



International Conference  
**Joseph Conrad. Twixt Land and Sea**

**17-18 November 2017**

University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn

University of Warsaw

Patronage: The Polish Joseph Conrad Society

Summarising his reflections concerning Conrad's service at sea, Zdzisław Najder wrote that in this 20-year-long period he "gained an immense range of experience, from stark, helpless fear, disgust, and boredom to the ecstatic enjoyment of beauty, a sense of the triumphant efficacy of his own body and spirit, to exhaustion relieved by the consciousness of victory in the struggle against an incomparably stronger elemental opponent". This incredibly vivid memory of serving at sea acquired a characteristic, almost elegiac overtone in Conrad's works, which was also audible in *The Mirror of the Sea*: "when the great soul of the world turned over with a heavy sigh [...] The machinery must do its work even if the soul of the world has gone mad".

The clash between the land and the sea, so powerfully evident in Conrad's narratives, may perhaps not be an opposition of two qualities of this soul of the world, but their interdependence. At the international conference *Joseph Conrad. Twixt Land and Sea* co-organised by the University of Warmia and Mazury and Warsaw University, we would like to pose an important question concerning the "model of co-presence", that is the scheme of coexistence of the land and the sea in Conrad's works. Does the duality of the marine and continental space implicate the duality of Conrad as a *homo duplex*, a Pole and an Englishman, a writer and a sailor? Doesn't the simplistic division of his novels into the marine and continental ones, against the writer's vehement protests, lead us astray?

We would like to invite you to extend the scope of our initial question. What are the characteristic features of Conradian "marine narratives", especially the "narratives of sailing" as opposed to "continental narratives". How are these features visible within the evolving stories of Marlow, some of which are the former (*Youth*), while others the latter (*Chance*)? Does the so called creation of Costaguana in *Nostramo* enrich our knowledge about the land not only as a Conradian literary theme, but also as a novelistic figure? Can it be claimed that the Conradian sea is a unique space of transcendence, a space that Hugo Friedrich would have called "empty ideality"? If so, in order to obfuscate the juxtaposition of the land and the sea, it is perhaps worth asking if

the Conradian land could also be seen as a similar, although differently realised, metaphysical symbol of empty ideality? If so, then, what land would that be? As, surely, not all Conradian visions of the land deserve such an appellation.

Or maybe it is the other way round, and the juxtaposition of the land and the sea is a fixed opposition, in some sense a radical, Dantean opposition? Could twixt land and sea mean as much as between hell and heaven? If so (although it is a risky perspective), Conrad's marine heaven is not at all obvious. It can be a space of romantically fulfilled tragedy portrayed in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, or a sphere of existential struggle depicted in *The Shadow Line*. Those who sail the seas can be corsairs like Peyrol from *The Rover*, or they can become "toilers of the sea", to use Victor Hugo's term. As for land, it is even more difficult to determine stable points of reference. Costaguana, Patusan, Borneo and the Malay Archipelago, the Belgian Congo, the monumental Conradian image of the East... – how to generalise all these multiaspectual and multiperspective images of the land Conrad created against the background of equally ambiguous images of the sea, though still rendering themselves to some synthesising attempts.

The Polish Parliament announced 2017, the 160th birthday anniversary of Joseph Conrad, the year of the writer. Our conference is to contribute to ceremonial celebrations. That is why we do not limit our participants only to the main theme, but we encourage them to propose papers referring to various aspects of Joseph Conrad's life, work and influence on Polish, European and world literature, discussing Conrad's Polish and European background.

### **Confirmed plenary speakers**

Prof. Robert Hampson, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK  
Dr Hugh Epstein, London, Secretary of the Joseph Conrad Society, UK  
Prof. Wiesław Krajka, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, PL

#### **Main theme**

- the coexistence/opposition of land and sea in Joseph Conrad's works
- specific features of 'sea' and 'land' narratives
- the image of land and sea in Joseph Conrad's works
- Conrad's sea years
- Conrad's land years

#### **Other aspects**

- Conrad and Polish Romanticism
- Conrad and European Romanticism
- intertextuality in Conrad's works
- Conradian echoes in contemporary literature
- Conrad's influence on world literature
- reception of Conrad's works
- translations of Conrad's works

The conference will take place at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn in the heart of the picturesque Polish Lake District (<http://www.uwm.edu.pl/en/node/36>). The organisers will offer moderately priced accommodation on the university campus (details will be announced on the website) for the duration of the conference. The conference fee covers: coffee breaks, lunches, gala dinner, and conference materials.

The conference fee is 400 PLN / 100 EUR / 100 USD  
(for PhD students 300PLN / 75 EUR / 75 USD).  
Conference languages: Polish, English

Proposals for 20-minute long presentations (please see the **attachment with a submission form**) should be sent to the following conference address: [conrad2017olsztyn@gmail.com](mailto:conrad2017olsztyn@gmail.com) Submissions are welcome until September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. Notifications of acceptance will be forwarded within two weeks since the receiving of your submission form.

We are looking forward to meeting you in Olsztyn!

#### Organisers

dr Karol Samsel, UW  
dr Anna Kwiatkowska, UWM  
dr Katarzyna Kodeniec, UWM (secretary)

#### Scientific Committee

prof. dr hab. Wiesław Rzońca, UW,  
dr hab. Ewa Kujawska-Lis, prof. UWM

#### Other members of the organizing committee:

dr Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska, UWM,  
dr Dorota Gładkowska, UWM  
dr Anna Drogosz, UWM

#### Student Interest Groups:

“Anglo-Cooltura Seniors”, Department of English Philology, UWM  
“Feerie”, Faculty of Polish Philology, UW