism, but such was Conrad's hold upon the critical mind by the time it was published that few of the reviewers dismissed it without finding much also that was highly admirable.

Under Western Eyes (1911) was the signal for the reviewers to flood us with comparisons with Russian writers, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and to discover that they had been conscious of a foreign strain in Conrad's writings even before the publication of this book.

In 1918, when Current Literature was commenting on A Personal Record, it volunteered the information that Conrad has given us "some of the most highly subjective romances in our language, and a few of the most subtle, most profound short stories ever

(21). Athenaeum, 1904, pt. 2: 619, Nov. 5
achieved in any language." Perhaps one might say that it was about 1912 that 'deification' as such began to be prominent. In that year Edwin Björkman, in the Review of Reviews, told us that

He is one who copies life in such a manner that it becomes more intelligible, and thereby more livable to the beholder.

As an artist [Mr. Björkman says] he holds a place apart, appearing to us as a sort of modern knight of the Holy Grail seeking ever the wondrous vessel in which beauty, worth, and truth are said to mingle in trium radiant.

... No other writer has surpassed Conrad in the picturing of those two fields of human endeavor—the endlessly variable sea, and the tropics where life and death, fierce passions, and dreamy languor are always found close together. (25)

Late in 1913 came the publication of Chance, the book which marks the rise of Conrad's popularity, and we find that "For subtlety of art no one now writing fiction approaches Conrad." From this time on such remarks as the following quoted from the Literary Digest become more and more common.

There is no use questioning or criticizing Conrad's method. His power is well known. ... (27)

(24) Cur. Lit., 52: 470-2, April, 1912, "Conrad's Profession of Artistic Faith"


(26) Outlook, 107: 45, May 2, 1914

(27) Lit. Digest, 48: 1119, May 9, 1914
Or as H.W. Boynton in the *Nation* states it:

Joseph Conrad is a name which by general impression, stands for fine and strong work, and for an uncommonly interesting personality. (28)

This summary is for the moment purposely omitting the less appreciative remarks about Conrad. They occur from the first, and are not less noticeable as his popularity grows. The adverse criticisms are, however, distinctly the exception, and their trend can be summarized briefly later.

*Victory* (1915) brought a division of the ranks; but its admirers told the public that the "symbolism of the book touches sublimity"; that the love idyl at the last of the book "is a scene as exquisite as anything in the whole range of English fiction." The reviewer in the *Atlantic Monthly* felt deeply about the master. He spoke of the insignificance of the two characters in the general scheme of things and of the fact that with them Conrad has made "a great drama charged with pity and terror." Then followed:

He sees them somewhat as one may reverently hope the creator sees us all. At least, he sees them with crystal clearness, with absolute detachment, yet with a yearning pity, a vast gentleness. To

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(29). Review of Reviews, 51: 761, Jan., 1915

be able to project one's self in it, to give it forth again completely, is art indeed, but art at such a marvelous pitch that it deserves some other, some yet greater name. (31)

The Dial, usually quite blase, asked

Has any man ever known, as this one knows, the soul of the human aerelist? (32)

In 1915 appeared, too, one of the first of the rhapsodical articles by Richard Curle. He gave us this about Victory:

And on the last night, the night of the climax, with the tropical storm rumbling around the island, and the stir of rising wind and of thunder echoing, as it were, the other storm about to break, the whole thing reaches a height of gloomy power hardly overmatched in Bear itself. (33)

In general, according to Mr. Curle:

The problems he [Conrad] puts before us are ageless. They have always concerned mankind and they always will. He is never trivial, and in his most colloquial pages just as in the lightest sketches of Maupassant there is the indefinable exaltation of the grand manner. (34)


(32). Dial, 58: 383, May 12, 1915


(34). Idem.

(35). WALPOLE, HUGH, Joseph Conrad, p. 17.
Perhaps more than enough quotations have been made to show that the arbitrary statement earlier in this chapter was not without foundation. The few additional quotations which follow have place principally because of the familiar ring of the names attached to them.

The real point is that Conrad is one of the writers who approach the fundamental human problem; as Shakespeare approached it in the heightened and complex world of Elizabeth; as Dante approached it within the Gothic confines of the Medieval Church; as Balzac approached it through all the stuffiness of French provincialism. (36)

—Katherine Fullerton Gerould

He is unique as a stylist. (p.5) . . . His rhythmic sense is akin to Flaubert's. (p.6) . . . . Scattered throughout his books are descriptive passages with few parallels in our language. (p.7) . . . . No writers of fiction, save the very greatest, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, or Turgeneff, have exposed the soul of men under the stress of sorrow, passion, anger. . . . (p.11-12) . . . That particular story "The End of the Tether" will rank with the best of the world's literature. (p.18) (37)

—James Huneker


(37). HUNeker, JAMES, *Ivory Apes and Peacocks.*

The Current Opinion (74: 677-9, June, 1923) quotes the N.Y. Outlook in which Huneker ranked Conrad "as fifth of a quintet of the world's greatest novelists---Flaubert, Turgeneff, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky --- and writing from London in 1916 about the leading men of contemporary letters said: "J.C. is the most lovable of them all."
Where we are to look for his real successors, his continuers, among the later tale tellers, I do not know.  (38)

--Ernest Haynes

His most comprehensive picture of the archipelago is a panorama taken from the sea in "The End of the Tale"—a passage as unforgettable in its pessimism as the famous description of Egdon Heath in "The Return of the Native".  (39)

--Robert Morse Lovett

There is only one word great enough for him, the word poet, which simply means creator.  (40)

--Christopher Morley

H.L. Mencken calls him a "realist of the realists" and admires him for his

. . . Adept skepticism— not complacent and attitudinizing like Anarchist France's nor bitter and despairing like Thomas Hardy's or Mark Twain's, but rather the severe skepticism of the scientist, with no room for any emotion more violent than curiosity.  (41)

With all these indications of our novelist's high position among contemporary critics it would be unfair to omit entirely comments of the opposite description.

The Athenaeum noted of Almayer's Folly that it is written in a "style which suffers from exuber-

(38) Bookman, 56: 402-3, Dec., 1922, "Interview with Joseph Conrad," by Ernest Haynes


(40) Mentor, 13: 24-26, March, 1925, "Word about Conrad," by Christopher Morley

"a dictum which later criticism has confirmed and applied to his first three books with almost unanimous force. The suggestion that An Outcast of the Islands is not a book for the common reader is a reflection or not as one chooses, but it was an early statement of a criticism which has been continued and which has gathered strength with later critics.

The Nigger of the Narcissus evoked comments concerning the "small allowance of material for the length of the book," and concerning the "terse, exaggerated, highly poetic diction" as not suitable to the common sailor who tells the story -- a criticism often applied to the language of Marlow.

Lord Jim was found to be too long; the mechanism of the story was severely criticized. In Youth, the Nation noted that the "power of expression is so fluent and intense that it often runs into prodigality." The Athenæum believed that Conrad showed some signs of growing over-subtle in his analysis.

(43) Academy, 49: 525, June 27, 1896
(44) Academy, 53: Sup. Jan.1: 1, 1903
(45) Nation, 76: 478, June 11, 1903
(46) Athenæum, 1903, pt. 2: 824, Dec. 30
of moods, temperaments, and mental idiosyncrasies.

"A jerky descriptive style" was one of the comments on Typhoon made in Harper's Weekly. The Dial criticized the structure of Noström, calling attention to its "lengthy analysis," its "interminable dragging out of incidents," and its frequent harping back to antecedent conditions." An article in the Edinburgh Review in 1920 rated Noström as "the extreme case of that tendency to over-elaborate detail from which he Conrad is prone to suffer."

The Dial calls the Secret Agent "a good story completely smothered by analysis." In Under Western Eyes, "the picture is too unrelieved for art and yet it is doubtless admirable as history."

Frederic Tabor Cooper, in an article already referred to, speaks of two outstanding faults: first, he follows no logical development of a story but goes zigzagging back and forth from east to west, from past to future, apparently quite without purpose or orientation.

and, second,

(48). Dial, 38: 126, Feb. 16, 1905, by W.M. Payne
(50). Dial, 43: 252, Oct. 16, 1907, by W.M. Payne
(51). No. American, 194: 935, Dec., 1911
He has no sense of proportion. Some parts of his stories are inordinately long, and others absurdly short: he will squander a full-length plot on a short story and amplify a mere episode into four hundred pages. (52)

In the Contemporary Review in 1921 is more concerning Conrad’s method:

He suffers—it would seem in an increasing degree—from that trick of construction which some writers seem to regard as a mark of superior intelligence—a kind of secretiveness in the telling of their story, a disinclination to say forthright what can be conveyed by illusion. (53)

The author of this article registers another complaint against the 'Marlow method':

One turns back the pages of Lord Jim with an uneasy fear that one has stupidly 'missed something'; a fear that is familiar to every reader of The Inland Sea... It is not until more than a hundred pages have passed that we are told what happened on the emigrant ship, and are thus enabled to form any conception of the origin and meaning of Jim's situation.

The Outlook in 1914, suggested that "A little cheerfulness would have made Chance easier to read." Essentially the same comment is repeated in 1925 when speaking of Conrad's attempt at dramatic work, Mr. Preston in the International Book Review says, "Unrelenting

(52) Bookman, 55: 61-70, March, 1918, "Representative English Story Tellers: Joseph Conrad," by Frederic Tabor Cooper

(53) Contemp. Review, 125: 54-61, Jan., 1924, "Joseph Conrad," by Carleton Kemmerer

(54) Outlook 107: 48, May 2, 1914. (Also: "Conrad wasn’t in this book at least, a glimpse of humor in his way of looking at life."
seriousness was one of his major faults. He knew no delicate playfulness either in writing or thinking."

The criticism implied in Grace Colbroom's characterisation of Lena as "one of the few women in Conrad's books who act voluntarily" appears occasionally.

Mark Van Doren seems to have remained almost totally unimpressed by Conrad's longer stories:

In general the novels of Joseph Conrad have depressed me by the spectacle they presented of an author who with more and more effort got less and less effect. The man was trying very hard to please and impress: he wrote with obvious labor, he strained every nerve to make the reader see the whole significance of what he himself saw; he piled device upon device. . . Passages of course I admired, Scenes stayed with me vaguely. . . I was less bored with the shorter narratives, and some of them indeed ---"Typhoon," "The End of the Tether," and "Talk," I still think positively great. (59)

In making these selections, those favorable and those unfavorable, there has been no effort to preserve anything like a degree of proportion comparable to the proportion found in criticism. Suffice it to say that while a quite respectable number of adverse criticisms have been quoted ---those given by no means exhaust the field --- they are so far outnumbered by the compli-


(56). Bookman, 41: 322, May, 1915, by Grace Isabel Colbroom

(57). In Victory

(58). Nation, 120: 45, Jan. 14, 1925, "First Glance," by Mark Van Doren
mentary remarks as to be almost buried. Not negligible, however; they contain too much truth. Confirmation of the judgment concerning the balance of comment may be had at a glance from the *Book Review Digest*. Out of two hundred and ten book reviews listed by that organ during the period from 1907 to 1926, only three were judged by their readers as distinctly unfavorable to Conrad, compared with one hundred and thirty that were highly commendatory. Of the others thirty-three are given no comments at all; thirty-six articles give some unfavorable comments but are on the whole favorable; eight articles although recording much that is admirable are on the whole unfavorable.

Lest all this comment, good and bad, suggest an early popularity with the reading public, the actual facts demand attention. Conrad's popularity—if indeed he has yet gained it in the usual sense of the word—was slow in coming. As a matter of fact it was not until Conrad had written sixteen books that he began to receive the general recognition which critics had been claiming as his due. Chance holds the honor of winning popular laurels for him. The *Atlantic Monthly* explains in this way:

"Popularity tarried, because at first he wrote of elemental passions and struggle lands with the psychological acuteness and complex style of Henry James. People who wanted adventure stories..."
shied at his style and his psychology; people who wanted style and psychology shied at his
 elemental stage settings supposing them appropriate backgrounds for melodrama only. But the
elect read him and rejoiced. It has just occurred to his publishers to advertise his new novel
 inside a help of quotations showing what the elect think of him. The result is so satisfactory from the counting room standpoint that
one wonders they didn't think of it long ago. (59)

This takes away part of the glamour his friends might
like to associate with his slowly won success. Conrad
has had many a 'lift'. As the Outlook stated it,
"Perhaps critics of the first order have been the warmest admirers of Mr. Conrad's achievement." Even Mr.
Curle, after telling us that "With Chance the recogni-
tion became suddenly wide and impetuous," admits that
"its popularity was probably more an accident of time
than accomplishment."

Facts concerning the actual sales of his books
do not appear as common critical information. Grant
Overton tells us, however, that it is no exaggeration
to say that in all the nineteen years leading up to
the publication of Chance not a single book, not the
succession of all the books made enough money for the
reasonable needs of Conrad and his family. Captain

(59). Atlantic: 114:530; Oct., 1914
(60). Outlook, 107: 45, May 2, 1914
   Conrad and 'Victory'," by Richard Curle
(62). Bookm., 57: 275-84, May, 1925, "In the Kingdom
   of Conrad," by Grant Overton
David Bone has told us of Conrad's discouragement which sometime before the publication of Lord Jim led him (63) to attempt to find a ship again. In Mr. Rutherford H. Platt's article on "How Conrad Came to Write" we are told that

"In 1900 Conrad's future was as uncertain as the new century. In that year an English publisher and an American publisher staked the retired, obscure sea rover to his bread and butter while he created 'The Rescue' (64)

Incidentally, these publishers waited until 1920 before the book was completed.

Mr. Mencken, speaking of Almayer's Folly, says:

The first edition, it would appear, ran to no more than a thousand copies; at all events, specimens of it are now very hard to find and collectors pay high prices for them. (65)

He calls attention to the fact that even after the publishing of Youth, which met with considerable recognition in critical circles, Conrad's publishing arrangements seem to have remained somewhat insecure.

His first eleven books show six different imprints; it was not until his twelfth that he settled down to one publisher. His American editions tell an even stranger story. The first six of them were brought out by six different publishers, the first eight by no less than seven. (66)

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(63). Sat. Review of Lit.: 2: 286, Nov. 7, 1925; "Memories of Conrad," by Captain David Bone


(65). MENCKEN, H. L., A Book of Prefaces, p. 52

(66). Ibid. p. 53
On the other hand, Conrad has attained popularity of a peculiar kind with the book collectors. From a price of $12.00 in 1914 for a copy of the first edition of Almayer's Folly the value has risen to $120.00. His original manuscripts were sold at a public sale in 1924 for more than $100,000.00; the manuscript of Almayer's Folly alone bringing $5,300.00.

Mr. Mencken is the authority for the following interesting information, written in 1917:

His manuscripts are cornered, I believe, by an eminent collector of literary curiosities in New York, who seems to have a contract with the novelist to take them as fast as they are produced—perhaps the only arrangement of the sort in literary history. His first editions begin to bring higher premiums than those of any other living author. Considering the fact that the oldest of them is less than twenty-five years old, they probably set new records for the trade. Even the latest in date are eagerly sought, and it is not uncommon to see an English edition of a Conrad book sold at an advance in New York within a month of its publication.

But Conrad has never been a "popular" writer in the usual sense of the word. Most critics feel he

(67). MENCKEN, H.L.; A Book of Prefaces, p.56
(71). MENCKEN, H.L.; A Book of Prefaces, p.56
will never be that. His first adequate recognition is said to have come from America, about one-half million of his books having been sold here before November, 1924. His continental sales are becoming a more and more important factor. G. Jean Aubry, who has translated several of his stories into French, is authority for this statement in 1923:

It is long since the name of Joseph Conrad passed beyond the lands where English is spoken. In Scandinavia, in France, in Germany, in Poland, in Holland, translations of his complete works are in progress. (73)

France and Poland, of course, have special reason for their interest, but the term cosmopolitan is often applied to him. It was a French magazine that asked this question in 1924:

Joseph Conrad serait-il un type anticipe d'une nouvelle génération d'auteurs cosmopolites qui écriront pour le monde entier, dans la langue qu'il leur plaira de choisir? (74)

It is when we come in contact with comments of this nature that the real nature of Conrad's astonishing fame strikes us with full force. In thirty years, in fact as this chapter has shown, long before his death, this writer had reached his unusual position

(72). Our Opinion, 77: 630-1, "Joseph Conrad's Heroic Pessimism"


---the critic's favorite, the writer's writer, the artist of the sea. This is the burden of the story. His work, even in the opinion of his warmest critic (75), friend, loses something by not possessing popular appeal; but the critics expect his reputation to grow in the years to come.

Two 'final' judgments may well end the long procession of tributes. The first is quoted from the New York Times of September 15, 1926:

Now that the final word by Joseph Conrad has been written, what is to be the final word on Joseph Conrad? Obscure in his early years as a writer, turning forth masterpieces that were read by few and appreciated by even fewer, Conrad came at last to receive the recognition due his unique position not only in English prose fiction but in the world's prose fiction. And this recognition, belated though it came, was due, is due, to the gradually achieved perception that Conrad probed human nobility and human frailty more deeply, more truly, and more extensively than any other writer with the exception of Shakespeare, Dante, and the Greek dramatists. (76)

The second is from the Spectator:

A world compelling genius was never his; but we are grateful for everything he wrote. (77)

(75). CURLE, RICHARD, Joseph Conrad, p. 13


CHAPTER III.
THE CRITICS AT WORK

Mr. Richard Curle tells us in his article in the Fortnightly Review for October, 1915, that Conrad has a sense of the proper method, a philosophic basis for all his artistic devices; that nothing is haphazard; that, in short, this is an author whom it is possible to criticize scientifically.

Being a scrupulous artist, he never does anything without a reason and ... his reasons spring not alone from a definite but from a discoverable attitude toward his work." (78)

This offers a challenge which demands a great deal from the critics---even from critics of the caliber of those who have attacked the problem.

But to criticize scientifically (if there is such a thing as scientific criticism) a man who by common consent is an artist first and last! This is not what we expect to find being attempted. Nor do we find it. The bulk of the criticism of Conrad is of the interpretative and appreciative brand, always with a spoken or implied admission that the critic is conscious of having come face to face with an impenetrable wall beyond which he cannot see, but where he suspects that

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(78). Fortn. Review, 104: 670-8, "Mr. Joseph Conrad and 'Victory'," by Richard Curle
the real secret lies. Only a very few of the critics give the impression of a real confidence in their critical acumen. One of the earliest articles, speaks of Conrad as the Critics' Puzzle. The Academy feels that Almayor's Folly is not a book which it is easy to appraise with confidence because it is so much more of a promise than a performance; moreover, it is difficult to say what the promise amounts to. This attitude continues down to the enigmatical statement of the International Book Review concerning Suspense:

There is no book in the world more difficult to appraise justly than the posthumous work of a great writer—unless it be the unfinished posthumous work of Conrad. (80)

In the preceding chapter we considered the evidences of Conrad's success. In spite of a few dissenting votes there seems no doubt that, for the present generation at least, Conrad's fame is secure. To look at the work of Joseph Conrad from the point of view of the achievement in modern criticism is another matter entirely. It takes very little examination of the critical works which deal with Joseph Conrad to see that most of them belong to the class of 'partial studies'—beginnings at criticism, in fact, which spend much time in personal

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(79). Academy, 47, 502, June 15, 1895
appreciation of the marvel they are contemplating, some time in resenting the fact that others have not approached him in the right way, some time in vainly attempting to find new ways of expressing the critical generalities which have gathered about Conrad's name, and a very little time in offering something in the way of actual contribution to an understanding of the work under consideration. Critics feel the inadequacy of what has been done; some attributing the inadequacy to deficiencies in the critical mind, others to the difficulty of the task before them. The New Republic in a review of Notes on Life and Letters says the critics have been and will continue to be baffled.

...His readers have all been guessing at him, all been trying to decipher him, to touch the heart of his mystery, and the sum total of our efforts is no great thing. (31)

It seems possible that it may be the high position that critics have assigned to Conrad that accentuates in their minds the poverty of criticism concerning him. He is ranked with the great ones of literature and cold criticism has not quite justified the judgment. With Mr. Curle imprudent enough to declare Conrad's work capable of scientific criticism the critics; whether they admit Mr. Curle to their ranks or not, are facing

(31). New Republic; 27:25, June 1, 1921
a challenge of no little difficulty.

A new writer appears on the scene. His first book marks him as unusual. The critics find faults in his work—plenty of them, according to such rules as they have come to rely on; but, nevertheless, there is something in the book and still more is there something in the succeeding books that makes the man not one to be passed by lightly. At first, criticism is comparatively easy. One does not worry much about an author's early books—although there is the chance that one might be the "keenly intuitive critic who discovered the genius"—like Mr. Wells. But, to repeat: the first criticisms are easy enough. One can talk vaguely of the author being one of 'promise'; that does not commit one too far. Yet there comes a time—and about 1914 or 1915 it is very evident in the case of Conrad—when the critics themselves begin to feel that either too much or too little has been said. The honor of the profession requires that the man be put in his place once for all. About 1915 we can imagine the critical mind expressing itself in some such fashion as this: "Twenty years and still not ticketed! What is more, it seems impossible to get it done. Plenty of reviewers and critics have tried and continue to try, but for some reason nothing comes of the vociferations. The trouble
is that the little fellows won't fall in line. They all insist he is the greatest living writer and then fuss among themselves as to the reason why. One says it is his psychology; another, his pictures of the sea. As a matter of fact there seem to be almost as many ideas as there are critics. The public can't be treated this way much longer. One ought to give the public something definite. And growing ever stronger is the ominous rumble of the word "genius," surely nothing to that, though, if so the critical gene is threatened. One might assume a dignified and unapproachable air and with a few sarcastic words on the danger of idols drop the subject; and yet,---by Jove! that book Youth did have something to it. Wonder just how much the rest of the books amount to. Expect it would be best to look them over again. Might as well settle this matter once for all."

---And straightway we have a few more confirmed Conradites---enthusiastic, but often uncritical.

The amount of dissatisfaction among Conrad critics over the state of criticism concerning him can hardly be emphasized too strongly. Comparatively few critical articles can be found in which some reference is not made to the inadequacy of what has hitherto been written. Some

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of the critics are outspoken in their comments, Mr.
Frederic T. Cooper wrote in 1912:

There is no other writer of similar magnitude whose treatment in the past has been so inadequate, so prejudiced, so blindly narrow and one sided. From the time when one of his earliest book notices bore the caption "A Puzzle for Reviewers" his detractors have never become tired of insisting that he does not know how to write English and does not know how to construct a story; and his admirers have expended their energies in explaining and apologizing for him. . . (83)

Mr. Cooper criticizes John A. Macy's article in the Atlantic Monthly, saying that Mr. Macy extols Conrad's lofty ideals and then "proceeds to devote a large part of his article to picking flaws in the construction of this author's several stories as measured by the pocket rule of a cut-and-dried technique." Nothing that Mr. Galsworthy has to say meets with Mr. Cooper's approval.

According to that gentleman, John Galsworthy's cordial appreciation lacks critical balance; Mr. Galsworthy is not interested in Conrad's technique.

He is mainly concerned with the attempt to sum up the essential spirit of Conrad in some epigrammatic, easily portable form, in finding some catch phrase

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that sounds like an explanation and which is really as futile as an attempt to reduce a myriad sided solid to a plane surface. (86)

Mr. Curle feels the same way about early criticism. After making exceptions of Ford Madox Ford (Hogger) and paying honor to Edward Garnett, he says:

... We can put all criticisms aside. If I had to prove my point from them alone it would be easy enough. Denser ineptitudes never gave heartier praise to an original genius.

He modestly adds:

I include my own past writings. (87)

That there is a great deal of truth in the charges of Mr. Curle and of Mr. Cooper cannot be denied; and yet there is a phase of the problem to which they have apparently given little attention; that is, the real worth of a composite of all the findings of early critics and reviewers. Down under the flattering generalities that cover many pages of the earlier comments of Conrad is to be found much that shows real insight and understanding. If Mr. Curle did not escape us by adding (88) that he is referring particularly to spoken comments,

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(87). CURLE, RICHARD. Joseph Conrad, p. 5/ (Incidentally, this study has revealed no 'past writings' by Curle concerning Conrad.

(88). Iadem, p.5, "But in saying that discerning critics miss the best in Conrad I am not talking so much of the written word. The wisest remarks about modern authors are nearly always spoken, and it is in conversation, mainly that one feels the pulse of current opinion."
an attempt to refute his statements might meet with some success. As it is we can have little idea what he resents. He does not tell us, except that Conrad is regarded as the author of Lord Jim rather than as the author of Nostromo. It may, at least, be pointed out that if early criticism is highly laudatory, it is no more so than the comments of these two gentlemen.

There were not many critical articles published before 1915—the year which marks the flood of criticism following Chance—and so the range of comment is of course limited. Yet one of the first things to strike the attention of one who considers Conrad criticism chronologically is the early date at which the outstanding elements of Conradian technique and artistry, as well as the peculiar characteristics of his subject matter, were recognized. The observation is at first a little astonishing, but it continues so only until one examines a chronological list of Conrad's works. It does not take long to see that all of his greatest work was done early in his literary career. In fact most of the critics would bound his great period by the dates 1897 and 1904. In that time he gave to the world The Nigger of the "Narcissus," Lord Jim, "Typhoon," Youth, with the two accompanying narratives "Heart of Darkness" and "The End of the Tether," and lastly, the great

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(89). Ibid. p. 4
Nostrono— all these in addition to his two novels in
collaboration with Ford Madox Ford (Hueffer), and his
Tales of Unrest. With all these coming in the first
ten years of Conrad's literary life—he began to write
in 1896—is it any wonder that early critics were
able to point the way for the later critics?

Later critics have chance with its perfection of
the 'Marlow method'; they have victory; and they have
Conrad's autobiographical writings, all of which are
important in casting the final vote. But they have
also the burden of explaining The Secret Agent and The
Rescue. Nearly all of the critics recognize a growth
of artistry with each successive volume; none of them
puts Almayer's Folly or An Outcast of the Islands on a
level with Conrad's best work; yet the "Minerva-like
(90)
birth of his powers" of which one critic speaks is not
so far wrong in view of the fact that his first two
books are all which can be in any measure said to be-
long to a period of literary apprenticeship.

Discarding for the moment the book reviews proper,
we still find a considerable body of writing. As early
as October, 1898, the Academy printed a short article
which spoke in appreciation of Conrad as an artist, and

(90). Bookman, 35:61-71, March 1912, "Representative
English Story Tellers: Joseph Conrad," by
F.T. Cooper
listed certain outstanding characteristics. The scope of the article was limited, and the prevailing note was appreciative rather than coldly critical, yet the author touched upon certain elements such as Conrad's lyrical impulse, his irony in "An Outpost of Progress," his faculty for seeing man's life in relation to the seen and unseen forces of nature --- elements which later critics in more extended articles have continued to emphasize. The same author spoke of Conrad's poetic reality and seems to have caught the same quality which Miss Ruth M. Stauffer explains so much more fully twenty-four years later as Romantic-Realism. A little sketch in the Current Literature for February, 1901, offered what has become a cliché of Conrad criticism, namely that he is a law unto himself.

Until it became the correct thing to appreciate Conrad's independence in matters of subject and technique, reviewers were worried because his stories did not fall into prescribed classes. The Athenæum carefully explained that the stories in the volume Youth are concentrated novels, probably, rather than short stories, and told us, too, that Conrad's methods and forms are his own.

(91) Academy, 56: 82, Oct., 15, 1898
(92) STAUFFER, RUTH M., Joseph Conrad, His Romantic-Realism (1922)
(93) Current Lit., 30: 222, Feb., 1901
(94) Athenæum, 1902, pt. 2: 824, Dec., 20
Harper's Weekly explained that Typhoon is not a novel.

An early criticism which showed particular insight and anticipated later criticism is in the Academy for May 9, 1903. It is especially interesting because it contained the first discoverable attempt to explain and justify Conrad's "indirect method"—another name (96) for the 'Marlow method.' The explanation in it was that the method offered Conrad an opportunity to introduce the point of view of minor characters. Stephen (98) Reynolds in 1912, Henry James in 1914, Hugh Walpole (100) and Richard Curle in 1915, and more particularly two (102) more recent critics, Miss Frances W. Cutler and Mr.


(96). The above attempt at tracing the growth of critical opinion concerning Conrad is of course of little ultimate value, for the very important reason that much of the material which should have been read could not be found. A statement that there has been no attention given to such and such a phase of his work before a given date is always meant to be qualified by the clause—so far as the material read for this study has shown.

(97). Academy, 64: 453, May 9, 1903


(99). JAMES, HENRY, Notes on Novelists

(100). WALPOLE, HUGH, Joseph Conrad


(102). Sewanee Review, 26: 28-38, Jan., 1918, "Why Marlow?" by Frances W. Cutler
Donald Davidson again take up the subject with more illuminating comments. Early reviewers for the most part regret it, overlook it, or condemn it.

The same year, that is, 1903, Mr. Hugh Clifford launched the term "mosaic" into the vocabulary of Conrad critics, a word which Mr. Clifford seemed to like, and one which has caught the fancy of many another who has spoken of Conrad. Mr. Clifford, himself the author of several books on Malay life, questioned Conrad's psychological insight into the oriental characters, and with the exception of some like Mr. Mencken who with characteristic assurance asks, "The cares? (105) Conrad is his own God, and creates his own Malay," critics in general have accepted the statement..

John A. Macy in 1906 was quite appreciative of Conrad as a writer of the see but was distinctly out of patience with what he calls Conrad's "mania for description." The following paragraph contains a bit of truth and will serve also to illustrate Mr. Macy's style and the general tenor of his comment:

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(103). Sewanee Review, 33: 168-177, April, 1925, "Conrad's Directed Indirections," by Donald Davidson


(105). MENCKEN, H. L., A Book of Prefaces, p. 59
In Typhoon, where a steamer with a deck almost vertical is plunging through a storm, we are on the bridge beside the simple dogged captain while he shouts orders down to the engine room through the tube. Without warning we are down in the engine room, hearing the captain's voice from above, and as suddenly we are back on the bridge again. A man crawls across the deck in a tempest so black that he cannot see whose legs he is groping at. We are immediately informed that he is a man of fifty, with coarse hair, of immense strength, with great lumpy hands, a hoarse voice, easy going and good natured—as if the man were visible at all except as a blot in the darkness. (106)

Mr. Macy believes Conrad's unpopularity is due to his subjective quality, his indirectness, and his melancholy.

John Galsworthy's criticism in 1908 is among the most famous of early utterances. It has brought forth considerable criticism. Few agree with Galsworthy (107) that with Conrad "Nature is first, man is second." (106) (109) (110) Edwin Björkman, H.W. Boynton, and F.T. Cooper rise angrily to disagree. In Galsworthy's words Conrad has

...A certain cosmic spirit, a power of taking the reader down below the surface of the earth's heart to watch a process that, in its slow inexorable course has formed a crust, to which are clinging all our little different living shapes.

He has the power of making his reader feel the inevitable oneness of all things that be, of breathing into him a sense of solace that he himself is a part of a great unknown unity.

Mr. Cooper insists that most readers feel above all else the vital and tremendous human interest of Mr. Conrad's books. Mr. Björkman says, "Nature is present in abundance, but only as seen and heard and felt by men."

In 1912 we find Stephen Reynolds in the Quarterly Review protesting that too much is made of Conrad's Polish inheritance as a means of accounting for and explaining his work. To him Conrad's sea experiences seem of highest importance:

Behind this psychological windings and subtleties, behind his brooding impressionism and keen realism, one comes almost always upon the strong working ideal that belongs to British seafaring tradition. When he judges his characters, that is his final test—the seaman's. All his heroic men are seamen or connected with the sea; his landsmen he is apt to treat with a sailor's curiosity and a sailor's slight contempt, as if they may be good or bad, just as it happens, but in any case they are not seamen." (Ill)

In a quotation from Lord Jim Mr. Reynolds finds Conrad's underlying reason for making the sea such a dominant factor in the lives of his characters.

"After two years of training he went to sea... and in time, when yet very young, he became chief mate of a fine ship, without ever having been tested by those events of the sea that show in the light of day the inner worth of a man, the edge of his temper, (Ill). Quarterly Review, 217: 159-160, July, 1912, "Joseph Conrad and Sea Fiction"
the fiber of his stuff; that reveal the quality of his resistance and the secret of his pretenses, not only to others but also to himself." (112)

Testing by the events of the sea is what Conrad does to the men of his books, be they seamen or landmen. Mr. Reynolds explains. The action of the story is plotted out to that end, and the situations invented for that purpose.

Miss Grace Isabel Colbroon discussed "Conrad's Women" and offered some interesting half-truths; or perhaps it would be best to say that her statements describe the women of Conrad's early books but overlook many of the later characters. They describe the women of Almayer's Folly and of An Outcast of the Islands much better than Mrs. Gould of Nostromo, Freya of "Freya of the Seven Isles," Mrs. Verloc in The Secret Agent or---were it fair to hold Miss Colbroon accountable for characters not then created---one might add, much better than the more complex, more conventional, and more charming ladies like Doña Rita in The Arrow of Gold or Madame de Montevesso in Suspense, both of whom Conrad gave us in late years and who do not fit well in the analysis.

They [Conrad's women] are just as one more, possibly the most potent force of nature, acting on and influencing the development of the male protagonist—never because of themselves or of what may happen to them. Hence Conrad's women are never complex. They do not change or develop in any sense of the word. . . . What they do, or what they are—-it is usually what they are—does not matter of itself. It counts only in its effect on the men into whose lives they come. . . . The men come and go, finding the women of each place, just as a line of sea forest and sky is complete and allied to each place, part of the memory of it in aftertime. (113)

Speaking of Nina in An Outcast of the Islands, Miss Colbroom says:

She does not reason—-Mr. Conrad's women do not reason—-she acts on instinct and impulse.

Amy Foster, in the story of that name, Miss Colbroom thinks"is a typical Conrad woman . . . in her articulate dullness enlivened only by one flash of feeling which led her out into strange seas of emotion, finally swampin her puny soul."

The characterization is true enough of Amy Foster, but Amy Foster is far from typical. Conrad's later women are certainly not quite like that. It is not "inarticulate dullness" that a reviewer in 1925 has in mind when speaking of the women in Suspense, he says:

No one now living and writing makes poetry so charmingly of the curve of a forearm, a pose, the fall of a silken robe from shoulder to floor. It is perhaps the strangest of all

the gifts of this sailor who passed his youth amid the roughness of small merchant ships and of ports. (114)

So far this survey has been carried in a very cursory manner to that convenient stopping place, the publication of Chance. Still, possibly enough has been given to indicate that early criticism deserves more credit than it received at the hands of Mr. Curle and Mr. Cooper. If one is to judge by the criticism which follows, that is, if one is to use the general consensus of opinion so far as it is discoverable as the norm, and this study is pretending to little more-- the early criticism of Conrad is not to be sneered at. Of course it is more than possible that a consciousness that criticism during the past thirty years has on the whole done very well for Mr. Conrad (in an appreciative way at least) ---if not too well, as many of his friends fear---may cause one to take lightly these convictions of Mr. Curle and Mr. Cooper. There is no doubt that Lord Jim has been and remains a favorite with many readers, yet no less is it true that criticism from the beginning found more to praise in Nostromo. Mr. Curle was offering no new criticism. Enough has been quoted in Chapter IX to show the efforts of early critics and reviewers to

elevate Conrad at once to a dignified plane.

On the other hand there is considerable truth in Mr. Curle's observation that critics have been trying to "place" Conrad. Yet it may be questioned if the real trouble in this critic's mind is not whether his friend Conrad will be "placed" but whether he will be "placed" in Mr. Curle's way. It is rather natural that Conrad's admirers should be uneasy until they were convinced that things were going all right. There is little doubt but that much of Conrad's reputation is the result of active campaigning on the part of his friends, Galsworthy, Hugh Clifford, Mr. Garnett, Mr. Wells, and a score of others. A number of articles have appeared in which this fact is regretted, in which his popularity is described as a mushroom growth. Richard Aldington talked of his being "ins advisedly over-boomed by his adherents," and the Nation in 1920 spoke of the "aspiring sophomores" who

... Hugged the tales of Conrad to very superior bosoms and regarded sternly the profane vulgar who knew him not. They fought for their idol valiantly and long and well; they established his

(115). Nation and Athenæum, 36; 272, Nov. 15, 1924, by Richard Aldington. "Whether his reputation, ins advisedly over-boomed by his adherents, will stand firmly in the future, or whether it will fall with a disastrous crash like that of Henry James, cannot be foretold. Four or five books by Conrad will perhaps still be commonly read at the end of the century."
fame as a great writer; they made him almost popular and not to admire him the badge of a rude and unlettered mind. (116)

A few additional sentences from this article are of interest as representing an outspoken comment which there is evidence to believe has been echoed more widely than is sometimes supposed:

For years he nourished their pride in him richly. He wrote "Lord Jim" and "Typhoon" and that incomparable story "Youth". By that time criticism had fallen silent. No one remarked the strain and mannerisms of the later books or the spiritual meagerness of the autobiographical writings.

Some of this may seem far afield in an effort to justify the contention that criticism of Conrad was---let us say---distinctly in no need of a boost. It may, however, serve to suggest proof of the personal factor taking a definite hand in directing Conrad's literary fortunes.

(116), Nation, 110; 804, June 12, 1920, "The Secret of Joseph Conrad"
CHAPTER IV.

THE CRITICS AT WORK (Continued)

Until 1914 Conrad's principal recognition had come from the critics. With the publication of *Chance* his friends saw their favorite gain the public recognition they had been demanding as his due. Encouraged, no doubt, by his sudden popularity, critics began to flood the magazines with more extended comments. Although it has already been pointed out that, in the main, early criticism anticipated nearly all of what later criticism has elaborated on or confirmed, there remained much to be done. A survey of criticism from this point on reveals attempts to make definite studies of some phase of Conrad's work. Although there were plenty of generalities and more than enough garlands offered, serious consideration of more detailed matters finds place. Just a glance at a few of the subjects which critics have considered will indicate something of the scope of the articles which appeared:

"Master of Languages"
"A Master of Literary Color"
"Joseph Conrad and Sea Fiction"
"Joseph Conrad's Women"
"Sermon in One Man"
"Kipling and Conrad"
"Why Marlow?"
"Conrad Compared with Dostoevsky and Other Masters"
"Conrad and His Art"
"The Realm of Conrad"
"The Secret of Joseph Conrad's Appeal"
"Joseph Conrad the Man"
"Conrad and His Fame"
"Joseph Conrad, Son of Poland"
"Joseph Conrad's Heroines in Real Life"
"Why Conrad Didn't Write French"
"Personality of Joseph Conrad"
"Joseph Conrad's Heroic Pessimism"
"Conrad and Hardy"
"The Meaning of Conrad"

But there is no reason for adding more. An examination of any fairly complete Conrad bibliography indicates the range. Personal appreciations rank high, appreciations both of the man and of his work, for, as has been noted by critics again and again, readers tend to ally themselves definitely either as lovers or haters of Conrad. They are seldom indifferent. To the onlooker it is curious to find how many of Conrad's friends feel a call to enlighten the world—generally by the 'testimony' method. Many a non-committal title turns out to be little more than an enthusiastic memoir or a collection of unimportant, though generally interesting, reminiscences. They have their place without doubt, but they do get in the way of what might otherwise be real contributions to the sum total of critical findings. There is this, however, to be admitted. Regret the intrusion of personal bias as much as we may, it has done one thing for criticism; it has given to what offerings we have a tone of sincerity. An overwhelming majority of the criticisms of Conrad ring with actual feeling and conviction. Let the review be as super-
ficial and unimaginative as it will—and there are plenty of that kind—seldom do we find one which does not reveal, somewhere beneath the 'correct' jottings of its professional comment, a distinct personal feeling on the part of the writer. The percentage of either reviews or criticisms that have only the stereotyped ring of the indifferent hack-writer's potboiling is surprisingly low. This fact has been one of the most convincing evidences of Conrad's real power that the study has afforded. Possibly because Conradites are so firmly convinced that Conrad is a writer's writer, that he is not 'caviare to the general,' they feel certain he needs explaining. Altruistic motives or professorial leanings have made the interpretative element loom large in bulk. There is his technique, that technique which

... In the beginning was so tentative, then so charmingly (and no longer naively) impulsive, and latterly, deliberate and uncompromising... [117]

And Marlow. Has the public appreciated Marlow? Then the uninitiated are so apt to miss the fine points of Conrad's irony and of his philosophy (or perhaps they may think he has a philosophy when there is nothing he dislikes more). Perhaps his readers have not learned to like that panorama. Nostrum. Do they know what a

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fine study of Russia is really offered in Under
Western Eyes, or if so, are they acquainted with the
fact that Conrad's Russia is the older Russia, the
Russia of Turgenev, not the new Russia? Do his readers
know sea writers and how they compare with Conrad? Have
they really taken time to note the relations between
Conrad and Hardy? Wouldn't it be interesting to see
the results of a minute examination of Conrad's sentence
structure and the evidence that examination gives of
his foreign extraction?

Comparison with other writers has been a favorite
pastime with the critics. Zola and Kipling were named
the first year that Conrad wrote, and the list has
swelled until one might wonder if Conrad had any charac-
teristics of his own. Of the French there are Flaubert,
Pierre Loti, and de Maupassant in the lead. Most critics
must name some of the Russians; Turgenev perhaps first,
with a great deal of disagreement about Dostoeievsky,
Tolstoy, and Chekhoff. When it comes to the English,
he must be compared of course with all the sea writers,
Marryat and Melville being most popular. Kipling and
Stevenson must stand comparison. Hardy has his philos-
ophy dissected for minute examples of likeness and

(118). Current Lit., 52: 236-7, Feb., 1912
difference. Poe is brought forward with his "Descent (119)
into a Maelstrom" and some few other stories. The (120)
Ancient Mariner and Marlow we learn are two of a kind.
And of course the whole galaxy of modern writers pass
in rapid review at stated intervals—at any time, in
fact, when another critic feels it necessary to re-
affirm Conrad’s surpassing power.

A composite of the criticism of Conrad offers ex-
cellent opportunity for a study of the methods of mod-
er criticism. Few of the methods of approach are

(119). Sat.Review of Lit., 1:90, Sept. 6, 1924, "Dat
Ole Davi Scs," by Stephen Graham
"He is a clever psychologist, but the Slavs
have no exclusive right in psychology and
Conrad’s methods are not those of Dostoiev-
sky, or of Chekhov or of Androyieff. You
are indeed nearer to the stories of Edgar
Allen Poe when reading Joseph Conrad. "The
Descent into the Maelstrom" slowed down by
the ultra-rapid lens, as they say in cinema-
parlance, would produce something not unlike
a Conrad story."

Nation, 102: 154, Feb. 10, 1916, "Within the
Tides"—Review
"'The Inn of the Two Witches' is a story of
horror almost as haunting as the "Pit and the
Pendulum" and faintly resembling it in motive,
or at least in its machinery of terror."

(120). Sewanee Review, 26:28-33, Jan., 1918, "Why
Marlow?" by Frances W. Cutler

Sat.Review of Lit., 1:90, Sept. 6, 1924, "Dat Ole
Davi Scs," by Stephen Graham

Dial, 62:441-3, May 17, 1917, by John A. Macy
(—a slightly different emphasis.)
missing. The impressionist is there in Mr. Ford (Heufer); in Mr. Arthur Symons, too, as a paragraph like the following will prove:

Conrad's inexplicable mind has created for itself a secret world to live in, some corner stealthily hidden away from view; among impenetrable forests, on the banks of untravelled rivers. From that corner, like a spider in his web, he throws out tentacles into the darkness; he gathers in his spails, he collects them like a miser, stripping from them their dreams and visions to decorate his web magnificently. He chooses among them, and sends out into the world shadowy messengers, for the troubling of the peace of men, self-satisfied in his ignorance of the invisible. At the center of his web sits an elemental sarcasm discussing human affairs with a calm and cynical ferocity: "that particular field whose mission is to jog the memories of men, lest they should forget the meaning of life," behind that sarcasm

(121) We are borrowing Robert Morss Lovett's classification of critics: ("Criticism Past and Present," pp. 30-37, Backgrounds of Book Reviewing, ed. by Herbert A. Wallery, George Wehr, pub., 1925; also in Litt. Sup., of New Republic, Oct. 26, 1921)

According to him there are four kinds:

1. The historical and interpretative critic, inspired chiefly by devotion to the artist. He envisages the function of criticism as that of understanding what the artist has attempted and of appraising his performance in the light of this understanding. His task is that of interpretation of the masterpiece through the personality of the artist.

2. The aesthetic and judicial critic, who forgets the artist in the work of art. His problem is to appraise the technique, to point out where-in and why it failed to do justice to the conception.

3. The ethical critic, who may pose as a social philosopher or a moralist

4. The impressionistic critic who is chiefly absorbed in himself. In his own sensations, impressions, reactions; who tries to express his emotion in language and so become an artist himself.
crouches some ghastly influence, outside humanity, some powerful devil, invisible, poisonous, irresistible, spawning evil for his delight. They guard this secret corner of the world with mists and delusions, so that very few of those to whom the shadowy messengers have revealed themselves can come nearer than the outer edge of it." (122)

"A Sermon in One Man", suggests the ethical in Mary Austin. Hugh Walpole wavers between being the interpretative critic and the judicial one, for his aim as he expresses it is

...To consider him [Conrad] as a novelist—
that is, as a narrator of the histories of certain human beings, with his attitude to these histories. (124)

Mr. Curle is a little bit of everything, although "inspired chiefly by devotion to the artist" must be written large after his name. The aesthetic or judicial critic is growing more numerous; the ethical, possibly because Conrad's own interests are elsewhere, has never been much in evidence, except for speculations concerning his philosophy; but for practically thirty years critics have been busy trying to understand Conrad and 'to appraise his performance in the light of that understanding.'

Of the more technical criticism which the years

(122). Forum, 53: 579-592, May, 1915. "Conrad," by Arthur Symons (This paragraph is the opening one of the article)


(124). WALPOLE, HUGH, Joseph Conrad, p. 37
have gathered about Conrad's work, perhaps the most serious has been in consideration of his methods—or method, one should say. For in Conrad discussions the word 'method' always refers to one thing, his perfection of that curious, involved, indirect manner of narration identified with the name of its most important agent, Marlow. There are those who profess to see in Conrad's 'Marlow method' a new contribution to the technique of the novel. A realization of the full possibilities of this method seems to have struck the critics with a surprise from which they have not fully recovered. Attempts were made to explain and (125) justify it quite early, but expressions of admiration for it came late. It was first looked upon as a personal peculiarity of Mr. Conrad's, a rather exasperating peculiarity, too, but one which might be overlooked for the sake of the stories he managed to tell in spite of it. Most critics were ready to agree with Henry James that

It places Mr. Conrad absolutely alone as a votary of the way to do a thing that shall make it undergo most doing. (126)

The difficulty, the unwieldiness of it, was what first struck those who considered it as a method of fiction

(125). See references, p.44 above

(126). James, Henry, Notes on Novelists, p.345
writing. A second step was to find justification for the method in the material Conrad was trying to embody in his story:

And it is obvious, [writes Richard Curle] that if a novelist wants to make more than one point in a story he must use some such method as does Conrad in his complicated narrations. After all, though it sounds paradoxical, Conrad's indirect manner is merely a search for conciseness in difficult circumstances. (127)

Or perhaps it was no more than an explanation that was attempted:

Conrad must have his direct narrator, because that is the way in which stories in the past generally came to him . . . he must have it by word of mouth, because it is by word of mouth that he himself has always demanded it, and if one witness is not enough for the truth of it then he must have two or three. (128)

Mr. Walpole found a similarity between Browning's method in "The Ring and the Book" and Conrad's use of multiplied (129) witnesses in Chance, Lord Jim, and Nostromo. Mr. Wilson Follet, writing in 1915, went into the matter with what seems to have been a more thorough understanding of Conrad's method than his predecessors had shown; but the two articles which handle the 'Marlow method' most satisfactorily are "Why Marlow?" by Frances W. Cutler and

(128). WALPOLE, HUGH, Joseph Conrad, pp.42-3
(129). Ibid, p.103
"Conrad's Directed Indirections" by Mr. Donald Davidson. Here are some selections from Miss Cutler's article:

Marlow's power rests, not on his appeal to sense or reason, but on the response of our awakened imaginations to his own.

Marlow would quicken to us the mystery of forgotten lives, and would share with us his and our own questionings. And how could such tales be told save as Marlow tells them,--chance incidents, scraps of speech, interwoven, interpreted?

She says Marlow ignores the rules of narration:

...That a story should have but one teller, to whom nothing in his tale is unknown; that the psychological story in particular demands the omniscient author-narrator. But Marlow's method not only defies the text books; it insistently questions some basic assumptions of the critics of fiction. They have declared that the novelist by eliminating the accidental and the irrelevant and revealing the causal, simplifies life. Yet here is a writer who deliberately complicates life, who, instead of putting his characters under the microscope, surrounds them with their reflections in the mirroring minds of tellers and listeners.

In so doing he has varily suggested another law and type for fiction. The older novel, the simplification of life, gave us the creative process achieved, the decision handed down. But with Conrad we actually enter into the creative process; we grope with him through blinding mists we catch as fleeting glimpses and thrill with sudden illuminations. (130)

Mr. Davidson's study is particularly well done. With almost no reference to the 'Marlow method' as such he proceeds to call attention to Conrad's "daring disregard of chronological order in narrative." He speaks

(130). Sewanee Review, 26: 28-38, Jan., 1918, "Why Marlow?" by Frances W. Cutler
briefly of the place of what he calls the "inversive method" in English fiction and then carefully illustrates Conrad's development of it. His effort to trace the gradual increase of its employment from book to book is especially illuminating.

An analysis [Mr. Davidson says] of Conrad's total production shows that inversion occurs in nearly all of his works. If we omit Romance and The Inheritors, we shall find that of the twelve novels, only three -- The Fisser of the "Narcissus," Typhoon, and The Shadow Line are prevailingly straightforward in method. (131)

Sixteen of the twenty-three short stories (Mr. Davidson's article was written early in 1925 and so did not take into consideration Conrad's two last volumes of stories) are characterized by inversion, and most of these sixteen are the story-within-a-story type. Mr. Davidson treats the "inversive method" as only one aspect of Conrad's inversive technique. He speaks in admiration of what (132)

Mr. Follet had also noted, namely the deftness with which Conrad introduces a portion of a character's antecedent history to bear on present events, and goes on to say:

What has not been noted is that this portion is almost regularly given, not in dry summary form, as is the common practice of novelists, but in direct dramatic narrative, of equal vividness with the events which surround it and for which direct narrative is generally reserved.

(131) American Review, 55:163-77, April, 1925, "Joseph Conrad's directed Indirections," by Mr. Donald Davidson

(132) POULIT, PILING, JOSEPH CONRAD (1915)
Conrad's inversive technique achieves its first unqualified success in the massive Uostromo "in binding together, motivating, and electrifying the sprawling bundles of material." Mr. Davidson finds the real importance of this method in "its bearing on the reconciliation of two apparently conflicting elements—dramatic subject-matter and intellectual content," for he believes

... one of the chief critical problems in the consideration of Conrad's art is to decide how he extracts from a subject-matter that tends to be violently melodramatic, a representation of life eminently serious, intellectually and emotionally convincing.

And here is the value of the inversive method; according to Mr. Davidson it is

... a structural technique which makes possible a release from a too great absorption in events. He secures a satisfying relevance, as Mr. Follett has indicated, by re-arranging events with regard to import rather than chronology, slicing into his main narrative whenever he pleases, any needful portions of history or incident. The effect at its best, when the involution is not too complex, is to throw the emphasis on the underlying significance of the human situation, thus rendering possible a discreet and serious treatment of melodramatic material. The reader, possessed in advance of knowledge which the participating characters do not have, looks down on the scene with Olympian foresight and with pity for brave mortal strife... His emotions are thereby released and tempered for the suspense of an evolving character rather than for mere incidental outcome.

Comparatively few critics question Conrad's mastery of the English language. One finds occasional mention of his lapses but always with an apologetic note. Any
fault they find is overbalanced by their admiration for
the ability he has shown in mastering our idiom. Conrad's
success in the use of a foreign language has sent the
critics scurrying around for names to match with his
in this particular achievement. They find that French
was mastered by the German Heine, by Jean Moréas, a
Greek, and by Stuart Merrill and Francis Veld-Griffin,
Americans. Among foreigners writing English are Maarten
Martens, George Santayana, Hendrik Van Loon, Edwin Björk-
man, Carl Schurz, and Abraham Cohen. But this array of
names fails to dim the brilliance of Conrad's achievement
in the minds of most critics. They find an occasional
'lie' for 'lay', a 'like' for 'as'. One notes here and
there "an adverb oddly transposed, a use of 'already' as
if it were the much more flexible 'déjà'," But hardly
more than half a dozen critics in the past thirty years
have seriously questioned Conrad's mastery of the language.
This fact gives particular force to Mr. E. H. Kellett's
article in the London Mercury for March of this year.
He has made a detailed study of the first three of four
chapters of The Rover with rather astonishing results—
that is, in the light of past criticism—and he pro-
ceeds to 'speak his mind' in no uncertain terms:

and the Gift of Tongues"

(134). Contemp. Review, 125: 54-61, Jan., 1924, "Joseph
Conrad" by Carleton Kemp Allen
Let some awful Aristarch speak out loud and bold, and the rest of the flock follow like sheep, turning each one in the way of the bell-wether... the common statement that Conrad writes English like an Englishman, and that it is impossible from his writings to detect his foreign birth, is simply false. He writes the language, it is true, astonishingly well, and his vocabulary is both choice and enormous. But his style shows so many marks indicating that he thought in one language and wrote in another that it makes us wonder whether the critics in question can have read the books with any care. (135).

Mr. Kellett’s quotations from Conrad’s one book, all chosen within a very small number of pages, bring their own conviction. To select just a few of the many he gives:

"But as to that, Old Peyrol had made up his mind from the first to blow up his valuable charge—unemotionally, for such was his character, formed under the sun of the Indian Seas in lawless contests with his kind for a little loot that vanished as soon as grasped, but mainly for bare life almost as precarious to hold through its ups and downs, and which now had lasted for fifty-eight years."—p.1 (136)

This, Mr. Kellett points out, is a sentence which assuredly would never have been written by any Englishman since the seventeenth century. He notes the use of the adverb "unemotionally" in an awkwardly detached position; the phrase, "formed under the sun..." as an example of Conrad’s common habit of adding to a sentence already finished a long adjectival phrase—remarking that an


(136). The quotations have been given their location in the Canterbury Edition of The Rover
Englishman would use a clause; then there is the strange use of "grasped"; "and which" is incorrect, for there is no previous "which" to justify the "and."

"He shaved his big cheeks with a real English razor, looted years ago from an officer's cabin in an English East Indianman captured by a ship he was serving in then." --p.2

"He did not get rid of his followers till the door of the Port Office." --p.3

"In the various offices connected with the sea where his duties took him,..."p.3

"Nobody could know. . . unless he told them." --p.5

A slip like the last Mr. Kellott attributes to the colloquial origin of Conrad's English. Having learned his English mainly from talk, he is not always alive to the difference between the colloquial style and the style of written prose. The following is given as an example of Conrad's unending sentences.

"He felt a little funny as it were, and the funniest thing was the thought which crossed his mind that he could indulge his fancy (if he had a mind to it) to buy up all this land to the furthest field, away over there where the truck lost itself sinking into the flats bordering the sea where the rise at the end of the Girona peninsula had assumed the appearance of a block cloud," --p.9

These show some of Conrad's more curious difficulties:

". . . He had been wearing next his bare skin--like a pious penitent his hair-shirt--a sort of waistcoat made of two thicknesses of an old sail-cloth and stitched all over in the manner of a quilt with tarred twine."--p.11
". . . Peyrol drew a long breath into his broad chest with a pepper-and-salt pelt down the breast-bone." --p. 12

These given are only eight of some thirty-four such examples which Mr. Kellett finds in perhaps fifty pages of The Rover. The article, aside from launching a few epithets in the direction of the critics, seems to have been written calmly and with every effort to be fair-minded. Mr. Kellett evidently admires Conrad but sees no reason to praise him for virtues he does not have.

If the critics before Mr. Kellett have found little fault with his mastery of our language, they have not been so reserved when commenting upon his diction in particular stories—early ones for the most part. The style of the first three books is commonly spoken of as florid. Mr. Walpole found much of the earlier prose definitely lyrical with many purple patches.

Prose piled high with sonorous and slow-moving adjectives, three adjectives to a noun, prose that sounds like an Eastern invocation to a deity in whom, nevertheless, the suppliant does not believe. (137)

Mr. Island Hall speaks of the same characteristics, adding this explanation:

It must be said, however, that this is due not so much to an excess of 'care for the shape and ring of sentences' as to the fact that he has yet to realize that English prose has not the crystal

(137), WALPOLE, HUGH, Joseph Conrad, p. 75
resonance of French. Obviously this early style is founded on French models. The later works do not contain such conscious profusion of rhythm and regular cadence, though even in "Victory" there is often a suspicion of timber that is not English. 

There is an uneasy feeling in the minds of certain critics that his English, while admirable in itself, is not quite a fitting vehicle for the stories which he tells. Marlow's language is unaccountably literary for an oral narrator. When theigger of the "Narcissus" was published, there was criticism that the "tense, exaggerated, highly poetic diction" was not suitable to the common sailor who tells the story. As one critic put it:

Jack Tar does not speak of "incomparable repose," he is by no means so fond of the word "incomparable" as our author is. He commands no such stilted language as this:

"The men turned in wet and turned out stiff to face the redeeming and ruthless exactions of their glorious and obscure fate."

Nor of his ship would he say that:

"She was born in the thundering peal of hammers beating upon iron, in black eddies of smoke, under a grey sky on the banks of the Clyde."

His only weapons are Gatling guns, and he brings them to bear on the trivial and insignificant in the same way as on what is important. In consequence the gradations of light and shade are lost, the many excellent passages are not shown up by artistic contrast. 

(138) Leland Hall, Chapter IX, pp.164-5 in CUNLIFFE, J.W., English Literature During the Last Half Century.

(139) Academy, 53; Sup., Jan.1, 1, 1898
It must be made clear however that these comments all concern his earlier work. It was in his increasing power over the language that the critics found his greatest progress. A topic which has been fruitful of much discussion is the comparison of his early and later styles. Mr. Burt in the *Hibbert Journal* takes up the question in some detail. A portion of his article is worth quoting if only for the interesting remarks he makes about the early style.

From Almayer's Folly to *The Arrow of Gold* there is a continuous development. The rich and sensuous imagery, the purple patches and the rolling periods give place to a more subdued, more 'nervous' and less 'poetic' manner. The first style appeals to the emotions, the second more to the intellect; the first is more splendid, the second more subtle and faultless. The weakness of the early style is a tendency to monotony. One grows weary of those somber and impenetrable forests, those illimitable seas and immobile lakes; moreover, the purple patches divert attention from the progress of the whole story. A characteristic trick of it is to attach three or four sounding adjectives, in the French manner, after the noun. Towards the end of *An Outcast of the Islands* this trick becomes almost laughingly frequent and reaches a climax in such a phrase as

"In his head seathed thoughts restless, somber, chilling, horrible, and venomous, like a nestful of snakes."

A similar and very familiar trick is that of emphatic repetition:

"A glaze came over his staring eyes, over his eyes that gazed hopelessly at the rising tide."

"He looked at the sparkling solitudes of the flowing water, of the water flowing ceaseless and free in a soft cool murmur of ripple at his feet." (140)

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A great many of the critics have written of the French influence upon Conrad's style, especially upon his early style. Mr. Walpole remarked that "The influence is mainly to be detected in the arrangement of words and sentences as though he had in the first years of his work used it as a crutch before he could walk alone." The Dial says with its usual positiveness:

Anyone can see that he has formed himself on French rather than English models. His eloquence and his volubility are not in the best English tradition, any more than his fastidiousness is.

On several occasions the Nation insists upon Conrad's resemblance to Loti but admits that there is all the difference of race:

The Englishman is less sensuous, less sentimental than the Frenchman, more spiritual and also more brutal. Then Mr. Conrad has no form; he wanders, wavers, does not load, but is driven. His expression is often effective, yet always too copious. Instead of patiently seeking the one word, he takes the half dozen that offer themselves. (143)

Conrad has an "imagination and temperamental impressionability rich as Pierre Loti's yet saved from sickness by Anglo Saxon Sanity."

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(141). WALPOLE, HUGH, Joseph Conrad, p.78
(143). Nation, 67: 54, July 21, 1898
(144). Nation, 76: 476, June 11, 1903
There is an early comparison between Conrad and Zola which has not been repeated as far as this study has revealed. The critic writing in the Athenaeum in 1895 saw the influence of Zola in certain passages such as an "overloaded, but powerful description of a (145) Borean forest" in Almeyer's Folly. The accompanying quotation, which the critic gives us, makes the comparison not unconvincing:

"In a moment the two little nutshells with their occupants floated quietly side by side, reflected by the black water in the dim light struggling through a high canopy of dense foliage; while above, away up in the broad day, flamed immense red blossoms, sending down on their heads a shower of great dew-sparkling petals that descended, rotating slowly in a continuous and perfumed stream; and over them, under them, in the sleeping waters; all around them in a ring of luxuriant vegetation bathed in the warm air charged with strong and harsh perfumes, the intense work of tropical nature went on; plants shooting upwards, entwined, interlaced in inextricable confusion, climbing madly and brutally over each other in the terrible silence of a desperate struggle towards the life-giving sunshine above— as if struck with sudden horror at the soothing mass of corruption below, at the death and decay from which they sprang."

(145)

One critic believes Conrad's story, "The Idiots", might have been done by Neuquassent; it has something of the air of "imperturbable veracity which gave his writings such veracity as might abide in an official edict of (147) Fate." A curious comment and one which is substantially

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(145). Athenaeum, 1895; 671, May 25
(147). Nation, 67: 54, July 21, 1898.
repeated seven years later was made by the Nation 1913:

There are whole pages in the present volume ['Twixt Land and Sea] which have the effect of a translation, a very beautiful and almost concealed translation from the tongue of Gautier and Maupassant. (148)

Numerous critics speak of Conrad's debt to Flaubert but with more emphasis upon gains in his method of writing than upon noticeable influences on his style.

English writers of fiction are thought to have had very little influence on Conrad's style unless it be Henry James. A few critics do speak of the influence of the English Bible upon his diction, but little more is said. In spite of the poetic qualities of his writing he knows little of English poetry.

The word "distinctive" is the favorite term among critics when speaking of his style. Whether talking of his later or earlier manner, critics are agreed in using such words as "unusual," "individual," and "striking." One occasionally finds the more descriptive terms

[148]. Nation, 96: 360, April 10, 1913, "'Twixt Land and Sea"—Review.

In 1920 an article entitled "The Secret of Joseph Conrad" (Nation, 110: 304, June 12, 1920) is this concerning The Rescue: "The whole account as of a remote and sultry Troy reads like a faultless translation of some late born Theophile Gautier fed on Henry James and Bertrand Russell's essay, 'A Free Men's Worship.' Here perhaps we come upon the secret of Mr. Joseph Conrad. He sailed the Malayan seas with the vision of a French Parnassian. He saw the visible world magnificently but never naively."
"leisurely" or "deliberate."

No very detailed studies have been made of his character drawing. Mr. Curle devoted a short chapter (149) to Conrad's women and a short chapter to his men; but for the most part criticism on this topic has been only incidental. Miss Colbroon's short article on (150) "Conrad's Women" has been referred to; in substantial agreement with her is William Lyon Phelps. Mr. Kuneker is conservative:

Conrad opens no new windows to her soul, but he has painted some full-length portraits and made many life like sketches. (152)

Conrad is, in the opinion of most critics, more successful in picturing his men. One speaks enthusiastically of his "notable power of characterization, of making us grasp situations or souls by means of some felicitous phrase," instancing the description of Captain Mitchell in Nostromo as a good example;

"He was too pompously and innocently aware of his own existence to observe that of others."

(149). CURLE, RICHARD, Joseph Conrad: A Study
(150). pp. 48-49, above
(152). HUNXER, JAMES, Ivory Ape and Peacocks, p. 14
John Galsworthy notes the "kindly diagnosis of the
departmental Briton" in such characters as Captain
Lingard, MacWhirr, Mr. Jukes, Inspector Heat, and others,
and says of them all:

Breathing and palpable, clothed firmly in their
suitable flesh, they are yet elusive, as though
jealous of displaying those dynamic powers which
they concretise. (154)

These two comments are from reviews of The Secret Agent:

Despite its gruelling and sanguinary plot the
book is saved by some excellent character
sketches. (155)

Both analysis and characterization are exceed-
ingly acute, for few men are Mr. Conrad's equals
in command of the incisive couch and the illum-
inating phrase. (156)

Mr. Walpole finds The Eiger of the "Narcissus" a gal-

lery of remarkably distinct and authentic portraits." (157)

He notes that Conrad chooses "the most solid and un-
imaginative of human beings for his heroes," but that
"his characters have individuality and live apart from
their action in the story." (158)

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(154). Fortn. Review, 89: 627-33, April 1, 1908, "Joseph Conrad, A Disquisition," by John
Galsworthy

(155). Independent, 64: 105, Jan., 1908

(156). Dial. 45: 252, Oct. 16, 1907, by Wm. M. Payne

(157). WALPOLE, HUGH, Joseph Conrad, p. 16

(158). Ibid. p. 55

(159). Ibid. pp. 60-61
The consensus of opinion is that Conrad is far more successful with his seamen than with his characters on land. To quote from Mr. Walpole again:

This theory about these men is that they have, all of them, an idée fixe, that you must search for thus patiently, honestly, unsparingly—having found it, the soul of the man is revealed to you. (160)

He instances Verloc in The Secret Agent. Of this character Mr. Conrad's idea seems to be

...That he should be able to retain at all costs, his phlegmatic state of self-indulgence and should not be jockeyed out of it.

A portion of Leland Hall's discussion of Conrad's characters is well worth the space necessary to quote it:

His characters have nothing of the heroic, and they are extraordinarily real. Few are wholly despicable; none is idealized. It can be said of none that here is a standard bearer (161)

(160). WALPOLE, HUGH, Joseph Conrad, p. 65


"C'est l'idée d'humanité qui domine. L'homme a des sentiments communs dans toutes les races, on peut partout apprendre les langues, les points d'honneur, former des amitiés... Contra apparaissait comme un pessimiste, qui ne craignait pas de montrer une certaine dégradation du monde par la civilisation. Il avait vu ses avant-postes lamentables, et les plus tristes de toutes les ruines, les ruines d'entreprises in achevées. Souvent, chez lui, l'indigène montrait un plus beau type humain que l'Européen. Cela était très peu anglais, et semblait avoir une teinte du pessimisme français d'alors, de Loti, par exemple."
for the race. They show no literary ear-marks. He has drawn them without prejudice for race, colour, and social caste; and they are so distinct from each other that it is impossible to generalize about them, except to say that all, being in the midst of life, are compelled to struggle against a force that is not benevolent. It is the revelation of such a force, not visionary but real, influencing the lives of men in all circumstances and in all parts of the world, that Conrad's novels and stories have accomplished...

Conrad has not shown man miserable in conflict with the impersonal forces of nature. On the contrary, as a sailor he has seen how men in ships unite against the wind and sea when they are hostile, and become strong and noble in their union. That force which brings grief and misery upon the race rises out of man himself, out of man's greed, which turns him against his own kind and renders him distrustful, envious and cruel. (162)

It is impossible for any of the critics to say much concerning Conrad's characters without waxing eloquent on the subject of Conrad's psychological insight. "Perhaps the greatest psychologist since Dostoevsky," says one. "Conrad is a painter doubled by a psychologist; he is a psychologist of the sea—and that is his chief claim to originality," is Mr. Huneker's judgment. Mr. Mencken in his Book of Prefaces thinks a number of modern novelists stand above Conrad in technical skill.
but that it is his attention to the profounder aspects of human nature and his "bold grappling with the deeper and more recondite problems of his art that gives him consideration as a first rate novelist." Mr. Edward Moore writing in the Living Age tells us that Conrad studies men but he is carried away by none. He is in reality a student of heroism; he notes how the spirit responds to uncertainty, to danger, to calamity, and he is interested in the responses. The publishing of The Secret Agent brought the comment from the Spectator that Conrad's knowledge of London was remarkable, that he showed penetrating insight into the psychology of the monstrous brood it harbors. Mr. Lovett's discussion of Conrad's psychology is one of the best. From it is taken the following:

To know men as tested by their surrounding circumstances, to read them through their action and speech, are for Conrad, as for Hardy, the great ends of novel writing. The former speaks of "the manner in which, as in the features and characters of the human face, the inner truth is foreshadowed for those who know how to look at their kind." It is the creed of the 'behaviorist psychologist.' And he is most successful in dealing with human life in simple, primitive forms and affected by elemental things--age, sex, and the great servitude to time and nature. Lord Jim in Patusan

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(165). MENCKEN, H.L., A Book of Prefaces, p. 47
(167). Spectator, 99: 400-1, Sept. 21, 1907
Winning absolution from his sin of fear, Heyst and Lena in the solitude of Samburea, blending their broken lives into something which justifies the title "Victory" may be set down as Conrad's most perfect synthesis of environment and human life. It is true that in his later novels he yields more and more to the temptation to hang his situations about with psychological nuances after the admired example of Henry James. Such a temptation led him to bring his old sea hero Lingard and Edith Travers together in "The Rescue" -- as Dona and the hero in "The Arrow of Gold" to no purpose artistic or human. It is, as it were, by way of retribution that in "desiring this man's art and that man's scope," he loses the great qualities which he illustrated so abundantly in his earlier work. (168)

Some there are who insist that Conrad has no philosophy. This is perhaps because he has expressed a dislike for dogma. It is true, certainly, that he does not formulate any philosophy for us.

Joseph Conrad laisse à son lecteur le soin dégager ses conclusions. Aucun de ses livres n'est écrit pour soutenir une thèse, jamais sa puissance créatrice n'est entravée par des théories perconques sur le sens et la signification de la vie. (170)


(169). Nation and Athenaeum, 28: 881, March 19, 1921, "The Pride of Mr. Conrad."

"These essays suggest... that we need not try to write him down philosophically, because there is in this particular direction, nothing to write. No creed, in fact. Only opinions and the right to throw them overboard when facts make them look absurd. Opinions held under the semblance of eternity, girt with the sea, crowned with the stars, and therefore easily mistaken for a creed."

But a number of critics have found the working philosophy of his novels a fruitful subject for investigation and admiration. Most of them are agreed that Conrad's convictions are pessimistic, yet that it is not the pessimism of Hardy. His friend Mr. Curle speaks of him as having a "deep strata of ironic melancholy, aristocratic contempt, and exasperated disillusionment," but Mr. Curle's view is not the common


(80)
one. More prefer to find the key to Conrad's outlook on life in a few of the lessons he has learned from the sea. G. Jean Aubry says:

Twenty years of struggle against the sea had taught Joseph Conrad that it can never be finally vanquished, and in the end it always gets the best of men and their ships; but that the nobility of man consists in the struggle however hopeless it may be. (173)

Current Opinion notes that the charge has been made that Conrad is a fatalist; and that as proofs have been cited the title of Chance and the passage (174) in "Heart of Darkness":

"Destiny! Droll thing life is—that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose."

The article goes on to quote Mr. Hutchison:

(173). Cur. Opinion, 77:650-1, Nov., 1924, "Joseph Conrad's Heroic Pessimism." (The words of G. Jean Aubrey are merely quoted in this article. No source is given.)

With this may be compared the following from FRIZELIAN, JOHN; The Moderns: Essays in Literary Criticism, pp. 250-1: "Life has taught him many things, and the great charge of those that travel the seas has taught him one thing mainly, that fidelity to a trust is the supreme triumph and its betrayal the supreme dishonour of a man's life. Honour, loyalty, faith, crown his conceptions, and he involves in them whatever beauty and strength is discernible in a man's desire and achievement. I am not sure that this simple and tremendous moral impression is not of all Mr. Conrad's effects the most weighty and lasting. I am quite sure that it is the most characteristic.

Conrad is a fatalist, a pessimist, only in respect to the outer facts of life. But all these outer things of life are merely illusions; it is the philosophy of the Best; it is the philosophy of Conrad. The true reality—the only reality that is—consists of the things spiritual. The real world is the world of the soul. The only real defeats are those which the soul suffers; the only real victories are those which the soul achieves.

In contrast with this is Mr. Edward Moore's insistence that Conrad has not portrayed the spiritual conflict in his novels at all; that the conflict is always a moral one. The soul he never pictures. Mr. Moore continues:

And this is what separates him from Dostoevsky, whom, as a psychologist, he resembles so much. Dostoevsky showed man in his relation to God; Mr. Conrad shows him in his relation to man and nature. The former is a mystic, the latter a rationalist. Neither Mr. Conrad nor his characters mention the name of God, but we feel it is because they would consider it insincere, if not theatrical, to do so. (175)

As was stated above, Conrad has formulated no philosophical creed for us. Here and there are sentences in the mouths of his characters—noteably Marlow—that the critics treasure, but there is always a question of how much of Marlow is Conrad, or better, perhaps, how much of Conrad is in Marlow. His autobiographical writings have been eagerly searched, but the findings are not great. Among the favorite passages as revealing Conrad's views are two in A Personal Record:

"Those who read me know my conviction that the world, the temporal world, rests on a few very simple ideas; so simple that they must be as old as the hills. It rests notably, among others, on the idea of Fidelity. At a time when nothing which is not revolutionary in some way or other can expect to attract much attention I have not been revolutionary in my writings. The revolutionary spirit is mighty convenient in this, that it frees one from all scruples as regards ideas. Its hard, absolute optimism is repulsive to my mind by the menace of fanaticism and intolerance it contains. No doubt one should smile at these things; but, imperfect Esthete, I am no better philosopher. All claims to special righteousness awakens in me that scorn and anger from which a philosophical mind should be free. . . (176)

"The ethical view of the universe involves us at last in so many cruel and absurd contradictions, where the last vestiges of faith, hope, charity, and even of reason itself, seem ready to perish, that I have come to suspect that the aim of creation cannot be ethical at all. I would fondly believe that its object is purely spectacular; a spectacle for awe, love, adoration, or hate, if you like, but in this view---and in this view alone---never for despair! Those visions, deliciously poignant, are a moral end in themselves. The rest is our affair---the laughter, the tears, the tenderness, the indignation, the high tranquility of a stoical heart, the detached curiosity of a subtle mind---that's our affair! And the unworried self-forgetful attention to every phase of the living universe reflected in our consciousness may be our appointed task on this earth. A task in which fate has perhaps engaged nothing of us except our conscience, gifted with a voice in order to bear true testimony to the visible wonder, the haunting terror, the infinite passion and the illimitable serenity; to the supreme law and the abiding mystery of the sublime spectacle." (177)
Conrad gives little impression of deliberately withholding his views. In spite of some statements to the contrary made by disappointed critics, to most of his readers his pages seem frank enough. He just fails to mention them. Perhaps Mr. Bjorkman's comment is as satisfactory as any:

For religious and philosophical formulation he has little more use than for political programs. But his pages overflow with true wisdom, with revelations that teach us how to live, not theoretically but practically—as when he tells us that 'both men and ships want to have their merits understood rather than their faults found out.

Whether Conrad had ever formulated a philosophy for his own use one can never know. But certainly his a pages give his readers the impression of some stable guiding principle which left him undisposed before the human problems he gave himself to solve.

The problem of Conrad's critical views is nearly as hard to solve. Perhaps, as the New Republic puts it, "just as he respects life too much not to be amused, rather scornfully amused, at the discoverers of keys to the riddle of the universe, so he respects the art of fiction too much to stilt its growth by laying down laws for its practice." He appears to suspect the

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(179) New Republic, 27: 25, June 1, 1921, "Notes on Life and Letters"—Review.
motives of novelists who treat themselves to a theory of their own undertaking. Nevertheless, Conrad has written about his art and about the art of a number of novelists whom he admires. The New Republic in the article quoted above says his brief essay on Guy de Maupassant reveals Conrad as a literary critic whose insight is profound, but there are few if any dogmatic statements of theory to be found in what he has written.

His 'Suppressed' "Preface" to The Nigger of the "Narcissus" was for many years practically the only source in which critics could find any expression of his opinions. In it were these significant words:

He [the artist] appeals to temperament, and he speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives.

* * Such an appeal to be effective must be an impression conveyed through the senses; * * * All art, therefore, appeals primarily to the senses, and the artistic aim when expressing itself in written words must also make the appeal through the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions. It must strenuously aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the color of painting, and to the magic suggestiveness of music—which is the art of arts. And it is only through complete unswerving devotion to the perfect blending of form and substance, it is only through unceasing, never discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences, then an approach can be made to plasticity, to color; and the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words. * * * My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel— it is, before all to make you see. That and no more; and it is everything. (85)
In A Personal Record in 1912 Conrad dropped a few more words which the critics have seized upon as helping to reveal his attitude toward his art:

He who wants to persuade should put his trust not in the right argument, but in the right word. The power of sound has always been greater than the power of sense. I don’t say this by way of disparagement. It is better for mankind to be impressionable than reflective. Nothing humanly great—great, I mean, as affecting a whole mass of lives—has come from reflection. On the other hand, you cannot fail to see the power of mere words; such words as Glory, for instance, or Pity. (181)

A few pages farther on he uses his long silence as an excuse for protesting against a certain judgment of the critics which he feels is unfair:

Fifteen years of unbroken silence before praise or blame testify sufficiently to my respect for criticism, that fine flower of personal expression in the garden of letters. (182)


Leland Hall in Chap. IX of SUN. IN. P. E.N. J.W., English Literature of the Last Half Century, p.182, wrote: "The preface he wrote for 'The Nigger of the Narcissus' may be classed with de Maupassant' preface to 'Pierre and Jean' among the permanent contributions to literary theory, especially as it affects the art of modern fiction, and nothing else throws so much light on Conrad's own work—the aims he has in view and the means by which he strives to accomplish them."


(182). Ibid. p. xvii
It was in 1921, the year in which were published Notes (183) on Life and Letters and Notes on My Books, that Conrad first gave the world any extended critical utterances. Perhaps the word 'extended' is hardly what is meant; but at least these two books include practically all Conrad has given us. Speaking of Notes on Life and Letters, the Current Opinion remarks that "he tells us frankly what he loves and what he hates." He "despises what he himself describes as the 'miserable vanity of a catching phrase.' The qualities he admires in a novelist are courage, compassion, self-denial, fidelity to an ideal; while purely literary gifts, he intimates, (184) are temptations and seductions." Robert Lynd says that Conrad as a critic often seems to be defining his own art rather than the art of fiction in general. "He is praising not merely Maupassant but his ideal self when he tells us: 'His proceeding was not to group expressive words that mean nothing, around mystery and mysterious shapes dear to muddled intellects and belonging neither to earth or to heaven.'" To Mr. Lynd there is a note of intolerance in Conrad, "intolerance of the work of many good writers from Shakespeare to Dickens, and if one may include a more diminutive artist, Stevenson. Thus he observes: 'He [Maupassant]

(183). Notes on My Books (1921) in most editions forms the prefatory material to the respective books.

will not be led into perdition by the seductions of sentiment, of eloquence, of humor, of pathos; of all that splendid pageant of faults that pass between the writer and his probity on the blank sheet of paper."

Mr. Eugene quotes from Conrad's essay on Henry James, remarking that often a "writer tells us more of himself in criticizing a fellow craftsman than in any formal aesthetic pronouncement":

"Action in its essence, the creative art of a writer of fiction may be compared to rescue work carried out in darkness against cross gusts of wind swaying the action of a great multitude. It is rescue work, this snatching of vanishing phrases of turbulence, disguised in fair words, out of the native obscurity into a light where the struggling forms may be seen, seized upon, endowed with the only possible form of permanence in this world of relative values—the permanence of memory,"

Conrad belongs to no school. The critics unite in finding praiseworthy his impatience of tag words like Realism, Sentimentalism, Naturalism; and Romanticism; and they quote his remark that "liberty of the imagination is the most precious possession of the novelist."

Conrad's Notes on My Books incidentally reveals much of interest concerning his critical views, in addition to explaining the genesis of each story. In

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(186). HUNGER, JAMES, Ivory Apes and Peacocks, p. 4

the Author's Note to Chance is this:

I do not mean to hint that anybody had ever done
me the injury (I don't mean insult, I mean injury)
of charging a single one of my pages with didac-
tic purpose. But every subject in the region of
the intellect and emotion must have a morality
of its own if it is to be treated at all sincerely;
and even the most artful of writers will give
himself (and his morality) away in about every
third sentence. (189)

A great many times Conrad protests against some judg-
ment of the critics and attempts to justify what he
(190) has done. In the Author's Note to Lord Jim he defends
the book from the criticism that Marlow talks too long
for any group to listen. He is surprised that it has
been called morbid.

In any case, he says no Latin temperament would
have perceived anything morbid in the acute con-
sciousness of lost honour. Such a consciousness
may be wrong, or it may be right, or it may be
condemned as artificial; and perhaps my Jim is
not a type of wide damnness, but I can safely
assure my readers that he is not the product of
coldly perverted thinking. (191)

(189). Chance, Author's Note, p.xi-xii. (Canterbury Ed.)

(190). That Conrad can speak in no uncertain terms is
proved by the instance cited in the Nation and
Athenaeum (28:661, Mar. 19,1921) in an article
entitled "The Pride of Mr. Conrad" According to
the story it seems that some reviewer had com-
mented on one of Conrad's earlier books and had
used the phrase "a lot of engaging ruffians!"
Here is Conrad's answer: "What on earth is an
'engaging ruffian'? He must be a creature of the
literary imagination, I thought, for the two words
don't match in my personal experience. It has
happened to me to meet a few ruffians here and
there, but I never found one of them 'engaging.'
I consoled myself, however, that the friendly
reviewer must have been talking like a parrot,
which often seems to understand what is says."
Speaking of his critics in the Author's Note to A Personal Record, he says:

But it seems to me that their unfailingly interested sympathy has ascribed to racial and historical influences much of what I believe appertains simply to the individual. Nothing is more foreign than what in the literary world is called Slavonism, to the Polish temperament with its tradition of self-government, its chivalrous view of moral restraints and an exaggerated respect for individual rights; not to mention the important fact that the whole Polish mentality, Western in complexion, had received its training from Italy and France, and, historically, had always remained, even in religious matters, in sympathy with the most liberal currents of European thought.

(192)

The study of Conrad's criticism suggests an interesting question concerning the amount of influence his criticism and his few statements of theory have had upon the trend of comment concerning him. Anyone can see even by a most hurried examination of the work of his critics that they were quick to snatch any hint he deigned to give. It is a question whether they would have noticed so quickly that his aim is above all to make us 'see' if he had not told them so in the 'Suppressed' 'Preface'. Perhaps those critics who see a didactic element in Lord Jim would have had a better hearing had not other critics been ready to protest that Conrad did not intend anything of the kind. Conrad

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(191) Lord Jim, Author's Note, p.ix (Canterbury Ed.)

(192) A Personal Record, Author's Note, pp.x-xi, (Canterbury Ed.)
disclaimed all pretensions to critical ability, saying he was not a literary man. Still he held tenaciously to the ideas he had gathered or worked out for himself concerning the aims and methods of his art. Not a great deal has been written about Conrad's influence—perhaps it is too early for the critics to speak with authority. Nevertheless, at least two critics have been bold enough to make direct statements. As early as 1916, Mr. Walpole thought he saw some influence on the work of such younger novelists as E.M. Forster, E.B. Lawrence, J.P. Beresford, W.L. George, Frank Swinnerton, Gilbert Cannan, Brett Young, and Miss Viola Meynell. Mr. Priestly, writing in the English Journal last year said that "Conrad's influence upon contemporary novelists, though largely indirect, has been and will be immense." Mr. Priestly named no authors who have been influenced but merely remarked:

Among the six best first novels I have read this last two years or so, at least three show unmistakable signs of that influence, and would not have been the fine tales they were had Joseph Conrad never lived, and dreamed, and labored. (195)

(193). Arts and Dec. 21:36, Sept. 1924, "Contemporary Revisitances," by Burton Rascoe. (Quoting Conrad) "No, I am not much up on American fiction, and my mind is not critical. I couldn't say much about writers because I haven't any general culture. Twenty years at sea when one is a youth do not fit one with a critical type of mind."

(194). WILPOLE, HUGH, Joseph Conrad, p. 116

CHAPTER V.
THE CRITICS AT WORK (Continued)

A number of critics challenge individual attention even in a study as short as this one: Ford Madox Ford (Rueffer) by virtue of his relations as a collaborator; Richard Curle for his persistent interest if nothing else—although it must not be forgotten that he is Conrad's official biographer; John Galsworthy and Sir Hugh Clifford for their early and continued friendship; and a score of others.

It was Mr. Curle whom we have already quoted as finding Mr. Ford the only critic before 1915 worth noticing. Mr. Ford's article has its merits, although it is more likely to please an admirer of Conrad than to aid in winning more readers for him. Mr. Ford's method is for the most part frankly a method of recording personal impressions. He speaks of books he likes and does not like, giving Lord Jim the highest praise.

.,.Why it is a part of me. Yes, it is a part of my soul, of my life. It has given me my English outlook, though I am a foreigner and have every kind of intellectual contempt for the countrymen of Tuan Jim. But it has made me understand the English-English with such a perfect comprehension ----and what one perfectly comprehends one loves!

Now that is a great achievement----for it is a great achievement to have overwhelmed any one soul
and there are few men's souls that can resist Lord Jim once they have found him out. The egotism of this personal confession is not meant to display myself. It is the best way of showing what this author's work can do, and as I am perfectly sincere in every word I have written I hope I may make the impression that I went. (196)

Mr. Ford gives us a curious comparison—one that has been repeated a number of times, by James Huneker among others. "I have thought very often that Conrad is an Elizabethan," he says, and explains:

His preoccupations are with death, destiny, an inscrutable and august force, with the cruel sea, the dark forests of strange worlds or the darker forests that are the hearts of our fellow men. It would not in the least surprise you to come upon a dance of madmen in one of his stories as in Webster's "Duchess of Malfi"; it would not in the least surprise you to come on the knocking at the gate of Macbeth; upon all the murders of the "Spanish Tragedy"; upon the sobbing misery of Celestina; upon the ragged knavery of Lazarillo de Torrez; why he might have written "To die is no more than a lasting sleep, a quiet resting from all jealousy, a thing we all pursue," and above all, "It is but giving over of a game that must be lost." And can you not imagine one of his Arab sheiks, or Marlow, that tremendous old man of the sea, or even the teacher-narrator of "Under Western Eyes," gazing upon the face of some woman who caused a great deal of trouble in some obscure quarter of the world and saying reflectively: "Was that the face that launched a thousand ships and burned the palm leaf towns of Parabang?" For really there is hardly anything that was written by Marlowe or Massinger or Webster or Kyd or Heywood that would not fit into this author's works. "Darkness, death, honour, and a careless chivalry are the constant preoccupations of Conrad. They were preoccupied with all the other primitive things that we have forgotten, whilst we have grown kinder. Indeed it is very curious how very little space kindness occupies in the work either of Conrad or of the Elizabethans.

One of Mr. Ford's remarks gives us the key to his own literary views. Conrad, he says, is "one of the two or three English writers who uphold the despised standard of art for art's sake." A number of Mr. Ford's comments are, so far as the study has shown, original with him:

He is a deeply religious writer—for the figure of an avenging deity pursues a fearful course through all his pages. If you sin, he says, you must pay for it:

. . . That is the ceaseless moral of all this author's work—the being true to your own sense of personal honour.

He considers Conrad's methods, calling particular attention to the fact that Conrad excels in describing action; that the secret of his success lies in the fact that he presents rather than states; that he makes each of his stories an experience for the reader. It will be seen that Mr. Ford has here advanced the idea which Mr. Davidson sets forth with appreciation.

An interesting topic which has had little treatment by the critics is Conrad's relations with Ford Madox Ford. With one or two exceptions, reviewers are united in disapproving of the collaboration. Beyond that they have little to say. Mr. Ford himself

is not so reticent. He has written at various times giving some quite interesting information concerning the methods employed by himself and Conrad in their collaboration. Of real interest are his notes following The Nature of Crime. He gives us for a portion of Romance the actual division of matter belonging to Conrad and to himself. But Mr. Ford has brought much adverse criticism upon himself by his Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance, a book which has provoked from Mark Van Doren the comment: "Surely one of the most conceited books ever published."

In the entire list of book reviews and criticisms examined for this study only one has actively espoused Mr. Ford's side. In the Bookmen for July, 1904, is a short article in which attention is called to the fact that Heuffer is apt to be blamed for all the faults of the collaboration. This article was written by an individual who would have us know that Heuffer is himself a man of no little importance. A nephew of the Rossettis', he has many successful books to his credit. We are told that his first, The Brown Owl, ran into ten editions. Furthermore, Mr. Conrad asked for the collaboration; the plot of Romance is Heuffer's; and

(199). Nation, 120: 45, Jan.14, 1925, "First Glance," by Mark Van Doren
lastly:

Mr. Hueffer is Conrad's literary advisor and a good deal of Mr. Conrad's work is done at his house, especially the last chapters of stories which Mr. Conrad finds most difficult to write.

(200)

Mr. Ford's late book confirms these statements and adds much. It is difficult to speak calmly of Joseph Conrad:

A Personal Remembrance: Just a copy of part of the title page is enough to indicate the spirit of the book:

JOSEPH CONRAD
A Personal Remembrance
by
Ford Madox Ford
(Ford Madox Hueffer)

It is the "Etc., Etc." which offends. One sees the implication at once. This gentleman whom most people know only as the collaborator with Conrad on three of Conrad's least important books, would have us believe that there would have been no Conrad but for him. One might conceivably believe all the accounts of their methods of collaboration and yet condemn the book and its "writer." (Those who have read the book will remember that hardly a page passes without the word "writer" appearing from once to a dozen times.) The jealousy and venom stored for years shows too clearly. A section chosen from the first chapter reveals some-

(200)  Bookm., 19:544, July, 1904
thing of what is meant (The 'dots' are Mr. Ford's; a characteristic bit of punctuation with him):

Conrad was Conrad because he was his books. It was not that he made literature; he was literature, the literature of the Elizabethan Gentleman Adventurer... Think of setting out in an old wackerwork chaise drawn by what appeared to be a smile to persuade a Hythe grocer to give you three years' credit,... Think of setting out from Stamford-le-Hope, a safe harbour where at least there was contact with ships, estuaries, tideways, islands, into an unknown hinterland of savage and unknown populations, of hares downs, out of sight of the refuge of the sea, to persuade an unknown wielder of the pen, the finest stylist in England, [Mr. Ford] to surrender his liberty to a sailing partnership -- to surrender too his glamorous "subject," for all the world as if you had adventured into the hinterlands behind Palembang to ask some one only just known to give up to you for joint working the secret of one of those mysterious creeks where gold is found. An adventure like that of "Victory" itself. ... And then to insult the owner of the creek with groans, sighs, O God's, contortions.... Well, all we who supported Conrad to his final, so great victory, were the subordinate characters of his books, putting up with his extortionate demands for credit, for patience, or for subjects.... The Steins, the Shelleys, the Captain MacWhirrs,... and now the Muriewes! (201)

Mr. Ford's pride has undoubtedly suffered many blows because of remarks made about the collaboration. But the nature of Conrad's position has made such a thing inevitable. The Athenæum regrets the collaboration which went into the writing of Romance, saying that "Conrad's talent is a good and complete one"; so "for such a writer---distinctive, strong, individual---

(201), FORD, FORD MADOX, Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance, pp.19-20
collaboration seems a mistake." The Academy makes nearly the same comment in these words: "This writer has too strong an individuality to be able to do himself justice when writing in harness with anyone."

One can understand that a continuation of such remarks might have rankled; one can sympathize with Mr. Ford's position; what one cannot do is forgive a book such as Joseph Conrad; A Personal Remembrance, published after the man's death. The spirit of the thing is despicable.

Mr. Richard Curle is not one of Conrad's earliest critics, for his book was published in 1924 when Conrad had gained a certain degree of recognition, if not actual popularity. Yet he has continued to show interest in Conrad, and he was chosen to edit Conrad's Last Essays. He is interesting, too, because his personal knowledge of Conrad has so evidently given him a con-
sciousness of belonging to the 'inner circle' of Conradites—- a distinctly noticeable characteristic of Mr. Curle which incidentally adds a great deal of amusement to reading him, although hardly as much to the value of his criticism.

Van Wyck Brooks has touched upon a dominant element of Mr. Curle's *Joseph Conrad: A Study* when he says it is "...a literal and faithful stepping from point to point; ...strictly a method of presentation and (205) scarcely at all a method of interpretation" --- but such a summary statement by no means disposes of Curle's book.

What Mr. Curle's method is can be seen briefly in outline from his chapter headings. These include:

Conrad, His Critics and His Contemporaries
Conrad's Biography and Autobiographical Books
Conrad's Novels and Stories
Conrad's Atmosphere
Conrad as a Psychologist
Conrad's Men
Conrad's Women
Conrad's Irony and Sardonic Humor
Conrad's Prose
Conrad as an Artist
Conrad's Position in Literature

In the first chapter Mr. Curle finds opportunity to point to the causes of Conrad's lack of popularity. These he finds in Conrad's personality, in the form of

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his books, in the character of the reading public, and, finally, in the attitude of the critics themselves. Conrad, Curle would have us believe, has a vivid personality pervading all his works which sets up a temperamental antagonism on the part of certain readers; a personality which acts somewhat as that of Walt Whitman or of Dostoievsky. Furthermore, the involved and indirect method of narration which he employs calls for imagination and exertion from the reader, a demand that the modern public does not meet cheerfully; Conrad is a visualizer and most of us are not. Curle is also convinced that the critics are on the wrong track as far as Conrad is concerned. _Nostromo_ is not _Lord Jim_, is representative of his genius.

It is to the second and third chapters that Mr. Brook's criticism applies in full force. Here Curle's aim is informative rather than critical, as he himself points out. Conscious that the public does not know Conrad, he gives in detail a summary of each story. For his biographical facts he claims Conrad's own sanction.

The remainder of the book lacks the organization of the first chapters, but its aim is much more than descriptive criticism. Curle feels very definitely that Conrad is a great artist, and it seems to be his aim to justify his belief. Curle is anxious that the
public consider Conrad in the light of the actual facts of his life. Without much elaboration he calls our attention to the Slavic element in this so-called English author. This he would have explained the “exotic” note of his earlier work, the undercurrent of brooding subjectivity, even the character of Lord Jim which has seemed unreal to the reader possessed of a normal English mind.

Curle centers his interest in the books as such, and his references to Conrad, after the biographical chapter, are mainly the sort which might be gained from the study of the books alone. Yet we become confused. The wonderful books are held up to us as evidence of Conrad’s artistry. Finally we become convinced that he is a wonderful man because his books are wonderful; then knowing that he is a genius, we look back at his books and decide that such a genius could have written nothing second-rate. It is something of a circle that Mr. Curle treads;

Frankly speaking, Curle presents a great deal that is worth consideration. He advances a considerable number of explanations of Conrad that seem to be original with him. But for a critic who gives the reader a sensation of confused thinking, one would go far to find his equal. And Curle himself seems intensely dissatisfied with what he has been able to accomplish. At the
end of his chapter on Conrad's Atmosphere, we find the following sentences:

For I set out to do a thing which I find is beyond me. The secret of Conrad's atmosphere eludes me as a critic, though emotionally it is as clear as day. (206)

There are other passages which have an apologetic ring, and there are other places where the reader is likely to feel an apology might not be out of place.

It is Conrad's realism that Curle finds his greatest claim to a permanent place in fiction. It is his realism that places him far above Henry James---a realism, Curle insists, that is "like Turgenev's and not (207) like Dickens' or Zola's." Curle makes many comparisons between Conrad and other authors, and some of them are rather searching and worth while. He finds that Conrad's Youth is in reality only a philosophic dream of what youth might be; whereas Hudson's Purple Land gives the real feeling of youth. He finds in Conrad's psychology much that resembles Dostoevsky's. Like Henry James, Conrad enjoys presenting his characters from as many points of view as possible. But in the comparisons Mr. Curle draws, more perhaps than in any other phase of his criticism, we are aware that it is a Conradist who is speaking and not an impartial critic.

(206). CURLE, RICHARD, Joseph Conrad, A Study. p.90
(207). Ibid. p.13
Kipling and Stevenson are left far behind. Conrad's characters walk on equal terms with King Lear, and the sublimity of his description is compared in a familiarly casual manner with some passages of "Paradise Lost." Curle is constantly marveling at Conrad's ability to achieve the effects he does. The aesthetic values are the dominant ones to Curle's mind, and he points with increasing wonder at what he pleases to call Conrad's conscious artistry, an artistry all the more wonderful because he finds it upheld by simple moral precepts.

We have Conrad's philosophy of life explained to us, and we are informed of his method of dealing with characters and of building plots. We are led to see what influence Flaubert and Henry James may have had on his writing and to what degree his development is essentially independent. Passage after passage is quoted from Conrad's various books—books which are marking "a new epic in our literature." And, as eulogistic as Curle is—he really seldom notes a fault that he does not find two virtues to balance it—he has chosen these passages with a fine feeling of

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(209). Ibid. p.11
(210). " p.19
(211). " p.1
discrimination. He gives very definitely the impression of knowing Conrad well and of appreciating his finer qualities with a sympathetic if not very critical insight. He sees in Conrad a continuous and valuable development which he is able to explain in a very logical and convincing way. As long as Curle sticks to Conrad alone we feel a degree of confidence in his judgment. He finds one passage in Typhoon, for example, superior to a given passage in The Nigger of the "Narcissus", and we are content with his explanation. He tells us that one character is more truly developed than some other, that The Mirror of the Sea is the "most eloquent, most intimate, most revealing" of Conrad's works and we do not quarrel with him. He finds Marlow a bore, and so do we. He may go on to justify Conrad's use of Marlow, and we can follow him. Our credulity is a little strained, however, when we are told that Conrad has a sense for proper method, a philosophic basis for all his artistic devices---to refer again to Mr. Curle's challenge to the critics. Then there is Curle's sense of proportion, his judgment of ultimate values that we question when we read:

It [The Mirror of the Sea] has something of the grave and exalted eloquence of "Paradise Lost".

(212) CURLE, RICHARD. Joseph Conrad: A Study, p. 58

(213) Ibid. p. 19
Conrad, like many other great writers, like Shakespeare in "The Merchant of Venice," Shelley in numerous lyrics, . . . impresses this singular image of a sentient nature upon the intimate moments of passionate love or passionate regret. (214)

It is not that these classics of the past must be held sacred from comparison with anything new and modern, but the casualness of it does draw a smile, and occasionally it offends.

The last chapter on Conrad's position in literature, while revealing as strongly as ever Curle's prejudice in Conrad's favor, does give us in a very convincing manner an idea of the racial elements which enter into Conrad's works and the relation of Conrad's works to the literatures of the different races to which he might be said to belong.

Of Curle's magazine articles little need be said. A review of Victory in 1915 analyzes the plot and speculates on Conrad's use of direct narrative after his former successful use of the indirect, involved, Marlowesque style which critics were beginning to expect. Curle's introduction to Conrad's Diary published in December, 1925, is a sympathetic and appreciative bit, but aims at little more than the


making of such annotations as will serve to connect
the Diary with Conrad's life and works. An article,
"The Last of Conrad," published a few months before,
tells of Conrad's last hours and gives a few comments
concerning his philosophy which are of interest.

It is difficult to give Curle all the credit one
instinctively feels he should have. We have spoken
of the sense of incompleteness the reader has after
finishing the book. Many bits of interpretation or
characterization just miss being what we are somehow
led to expect. A mere detail—still a significant one—which may be referred to is his continued use
of the word "thrilling" as descriptive of Conrad's
most intense situations—a school-girl limit of
vocabulary, one is almost tempted to say. Perhaps
his numerous apologies detract as much as anything
from the impression his writing gives us. He seems
continually in the situation of the younger who says:

"I know it, but I can't tell it."

(218)

Mr. John Galsworthy's article in 1906 has been
commented upon in relation to the storm his 'nature-
rather-than-men' hypothesis provoked. Mr. Galsworthy

(216)* Yale Review, 15: 254-266, Jan., 1926

(217)* Mentor, 15: 29-33, March, 1926, "Last of Conrad,"
by Richard Curle

(218)* Fortn. Review, 89: 627-635, April 1, 1906, "Joseph
Conrad," by John Galsworthy
has remained one of Conrad's warmest friends; one, too, of the few whom Conrad has recognized in his own critical writings. His article concerning Mr. Galsworthy is now printed in Last Essays. Mr. Galsworthy is the author of a somewhat guarded, but entirely sympathetic, preface to Mr. Conrad's volume containing the two plays, Laughing Anne and One Day More. The Saturday Review of Literature describes Mr. Galsworthy's in words that need no further comment:

John Galsworthy is reverently friendly but manages to escape the general swooning which takes place at mention of the master's name. "One Day More" he says is "nearly a little masterpiece"-- and we see him vanishing quickly through the convenient loophole of the adverb. "Laughing Anne," he declares, is "a pleasure to read"; wise Mr. Galsworthy-- when it was meant to be acted. And for "The Secret Agent"-- he praises the novel. (219)

Sir Hugh Clifford's articles appeared early in Mr. Conrad's career and showed a quick sympathy and intelligent understanding of his literary aims.

Mr. Wilson Follett's Joseph Conrad; A Short Study was written at the request of Doubleday, Page and Company and has been distributed gratis by them. Miss Ruth Stauffer calls it one of the best criticisms of Conrad yet written.

To these critics already named might be added Miss Ruth Stauffer who has contributed Joseph Conrad; His Romantic-Realism. Her book is a fairly able presen--

(219), Sat. Review of Lit., 2:43, Aug. 15, 1925
(220), STAUFFER, RUTH M., Joseph Conrad, His Romantic-Realism, p. 102
tation of her thesis that in Conrad's work is to be seen a union of the two schools that swayed literature during the past century. The book is of particular value for its bibliography.

(221). Miss Steuffer has included a 30-page appendix including:

I. A list of bibliographies.
II. Conrad's works
   A. Chronological list of novels and tales with original editions, serial publication is recorded
   B. Alphabetical list of short stories. All of Conrad's short stories are credited to their respective volumes; magazine publications are noted.
III. Criticisms of Conrad
    A. Books on Conrad. With a paragraph of characterization of each.
    B. Articles about Conrad. With notes as to the character of each article. There is a 'first', 'second', and 'third' list, according to the estimate of the article's value.
IV. Book reviews: Described as 'partial list' only.
V. Miscellaneous
    A. Brief articles on the personality of Conrad.
    B. Poems to Conrad
    C. List of Portraits of Conrad.
CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUSION

A great many factors, no doubt, have entered into the making of Conrad's present place in English fiction. There was his cosmopolitan spirit, engendered perhaps by wide and varied experience which was his. There was his intimate knowledge of the far east which he brought to the forming of the luxuriant backgrounds of his first novels. For, as Mr. Priestly suggests, when he began writing in the nineties, exotic romance was becoming popular. "Mr. Rudyard Kipling, at one sweep, had brought in 'East of Suez'; Stevenson had dowered the South Sea Islands with a popularity that they have never lost; and so writers of romance were hurrying (222) to the ends of the earth in search of 'local color'." Conrad entered the field of fiction fully provided with the necessary 'local color' knowledge. He had been unconsciously collecting it during twenty years of travel over most of the known world. Added to this was his poet's eye for beauty and his deep psychological insight. To quote Mr. Priestly again:

Superficially we may say Conrad made his first appeal because he combined two kinds of fiction that had not been combined before. With all the outward interest and excitement of the romantic story, he combined the inward excitement of the psychological story.

The New Republic remarks that Conrad entered the field of English literature at a time when the critics were more than ready to recognize any new talent that should reveal itself. Conrad's literary career began the year of Stevenson's death. Hardy and Meredith had almost retired from the field of fiction. Shaw had not yet published "Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant," and Galsworthy, Bennett, and May Sinclair were still below the horizon. Thus Conrad found the older generation except for Henry James and George Moore quitting the field and himself the first of the new generation to occupy it.

To Conrad's Polish inheritance has been ascribed some of his power. To it, according to one critic, was due much of what places Conrad, as regards his style and his psychology, apart from other great English novelists:

To the student of Polish literature there are indeed certain aspects of Conrad that can be explained only by his Polish birth. . . . His handling of atmosphere is fundamentally Polish. It

is so strongly a marked characteristic of Polish literature that a Polish novelist who lacks it ceases to be typical. Those who know the great descriptive passages in Poland's literature, in which the rich Polish language repeats as though on a musical instrument the harmonies of winds and waves, will recognize the link between the novelists and poets of Poland and the Pole whom we claim as ours.

From his earliest years his mind was familiarized with the rough struggle for life (referring to the banishment of his parental) and with the austerity of struggle. This fact gives the keynote to the psychology of Conrad's works. In his novels and tales we are confronted with the image of man in conflict with powers stronger than himself. The duel between the human being and adverse fate had been present to Conrad as an oppressed Pole from the hour when mind and memory first began to work.

The richness and redundancy of his language may be traced to his Polish birth. The Polish tongue, with its wealth of imagery and its somewhat loose syntax, has played its part in fashioning the peculiar and splendid style. (224)

Maitland Leroy Osborne writing for the *Poland*, an American magazine devoted to Polish interests, explains Conrad's mastery of the English tongue in these words:

But the marvel lessens when we recall that Polish literature antedates that of English itself; that the Polish language surpasses almost all other Slavonic tongues in euphony and flexibility; that the Pole is born a poet and a dreamer; and so, that Conrad has a background of language, literature, and excited national consciousness such as few great writers in the world can boast.

The Pole is essentially a mystic—he projects his sensibilities beyond the narrow bounds that prescribe the spiritual attitude of those who are born to the English tongue. The inhibitions of the Anglo-Saxon race—the cold and clammy self-restraint that marks the works of even the most

(224). *Spectator*, August 1, 1925, p.190-1; "Joseph Conrad as a Pole," by Monica M. Gardner
inspired of English writers—have no hold on
the mentality and spiritual vision of such seers
as Joseph Conrad. (225)

But seemingly of more importance than any of the
factors so far mentioned was Conrad's intimate know-
ledge of the sea, and with it his love of ships and
his understanding of the men who sail them. Current
Opinion in an article following his death labeled him
the greatest of sea writers and offered a whole sheaf
of newspaper tributes collected from far and near.

Perhaps the Conrad vogue today, as many critics
believe, may be the logical outgrowth of the interest
which Herman Melville and Stevenson aroused in the
South Seas. Melville lacked the creative imagination
and was hardly artist enough to speak the final word
in sea fiction, and Stevenson was more artist than
sailor. But they succeeded in whetting the appetite
of the reading public for what Conrad was to offer.

One of the common explanations of Conrad's choice
of the English language as his medium was been that
in that language he would be addressing a people long
interested in the sea. Stephen Graham remarks that
"the sea is an Anglo-Saxon cult in literature. Other
races have their sea stories, but with us, sea stories

(225). Poland (N.Y.), 5:87-89, Feb., 1924; "Joseph
Conrad, Son of Poland," by Maitland Darcy
Osborn.

(226). Current Opinion, 77: 304-313, Sept., 1924
are a passion." However that may be, critics early recognized Conrad's importance as a sea writer, and by far the largest number consider his sea stories his greatest achievement. Youth, Typhoon, The Bigger of the "Marmalade", The Shadow Line --- all of these are sea stories. Mr. Cooper says, "They are equally good, equally poignant with truth; . . . they breathe freely of ozone and clean salt sea spray, the simple faith and bravery." The Academy told us in 1903:

He is a writer who is so possessed with the terror and wonder and beauty of the sea that he brings to his work a sense, as it were, of profound responsibility, a consciousness of the vastness and of the wide and sinister horizons. (229)

In the same article the suggestion was made that in our times the cult of the sea has changed its tone. The old rollicking sea story still has its interpreters, but readers today are turning to the writer who, with a more subjective eye, sees the "inner meaning of power in relation to individual temperament." And the writer who the article goes on to compare the work of Conrad with that of sea writers of the popular swashbuckling kind. Guelph Hyne is named who in his Captain Kettle, K.6.B. treats the sea jovially and


(228). Bookm., 35:61-70, March, 1912, "Representative English Story Tellers" by F.T. Cooper

(229). Academy, 64: 463, May 9, 1903
objectively. He understands the handling of a ship, but his Captain Kettle is a convention. The reader never approaches to any intimacy with the soul of the man.

With the earlier sea writers, Marryat, Cooper, Melville; adventure was the main concern; according to one critic. With Conrad, as Mr. F. A. Hutchison believes, adventure and romance is never an end in itself. Other sea writers today, such as William McFee and David Bone, give us exact word painting of the sea; as well as exact handling of ships. "But in any one of his volumes, Conrad paints a hundred seascapes to ten by either of his colleagues. And there is the exact handling of ships, although the reader will not win the same store of knowledge here that he will from Bone."

Mr. Robert Horss Lovett spoke of the sea as "The Realm of Conrad" and included, among others—these observations:

Now the seas of the archipelago abound in shallows and straits and riffles but Conrad regards them chiefly as a challenge to the skill and knowledge of his mariners. His great stories of the sea are those in which it manifests its wrath in sheer naked strength, owing nothing to subsidiary dangers. The relation which determines his typical situation is one of affection, devotion, protection,


(231). Ibid.—quoting Mr. F. A. Hutchison from the New York Times
tested by danger, by the fury of nature, and by the craft and cruelty of savage men. Calling out the highest courage, the purest loyalty, the uttermost endurance, the perfect sacrifice, and maintained with stainless honor against betrayal. Its object may be a child, a ship, a friend, a woman, or a whole people. (232)

Critical appreciation for Conrad's sea stories has resulted in comments like this one of 1893 concerning The Nigger of the "Narcissus":

'' . . . A Masterpiece—-not merely because the whole illusion of the sailor's life is reproduced before our eyes with the crew's individual and collective attitude towards one another and their officers, with the daily round of hardship, peril, love for their ship; but because the ship is seen as a separate thing of life, with a past and a destiny, floating in the midst of the immense mysterious universe around it; and the whole shifting atmosphere of the sea, the horizon, the heavens, is felt by the senses as mysteriously near us, yet mysteriously aloof from the human life battling against it. (233)

Mr. Cooper speaks of Il·lun in 1912 as "an allegory, half epic, half satiric, of the impotence of physical life before the blind unchained forces of nature—a fable told with all the forceful brevity of 'Le chêne et le roseau' of La Fontaine."

Explain Conrad's position today as they will, the critics are agreed in assigning him high rank. Perhaps


(233). Academy, 55: 82, Oct. 15, 1898

in the end most critics would agree so far as to admit that he has developed a new technique for the novel, and that he has elevated sea fiction.

Criticism has shown a few signs of crystallizing around certain judgments. Most of the critics are now agreed that there is value in the 'Marlow method', although they seem to feel doubtful if the method, because of its difficulties, will ever prove popular. Nearly all mention Flaubert and Henry James as the dominant influences upon Conrad. There are few who fail to praise his artistry. The judgments as to which are his best stories are gathering surely around a few of his early looks. Indeed most of the book reviews since 1915, with the possible exception of those dealing with The Shadow Line, follow a formula something like this:

"The author of Youth, Typhoon, and The Nigger of the 'Narcissus' (or perhaps of Nostromo and Lord Jim), has given us a new book. Nothing from his pen can be passed over in silence. (Here appreciative statements of varying warmth are inserted) But on the whole this will not increase his fame, although we hasten to add that it can in no way detract from it."

Throughout Conrad's literary career, critics were almost tragically afraid that Conrad might lower himself by appealing to the popular taste—and in the end, many thought he had done so. A criticism in the Academy
for May 9, 1903, criticized the main incident in Typhoon, "the fight amongst the battened-down Chinesemen when their boxes break loose and the hoarded dollars get adrift"; the passage, according to the critic, is admirably written but not needed; it is not a characteristic digression, but rather an interpolation or a "concession to those who insist on incident." In a review of Suspense in 1925, the London Times reviewer says:

In the later novels of Conrad there was to be noted an increasing tendency to abandon those lengthy disquisitions upon states of mind; too lengthy surely in a book such as The Shadow Line. With the change, one fancies, had come a greater simplicity and clarity of style. Some of the old band of admirers to whom their Conrad seemed a peculiar possession not to be shared by the profane, may regret the change, but there is no doubt that Suspense, like The Rescue --- though it is not the equal of that magnificent romance --- appeals to many more types of intelligence.

(236)

Spoken more harshly is a comment in the Nation and Athenaeum in April of this year:

Mr. Havelock Ellis, in a recent note on Conrad, has related how his first vision of the man "confirmed my own intuition of the essential and radical qualities of a great writer who wrote too much, and often in fields for which his genius had not fitted him... He had written a few short books at the impulse of genius, out of inner compulsion. And then he became a professional author and his genius degenerated into talent, a quite

(235). Academy; 64; 463, May 9, 1903

(236). London Times; Sept. 17; 1925, p.597, "Suspense" --Review
superior sort of talent, and he wrote many books, long books, for the many to read; not from inner, but from outer compulsion. (237)

Conrad has not and probably never will enter the ranks of popular writers—although critics believe his following will increase. With the disparity between critical judgment and popular judgment that his lack of popularity indicates, it is natural to find critics occasionally on the defensive. Often there is a note of condescension as they more or less patiently explain "Why." A number of explanations appear to be impartial and straightforward attempts to clear away the haze in the public mind. Stephen Reynolds wrote:

Considered solely as chronicles of events and adventure the novels of Conrad have their weaknesses. From the point of view of the more superficial novel readers who demand physical action, plot, suspense, excitement, they have numerous longueurs, and their appeal lies rather in the strangeness of their scenes and subjects. On the other hand they are strong in those qualities which make a novel twice readable, chief among them being that each paragraph shall have an intrinsic interest of its own; and that an implicit philosophy shall give substance and cohesion to the whole. (236)

Katherine Fullerton Gerould remarked that

For some readers Conrad has been only the master of a halfbrooding, half picturesque exoticism—a kind of Spinoza-ish Loti! . . . a diversion from the frowsy realism of the modern novel, . . . a writer who brought Henry James's psychologic subtlety to bear on Kiplingesque material. (239)
But her explanation of his greatness is this:

He has done a special and a striking thing; he has brought the supreme tests of civilization to bear on human problems far removed from civilization's sphere of influence. That, I fancy, is in literature, his great service.

Perhaps as true a judgment as has been uttered came in the obituary tributes which were summarized in the Current Opinion. It is that Conrad though "difficult is infinitely rewarding." Such a phrase sums up in the fewest words possible the feelings of the writer as this study ends---difficult but rewarding. From a casual interest in a few of Conrad's books, the study has led to a deep admiration for certain ones of them and a liking for all. Difficult and a little less rewarding are Conrad's critics; but the study has led to an appreciation of their difficulties and the seriousness and sincerity of most of their work.

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(239). Bookm., 49: 368-70, May, 1919, by Katherine Fullerton Gerould

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  Geography and Some Explorers
  The "Torrens": A Personal Tribute
  Christmas Day at Sea
  Ocean Travel
  Outside Literature
  Legends
  The Unlighted Coast
The Dover Patrol
Memorandum on the Scheme for Fitting Out
a Sailing Ship
The Loss of the "Dalgoner"
Travel
Stephen Crane
His War Book
John Galsworthy
A Glance at Two Books
Preface to "The Shorter Tales of
Joseph Conrad"
Cookery
The Future of Constantinople
The Congo Diary

Laughing Anne and One Day More: Two Plays;
1925 (With a Preface by John Galsworthy)

CONRAD, JOSEPH, and FORD, FORD MADOX (F.M. Hueffer);
The Nature of a Crime; Garden City, New York,
Doubleday, Page & Co., 1924

This list omits only The Secret Agent: A Drama (1923)
which has not been read. The material sometimes
published in a separate volume as Notes on My Books (1921)
prefaces the respective volumes of the Canterbury Edition.

With the following bibliography of critical mater-
ial has been included a list of the first editions of
Conrad's works in England and in America. A further
list of the numerous editions has not been included.
Neither are magazine publications of Conrad's works
given attention. Miss Ruth M. Staufler has included in
her study, Joseph Conrad: His Romantic-Realism (1923),
a complete list of Conrad's magazine publications. This
fact, together with the fact that all of Conrad's scat-
tered articles are supposedly collected either in Notes
on Life and Letters or in Last Essays, is the reason
offered for ignoring all periodical publications of
his writings here.
II. BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CRITICAL MATERIAL, REVIEWS, AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

It was impossible from the material in the Kansas University Library to compile a complete bibliography of critical material concerning Conrad. Such sources as were in the library were exhausted, and the bibliography is complete as far as it could be made from the sources listed. These sources include several early attempts at a Conrad bibliography, all the published bibliographies of importance it is believed--- with one exception. And this bibliography, which was compiled by Mr. Wise in 1920 (a), has been used by Miss Stauffer two years later and here in turn consulted for the bibliography which was used for this investigation.

A. Sources of the Critical Bibliography

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Book Review Digest (Annual Cumulation), New York, H.W. Wilson and Co., -- 1905 and 1907 to June 1926 (1906 missing)

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B. Critical Bibliography: Chronological Arrangement.

The following bibliography is arranged chronologically, because in this way it is possible to show at a glance the attention that Conrad was attracting at a given moment. For convenience in this comparison the first American and English editions of his works are listed here. (b). The English editions preceded the American editions except where the dates are given to indicate that the American editions were first.

Items starred(*) were not available in this library.

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The End of the Tether

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