

学会報告 Reporting the 33rd Annual International Conference,
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To celebrate the 150th anniversary of Joseph Conrad's birth, the Joseph Conrad Society (UK) held its 33rd annual conference in London for three days from the 5th to the 7th of July. The first two days saw the conference in the building of The Polish Social and Cultural Association (POSK) at Hammersmith in the north-western part of London, and the last day saw it at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, a suburb of London. I find it interesting for the Society to have chosen the museum as a meeting place. First, the museum is fittingly proper for Conrad who describes the characters of seamen in his impressive tales and stories; second, it is very close to the mouth of the Thames where Marlow narrates "Heart of Darkness" and "Youth" to his four friends; and third, it is within a stone's throw of the Royal Greenwich Observatory, a target for the attempted bombing in *The Secret Agent*.

Among the many participants of various nationalities, there were two from Japan: that is, Kenji Tanaka and I. As a presenter, Tanaka spoke about "Noteworthy Japanese" who must have been on friendly terms with Joseph Conrad in his Marseilles days. Security had been critical throughout Britain for a few days before we got to Heathrow Airport. There occurred in the central part of London two attempted acts of terrorism by using cars with an explosive in them and a similar incident at Glasgow Airport, Scotland. However, once we stepped into the conference hall it looked as if we were in another world completely different from the outer, threatening world.

The conference started with Keith Carabine's opening greetings. The room rang with his loud and clear voice, which sounded incredibly young. After introducing the 2006 Japanese translation of "The End of the Tether" by the present writer, he said, "UNESCO glorifies the achievements Conrad left

behind in literature, particularly the manner in which he shows a deep insight into an individual's ethics and human solidarity" and expressed his gratitude to us all for coming all the way to the meeting from the four corners of the earth. There were a variety of events and activities awaiting us to celebrate Joseph Conrad's 150th birthday. To cite some examples, there were a number of papers presented which were valid and convincing, a puppet show *Out of Heart of Darkness*, an audio-visual presentation of a new one-act opera based on "Heart of Darkness," in which both Tarik O'Regan, a young composer, and Tom Philips, a versatile artist, demonstrated how they had tackled the topic to make the most of the original into the opera, and a speech by J. H. Stape titled "On Conrad Biography as a Fine Art" to mark the publication of his own new book *The Several Lives of Joseph Conrad*.

The first presentation, "Another Look at Conrad and Achebe," was an impressive beginning to the conference. Robert Hampson examined Chinua Achebe's criticism of "Heart of Darkness" in detail, and explained how the work had been challenged by it in the past thirty years. At the same time, however, Hampson revealed how complex the work is, containing a variety of subjects to be studied in the future. To make his point clear, he referred to Albert J. Guerard's psychological interpretation which tried to prove that Marlow's travels into the Congo are an exploration into his own identity. Hampson argued that "Heart of Darkness" is not meant to directly convey "African savageness" or dehumanize Africans. Conrad noticed the savage latent in the mind of Western people, and his imagination crystallized into "Heart of Darkness," a challenge to the colonialism of Western industrialized countries. The work was full of insight and foresight in Conrad's times. What I made out of his presentation is that Hampson suggested that "Heart of Darkness" is a classic which will be read from generation to generation throughout the world. When Hampson ended up reading his paper, a woman scholar gave a sad cry, saying "There would be nothing else than the Bible for us to read if literature should be read in Achebe's style." Her interesting remarks have stuck in my mind since.

The second day started with the presentation of two papers on "The End of the Tether," Owen Knowles acting as Chair. The first presenter was a young English scholar. He was inspired by "The Nobility of Sight," an essay by Hans Jonas (1903-93), a German-born existential philosopher, to read the novella. In particular, he referred to the following part of Hans Jonas's essay:

Since the days of Greek philosophy sight has been hailed as the most excellent of the senses. The noblest activity of the mind, *theoria*, is described in metaphors mostly taken from the visual sphere. Plato, and Western Philosophy after him, speaks of the "eye of the soul" and of the "light of reason". . . . Sight, in addition to furnishing the analogues for the intellectual upper-structure, has tended to serve as the model of perception in general and thus as the measure of the other senses. . . . Aristotle, in the first of the *Metaphysics*, relates the desire for the knowledge inherent in the nature of all men to the common delight in perception, most of all in vision. (Hans Jonas, "The Nobility of Sight: A Study in the Phenomenology of the Senses")

From this point of view the presenter attempted to explore Captain Whalley's outlook on the world, his religious faith, the meanings of his progressive blindness and even Conrad's artistic attitudes.

The second presenter was a Conradian from Texas, America, working at Odessa College. He paid special attention to the organic connection of "delayed decoding" with the plot of the novella.

On the last day Laurence Davies spoke about the relationship between Conrad and John Everett. In Conrad's later years J. B. Pinker, the writer's agent, proposed that they should publish a new edition of *The Mirror of the Sea* which had been published in 1906, and that they should ask Herbert Barnard John Everett, a maritime painter and engraver, to illustrate it. Conrad, deeply moved by Everett's "accurate and imaginative" pictures, responded with enthusiasm. Sadly enough, this plan did not bear fruit after all. Then Laurence

Davies told how, just like Conrad, Everett went to sea early in his youth to become a genuine sailor at last. Meanwhile he went on painting the sea, boats and ships. He donated all his marine paintings to the National Maritime Museum. The presenter gave an explanation of the five paintings by using a slide projector, which would probably have been appreciated by Conrad. The pictures in question are *The 'Cutty Sark' and a Tug* (1921), *A Convoy* (1918), *Converting a Cunarder to a Merchant Ship* (1918), *The 'Castle Holme' in Surrey Commercial Dock* (1921), and *Le Croisic* (1921).

Keith Carabine offered us twenty-three letters of Jessie Conrad ranging from 1905 to 1933, out of which 18 had been unpublished. As he read her letters, he made a few comments on what kind of woman she was like. His tone of voice expressed clearly that Carabine feels sympathetic for the writer's wife. Jessie was from Camberwell, south of the Thames, which was mainly a lower-middle and working-class area. She was often ridiculed by Conrad's literary circle for some local accent and phrases in her speech. However, she was both a good wife and a good mother in her household. She always cared about her husband's health, and paid much attention to the education and discipline of her two boys. She was a good cook familiar with French and Italian cuisines. From 1923 to 24 Jessie sent some articles about cooking to Eric Pinker, the son of J. B. Pinker. Nine years after her husband's death, she complained that she had not heard from their elder son Borys for more than a year and a half, and that the son's wife had not let her see their grandson.

Then we took a two-hour break to stretch our legs. We made a tour of the Museum Galleries and enjoyed lunch. The Greenwich Observatory looked beautiful against the blue sky, surrounded by a spacious, well-kept lawn.

At a quarter to two we went again into the lecture theatre to listen to papers on Conrad's short fiction. They dealt with "An Outpost of Progress," "Because of the Dollars," and "Freya of the Seven Isles" respectively. For me, the third paper was interesting and easy to understand. Susan Stringer O'Keefe, a Chilean Conradian, spoke about "duality, paradox and confusion" in the story. She had a deeper look into the relationship between the main characters and

had done a thorough analysis of the narrative. She described the story as “a nightmarish fairy tale of a passionate romance culminating in death.” “Duality extends to all aspects of the narration”; the reader takes “pleasure in the play on ‘the conflict between appearances and reality,’” “the tension between the comic and the tragic” and “the opposition between male and female.” Conrad gave free rein to his poetic language in making an artistic work of “what would have been clumsy melodrama and caricature in the work of a lesser writer.” Although the narrator portrays Freya paradoxically “both as a goddess and a down-to-earth woman,” she is actually “highly vulnerable, having grown up largely without a mother and with an apprehensive and indecisive father.” Her lack of social experience as well as her enclosed geographic surroundings inclines her towards the liking for a brig, the *Bonito*, which is “another enclosed environment.” Jasper is also an emotionally defenceless orphan, having grown up without a mother. His love for Freya makes him blind to Heemskirk’s scheme; he fears Heemskirk only “as a representative of the Dutch authorities, not as a rival in love.” On the surface Jasper is the epitome of masculinity, but with Freya he accepts the role of the “kid,” “the happy child.” Furthermore, he merges his and Freya’s identity and their love with the brig *Bonito*. In this way, it was easy for us to appreciate how scrupulous Susan Stringer O’Keefe was in studying “Freya of the Seven Isles.”

The last session to conclude the conference was devoted to J. H. Stape’s speech “On Conrad Biography as a Fine Art.” Stape referred chronologically to the past major biographies of Conrad by G. Jean-Aubry, Jocelyn Baines, Norman Sherry, Frederick R. Carl, Zdzisław Najder, Jeffrey Meyers and so forth. He considered all the biographies to be the products of the times in which each biographer lived as well as those of his national trait. And he said that it is now possible to gather information or to get in touch with persons or facilities in an instant by making use of websites; so that he had gotten a number of new facts relating to Joseph Conrad. It was exceedingly interesting to hear him point out that Jessie, whom Conrad asked to marry, was actually a worker in a typewriter factory, and that she was a two-finger typist; it had been

assumed that she was a professional typist. Sober and serious a scholar as he usually is, Stape made everyone burst into laughter with his humorous remarks. The one-hour speech seemed to have ended in no time at all.

Thus the three-day conference successfully concluded. We all gathered in a traditional pub on the Thames and talked over beer and dinner, looking at the lingering glow in the evening sky and river. Each one of the participants started for home promising to meet again.

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