



In Memoriam Mario Curreli (1943–2015)

I first met Mario at the famous 1972 conference in Poland under the aegis of Zdzislaw Najder. Like Mario, I was overawed to find myself in the company of Borys Conrad, Ian Watt, Gustav Morf, René Rapin and other famed figures. (The conference was gate-crashed by a contingent from a *Conradiana* conference in London, which brought in Eloise Knapp Hay, Ed Bojarski and others.) Mario was alert, astute, sensitive, a little nervous, resourceful and engaging.

Later that year, he and the charming Vanna visited me in Brighton, and we proceeded to Hindhead to meet Borys again. Mario and Borys soon became good friends, and Borys presented

Mario with a silver-topped cane that had belonged to Joseph Conrad. Subsequently, I collaborated with Mario on an article on *The Premier and the Painter* and *The Secret Agent*, and our collaboration continued over the years until Mario's death. He would advise me on (say) Italian matters in Shakespeare's works, and I would proof-check some of his articles in English. Mario's linguistic range was remarkable: it was from him that I learnt the useful English word "onomastic." We met at various Conradian gatherings and conferences. Mario was immensely productive and resourceful, in spite of severe health problems. For years he underwent the ordeal of regular dialysis. Eventually he was helped by a kidney transplant, the donor being Vanna. In the case of Mario and Vanna, the biblical adage "they shall be one flesh" became literally true. Their flat in the heart of historic Pisa provided frequent generous hospitality for international visitors.

In 1974, with Ugo Mursia and Renato Prinzhofer, Mario founded the Italian branch of the International Joseph Conrad Society. As editor and scholar, Mario was remarkable. Being an expert on the Romantics, on Italian aspects of English literature, on numerous nineteenth-century writers (particularly Dickens), and of course on Conrad, his writings were notable for scholarly accuracy, range and depth. His *Invito alla lettura di Conrad* (Milan: Mursia, 1984) must have provided a handy introduction to Conrad for many Italian students. Mario organized the quite lavish international Conrad conferences at Pisa in September 1983 and

September 2004, and edited the two volumes which resulted: *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures* [First Series] (Milan: Mursia, 1988) and the Second Series (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2005). As testimony to his range, *Scrittore inglese a Pisa* appeared in 2005.

One of the recurrent characteristics of Mario's writing was that he traced allusions further than one might expect: he was skilled in making connections that other writers might have overlooked. To take one very small but typical example: in the essay "Intertextuality and Myth in *Nostramo*," he says:

At the end of "Youth" the *Judea* has to be swallowed by the waves in a typically Conradian impenetrable night, and the phrase "black, black as Erebus" (p. 33) is an obvious lexical pointer to suggest that we are in the context of a veritable descent into Hell. This mythological name re-appears in "Heart of Darkness" as one of Sir Thomas Franklin's two ships, ice-bound and lost in the Arctic; among the ships sent to look for them was the *Diana* (her figurehead is preserved in the hold of the *Cutty Sark* at Greenwich) whose name is used for Hermann's ship in "Falk".

That detail about the figurehead in the *Cutty Sark* is a typical Currelian flourish: Mario's scholarship was unstinting and always provided a larger associative network of allusions than most of us would have perceived. In his range of knowledge and concern for accuracy he sometimes seemed to me to resemble an Italian Hans van Marle. He has made numerous enduring contributions to Conradian studies.

Observant, dapper, resourceful, shrewd, learned, indefatigably diligent, hospitable, generous, modest, a little nervous or anxious perhaps, but possessed of a dry humour and capable of penetratingly witty character-observations, an efficient organizer, a reliable scholarly collaborator, and possessor of a quiet charm, Mario was one of the most endearing of Conradians. I remember him with affection, and bitterly regret that his life was cut short at a time when he was still so active and so rewardingly productive. The community of Conrad scholars in Britain sends its deepest condolences to his wife Vanna and daughter Marta.

Cedric Watts

SELECTED WORKS ON CONRAD BY MARIO CURRELI

In addition to his large body of criticism and commentary, Mario Curreli translated virtually the whole of the Conrad canon into Italian and also edited the one-volume compilation *Joseph Conrad: Opere, Romanzi e racconti, 1904–1924* (Milan: Bompiani, 1995). Other volumes and articles include:

“Conrad and Zangwill: A Note on *The Premier and the Painter*,” *kwartalnik Neofilologiczny*, 22.2 (1975), 240–42 (with C. T. Watts).

“Four Unpublished Conrad Letters,” *Conradiana*, 8.3 (1976), 209–17.

“The Writing of *Nostramo*,” in *Joseph Conrad Conference in Poland, Second Series*, ed. Roza Jabłkowska (Wrocław: Polish Academy of Sciences, 1979), 47–67.

Invito alla lettura di Conrad (Milan: Mursia, 1984).

“A Socio-Semiotic Reading of Conrad’s ‘Falk,’” *L’Epoque Conradianne*, 18 (1988), 35–46 (with Fausto Ciompi).

The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures, Papers from the International Conrad Conference, University of Pisa, September 7th–11th 1983, ed. Mario Curreli (Milan: Mursia, 1988).

Cecchi e Conrad: Tres lettere inedite (Viareggio: Pezzini, 1990).

“A Survey of *Nostramo* Editions,” *The Conradian*, 24.1 (1991), 19–42.

L’esperienza del primo commando nella narrativa conradiana (Livorno: Accademia Navale, 1995).

“Conrad’s Reception in Italy,” *Contexts*, 2–3 (1999), 22–48.

“Genuine Genoese Names in *Nostramo*,” *Conradiana*, 31.2 (1999), 99–108.

“Crossbreeding the Wilderness: Conrad’s Mythical Method and *The Waste Land*,” *L’Epoque Conradianne*, 28 (2002), 97–117.

Ian Watt and Hans van Marle: Conradians, A Tribute from Friends, ed. Mario Correlli (London: Joseph Conrad Society, UK, 2003).

Leitmotifs from Coleridge and Wagner in *Nostramo* and Beyond,” in *Nostramo: Centennial Essays*, ed. Allan H. Simmons and J. H. Stape (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 96–109.

The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures, Second Series, ed. Mario Curreli *Anglistica Pisana* (Pisa: Edizione ETS, 2005).

“Intertextuality and Myth in *Nostramo*,” in Curreli (ed.), *The Ugo Mursia Lectures, Second Series*, pp. 121–132.

“Invading Other People’s Territory: *The Inheritors*,” *Conradiana*, 37.1–2 (2005), 75–96.

“Myth and the Folklore of the Sea in Conrad,” in *Myths of Europe*, ed. Richard Littlejohn and Sara Soncini (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 133–46.

“Garibaldian Names in Conrad’s *Nostromo*,” *The Conradian*, 33.2 (2008), 80–97.

Le traduzioni di Conrad in Italia, Anglistica Pisana (Pisa: Edizione ETS), 2009.

“Translations,” in *Conrad in Context*, ed. Allan H. Simmons (Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 99–106.

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