

Call for Papers
Between Texts and Theory: Transnational Conrad
University of Limoges, France
EA 1087 EHIC (Espaces Humains et Interactions Culturelles)
& Société Conradienne Française,
with the support of Associazione Italiana di Studi Conradiani
21-22 September, 2017

Joseph Conrad's work has acquired a symbolic status in contemporary globalized culture. After 9/11, *The Secret Agent* "became one of the three works of literature most frequently cited in the American media"¹ and the same happened after the November 2015 attacks in Paris. His colonial fictions in particular have in the past decades become a contentious site of debate, as a great number of critics have chosen them as case studies for the application of postcolonial theory. Few other polemics in the field of English Studies have equalled the early responses to Chinua Achebe's essay in which Conrad is called a "thoroughgoing racist" – an accusation that has changed for ever the reception and evaluation of *Heart of Darkness*. And yet, Conrad is also mentioned as a major source of inspiration by contemporary writers worldwide with, for instance, dozens of novels inspired by *Heart of Darkness* alone (not to mention the films, graphic novels, the multiple translations and re-translations, etc.). In all these cases, his works have been appropriated by people with very personal agendas that have little to do with the original texts.

As someone born in Poland, brought up as a Francophile, writing in English, it seems that "the whole of Europe contributed to the making of" Mr Conrad, giving him a transnational dimension: his works mirror this cultural and linguistic diversity and this is also why, perhaps, they have constantly been re-interpreted according to changing critical trends and ideological perspectives. In the process, however, the literary and aesthetic dimension of his novels has often been forgotten in favour of the debate of ideas. Yet Conrad was also an experimenter, playing with forms, genres, narrative modes, literary conventions.

¹ Peter Lancelot Mallios, "Reading *The Secret Agent* Now: The Press, the Police, the Premonition of simulation" in *Conrad in the Twenty-First Century. Contemporary Approaches and Perspectives*, ed. by Carola M. Kaplan, Peter Lancelot Mallios, Andrea White, New York: Routledge, 2005, 155.

We would like to interrogate our reading of Conrad nowadays, from a transnational perspective in order to explore how his approach to fiction makes it possible for us to question the way we read novels as aesthetic and ethical artefacts in the contemporary world.

We wish to address such issues as:

- Conrad and ideology
- Conrad between theory and close reading
- Conrad as European icon
- Conrad as English writer and transnational author
- Conrad as a “chamber of echoes” for a diversity of cultures, languages, genres, traditions
- Conrad’s influence on contemporary literature
- Conrad’s relevance in the contemporary landscape
- Multidisciplinary approaches of Conrad
- Reading Conrad after/in spite of Achebe

All proposals should be addressed before 30 April 2017 to:

Nathalie Martinière

nathalie.martiniere@unilim.fr or nmartiniere@gmail.com

A selection of papers will be published in *L’Epoque Conradienne*