

# *Ne vedem la seminar...*

Note de curs, texte, teme, definiții, explicații

Seminars of English Literature: A Reader



**Silvia Osman**

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Seminars of English Literature: A Reader



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*„I make not therefore my head a grave, but a treasure of knowledge; I intend no monopoly, but a community on learning; I study not for my own sake only, but for theirs that study not for themselves.“*

- Thomas Browne<sup>1</sup>, “*Religio Medici*” (1643)

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<sup>1</sup> **Sir Thomas Browne** (1605 - 1682) was an English author of varied works which disclose his wide learning in diverse fields including medicine, religion, science and the esoteric. Browne’s writings display a deep curiosity towards the natural world, influenced by the Scientific revolution of Baconian enquiry. A consummate literary craftsman, Browne’s works are permeated by frequent reference to Classical and Biblical sources and to his own highly idiosyncratic personality. His literary style varies according to genre resulting in a rich, unusual prose that ranges from rough notebook observations to the highest baroque eloquence. The Argentinian writer **Jorge Luis Borges** alluded to Browne throughout his literary writings, from his first publication, *Fervor de Buenos Aires* (1923) until his last years. Such was **Borges’** admiration of Browne as a literary stylist and thinker that late in his life (Interview April 25th 1980) he stated of himself alluding to his self-portrait in “*Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*” (1940): „... *Thomas Browne – I love him. I translated him into seventeenth century Spanish and it worked very well. We took a chapter out of Urne Buriall and we did that into Quevedo’s Spanish and it went very well.*” He described Browne as “*the best prose writer in the English language*”.



## ***Ne vedem la seminar...***

Deși aparent imposibil, copertile volumului de față adună la un loc aproape un secol de literatură, în informație esențială, concisă. A fost o adevărată provocare acoperirea în timp a unei perioade atât de lungi, frământată de idei inovatoare și de prăpastii, de suișuri și coborâșuri, de stigmatul a două războaie nemiloase, a căror amprentă a marcat etern întreaga umanitate, lăsând în urmă un tărâm al pustietății. O mână de oameni puternici, talentați și sensibili au pus pe hârtie – fiecare cu harul său – poveștile unor vieți trăite cu intensitatea vibrațiilor lor interioare, purtând pecetea vremurilor pe care le trăiau, retrăiau, imaginau sau visau, păriseau sau întrezăreau, bănuiau sau intuiau ca fiind posibile pentru ei și pentru personajele lor. Au creat, cu uriașa ingeniozitate, lumi ficționare pe măsura geniului lor creator, desenate după adâncimea trăirii lor interioare.

Facem cunoștință la fiecare Unit / capitol cu un astfel de creator (în *The Author*) - scriitor, poet, prozator, dramaturg - cu artistul care țese, țese priceput (ca Penelopa lui Ulise, călătorul) pânza unui text pe care, trecând de păienjenis (în *The Web of a Text*) – vom încerca să-l înțelegem împreună, să ne croim drum spre limpezimea trăirii care a adus suflu și corporalitate în literă.

Frământările **secolului 20** se reflectă – uneori mai deformat, alteori nemilos de exact – în oglinda părținoare de dincolo de pagina scrisă. Virginia Woolf spunea într-unul dintre eseurile sale („*Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*”) ca la începutul secolului 20 (“...in or about 1910...”) <sup>1</sup> spiritul uman a suferit o inconfundabilă schimbare. Cu siguranță, această transformare – în aparență, simbol sau profunzimi abisale – își regăsește amprenta clar conturată asupra literaturii născute sub apăsarea a două războaie mondiale, mișcări și zguduiri

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<sup>1</sup> Having already written a story about a Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf thought of a foiling device that would pair that highly sensitive woman with a shell-shocked war victim, a Mr. Smith, so that “the sane and the insane” would exist “side by side.” Her aim was to “tunnel” into these two characters until Clarissa Dalloway’s affirmations meet Septimus Smith’s negations. Also in 1924 Woolf gave a talk at Cambridge called Character in Fiction, revised later that year as the Hogarth Press pamphlet *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*. In it she celebrated the breakdown in patriarchal values that had occurred “in or about December, 1910”–during Fry’s exhibit “Manet and the Post-Impressionists”–and she attacked “materialist” novelists for omitting the essence of character.

sociale majore, patimi și ambiții, furii și deznădăcinări. Lumea întreagă și-a schimbat de atunci, insidious, măreț și ireversibil fața.

Pentru a putea oarecum descifra sau a ne apropia cât de cât de o cheie, de o ridicare a vălului diafan ce acoperă acest univers literar (pentru mulți criptic) avem nevoie de o seamă de elemente ajutătoare: detalii despre autor, despre perioada istorico-socială pe care o traversează creația sa artistică, despre mișcările literar-artistice contemporane, plus unele detalii explicative (definiții, termeni literari, etc). Am încercat să adun în paginile acestui suport de studiu / reader cât mai multe elemente de informație complexă, riguroasă, relevantă, dar care nu se dorește a fi – nici pe departe - completă sau suficientă.

Ceea ce mi-am propus însă este să vă conving că merită să citiți mult, ca să înțelegeți destul și să citiți tot ce vă cade în mână, ca să puteți să deschideți și singuri, în timp, comoara literară a acestui secol frământat de frumos, excepțional de inovativ și crud de adevărat și să reveniți cu drag ori de câte ori vă este dat prilejul.

Profesorul **Peter Conrad**<sup>2</sup>, în lucrarea “*Cassell’s History of English Literature*”, spunea că literatura este ca o poveste de dragoste (“*literature is a love affair with the language*”): vă doresc să vă regăsiți parteneri ai acestei relații cu totul și cu totul speciale, să reușiți să o ocrotiți și să o prețuiți toată viața și să descoperiți “*agape*<sup>3</sup>” – iubirea pură pentru cuvântul scris cu artă.

Vorbindu-vă despre toate aceste lucruri, gândul îmi zboară către profesorii mei - **Tudora Sandru-Mehedinți, Gabriela Necheș, Bogdan Ștefănescu, Sanda Popescu y Duma, Andrei Ionescu, Monica Botez** - în fața cărora mă înclin și astăzi, mulțumindu-le pentru iscusința cu care au știut să sădească în mine – ireversibil și contagios - dragostea pentru literatura de calitate.

Vă invit să deschidem romanele și cărțile de poezie ale Secolului 20 și să ne bucurăm împreună de această experiență unică: **Ne vedem la seminar...**

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<sup>2</sup> **Peter Conrad** (b. 1948) is an Australian-born academic specializing in English literature, currently teaching at Christ Church at Oxford University. He has written a number of works of criticism including a major history of English literature, *The Everyman History of English Literature*, a cultural history of the twentieth century, two autobiographical works and a novel. He has written books of criticism on Orson Welles and Alfred Hitchcock and has been a prolific writer of features and reviews for many magazines and newspapers including *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Observer* and the *New Statesman*.

<sup>3</sup> **Agape love** - unconditional love that is always giving and impossible to take or be a taker. It devotes total commitment to seek your highest best no matter how anyone may respond. This form of love is totally selfless and does not change whether the love given is returned or not. This is the original and only true form of love.

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## Unit 1

*„Ambition is the last refuge of the failure.”*

- Oscar Wilde, Irish writer and wit<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1. The Author

#### Henry James or the *Moments of Life*

**Henry James** (1843-1916) was an American-born writer, gifted with talents in literature, psychology, and philosophy. James wrote 20 novels, 112 stories, 12 plays and a number of literary criticism. His models were Dickens, Balzac, and Hawthorne. James once said that he learned more of the craft of writing from Balzac “than from anyone else”.

*“A novel is in its broadest sense a personal, a direct impression of life: that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression.”*

(from *The Art of Fiction*, 1885)

Henry James was born in New York City into a wealthy family. His father, Henry James Sr., was one of the best-known intellectuals in mid-nineteenth-century America, whose friends included Thoreau, Emerson and Hawthorne. James made little money from his novels. Once his friend, the writer Edith Wharton, secretly arranged him a royal advance of \$8,000 for *THE IVORY TOWER* (1917), but the money actually came from Wharton’s royalty account with the publisher. When Wharton sent him a letter bemoaning her unhappy marriage, James replied: *“Keep making the movements of life.”*

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<sup>1</sup> **Wit** - 1 - the ability to use words in a clever and humorous way:

a woman of great intelligence and wit

Her conversation sparkled with her own subtle blend of wit and charm.

He was known for his dry/ready/sharp wit.

2 – a person who is skilled at using words in a clever and humorous way:

Sydney Smith, a notable wit, once remarked that he never read a book before he reviewed it because it might prejudice his opinion of it.

In his youth James traveled back and forth between Europe and America. He studied with tutors in Geneva, London, Paris, Bologna and Bonn. At the age of nineteen he briefly attended Harvard Law School, but was more interested in literature than studying law. James published his first short story, 'A Tragedy of Errors' two years later, and then devoted himself to literature. In 1866-69 and 1871-72 he was contributor to the *Nation* and *Atlantic Monthly*.

From an early age James had read the classics of English, American, French and German literature, and Russian classics in translation. His first novel, WATCH AND WARD (1871), appeared first serially in the *Atlantic*. James wrote it while he was traveling through Venice and Paris. *Watch and Ward* tells a story of a bachelor who adopts a twelve-year-old girl and plans to marry her.

After living in Paris, where James was contributor to the *New York Tribune*, he moved to England, living first in London and then in Rye, Sussex. "It is a real stroke of luck for a particular country that the capital of the human race happens to be British. Surely every other people would have it theirs if they could. Whether the English deserve to hold it any longer might be an interesting field of inquiry; but as they have not yet let it slip the writer of these lines professes without scruple that the arrangement is to his personal taste. For after all if the sense of life is greatest there, it is a sense of the life of people of our incomparable English speech." (from *London*, 1888) During his first years in Europe James wrote novels that portrayed Americans living abroad. James's years in England were uneventful. In 1905 he visited America for the first time in twenty-five years, and wrote 'Jolly Corner'. It was based on his observations of New York, but also a nightmare of a man, who is haunted by a *doppelgänger*.

Between 1906 and 1910 James revised many of his tales and novels for the so-called New York Edition of his complete works. It was published by Charles Scribner's Sons. His autobiography, A SMALL BOY AND OTHERS (1913) was continued in NOTES OF A SON AND BROTHER (1914). The third volume, THE MIDDLE YEARS, appeared posthumously in 1917. The outbreak of World War I was a shock for James and in 1915 he became a British citizen as a loyalty to his adopted country and in protest against the US's refusal to enter the war.

Henry James suffered a stroke on December 2, 1915. He expected to die and exclaimed: "***So this is it at last, the distinguished thing!***" However, James died three months later in Rye on February 28, 1916. Two novels, *The Ivory Tower* and THE SENSE OF THE PAST (1917), were left unfinished at his death.

Characteristic for James novels are understanding and sensitively drawn lady portraits; James himself was a homosexual, but sensitive to basic sexual differences and the fact that he was a male. His main themes were the innocence of the New World in conflict with corruption and wisdom of the Old. Among his masterpieces is *DAISY MILLER* (1879), where the young and innocent American Daisy finds her values in conflict with European sophistication. In **THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY** (1881) again a young American woman is fooled during her travels in Europe. James started to write the work in Florence in 1879 and continued with it in Venice. The definitive version appeared in 1908. *“I had rooms on Riva Sciaconi, at the top of a house near the passage leading off to San Zaccaria; the waterside life, the wondrous lagoon spread before me, and the ceaseless human chatter of Venice came in at my windows, to which I seem to myself to have been constantly driven, in the fruitless fidget of composition, as if to see whether, out in the blue channel, the ship of some right suggestion, of some better phrase, of the next happy twist of my subject, the next true touch for my canvas, mightn’t come into sight.”*

The protagonist is **Isabel Archer**, a penniless orphan. She goes to England to stay with her aunt and uncle, and their son, Ralph. Isabel inherits money and goes to Continent with Mrs Touchett and Madame Merle. She turns down proposals of marriage from Casper Goodwood, and marries Gilbert Osmond, a middle-aged snobbish widower with a young daughter, Pansy. *“He had a light, lean, rather languid-looking figure, and was apparently neither tall nor short. He was dressed as a man who takes little other trouble about it than to have no vulgar thing.”* Isabel discovers that Pansy is Madame Merle’s daughter, it was Madame Merle’s plot to marry Isabel to Osmond so that he, and Pansy can enjoy Isabel’s wealth. Caspar Goodwood makes a last attempt to gain her, but she returns to Osmond and Pansy.

**THE BOSTONIANS** (1886), set in the era of the rising feminist movement, was based on Alphonse Daudet’s novel *L’Évangéliste*. **WHAT MAISIE KNEW** (1897) depicted a preadolescent young girl, who must chose between her parents and a motherly old governess. In **THE WINGS OF THE DOVE** (1902) a heritage destroys the love of a young couple. James considered **THE AMBASSADORS** (1903) his most “perfect” work of art. The novel depicts Lambert Strether’s attempts to persuade Mrs Newsome’s son Chad to return from Paris back to the United States. Strether’s possibility to marry Mrs Newsome is dropped and he remains content in his role as a widower and observer. *“The beauty that suffuses *The Ambassadors* is the reward due to a fine artist for hard work. James knew exactly what he wanted, he pursued the narrow path of aesthetic duty, and success to the full extent of his possibilities*

*has crowned him. The pattern has woven itself, with modulation and reservations Anatole France will never attain. But at what sacrifice!*" (from *Aspects of the Novel* by E.M. Forster, 1927)

Although James is best-known for his novels, his essays are now attracting audience outside scholarly connoisseurs. In his early critics James considered British and American novels dull and formless and French fiction "intolerably unclean". "M. Zola is magnificent, but he strikes an English reader as ignorant; he has an air of working in the dark; if he had as much light as energy, his results would be of the highest value." (from *The Art of Fiction*) In PARTIAL PORTRAITS (1888) James paid tribute to his elders, and Emerson, George Eliot, and Turgenev. His advice to aspiring writers avoided all theorizing: "Oh, do something from your point of view". H.G. Wells used James as the model for George Boon in his *Boon* (1915). When the protagonist argued that novels should be used for propaganda, not art, James wrote to Wells: "It is art that makes life, makes interest, makes importance, and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process. If I were Boon I should say that any pretense of such a substitute is helpless and hopeless humbug; but I wouldn't be Boon for the world, and am only yours faithfully, Henry James."

James's most famous tales include '*The Turn of the Screw*', written mostly in the form of a journal, was first published serially in *Collier's Weekly*, and then with another story in THE TWO MAGICS (1898). The protagonist is a governess, who works on a lonely estate in England. She tries to save her two young charges, Flora and Miles, two both innocent and corrupted children, from the demonic influence of the apparitions of two former servants in the household, steward Peter Quint and the previous governess Miss Jessel. Her employer, the children's uncle, has given strict orders not to bother him with any of the details of their education. Although the children evade the questions about the ghosts but she certain is that the children see them. When she tries to exorcize their influence, Miles dies in her arms. The story inspired later a debate over the question of the "reality" of the ghosts, were her visions only hallucinations. In the beginning of his career James had rejected "spirit-rappings and ghost-raising", but in the 1880s he become interested in the unconscious and the supernatural. James wrote in 1908 that "*Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are not "ghosts" at all, as we now know the ghost, but goblins, elves, imps, demons as loosely constructed as those of the old trials for witchcraft; if not, more pleasingly, fairies of the legendary order, wooing their victims forth to see them dance under the moon.*"

Virginia Woolf thought that Henry James's beings have nothing in common with the violent old ghosts "*the blood-stained captains, the white horses, the headless ladies of dark lanes and windy commons.*"

## 1.2 The Web of a Text

### "The Portrait of a Lady"

*"Under certain circumstances there are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea. There are circumstances in which, whether you partake of the tea or not—some people of course never do—the situation is in itself delightful. Those that I have in mind in beginning to unfold this simple history offered an admirable setting to an innocent pastime. The implements of the little feast had been disposed upon the lawn of an old English country-house, in what I should call the perfect middle of a splendid summer afternoon. Part of the afternoon had waned, but much of it was left, and what was left was of the finest and rarest quality. Real dusk would not arrive for many hours; but the flood of summer light had begun to ebb, the air had grown mellow, the shadows were long upon the smooth, dense turf. They lengthened slowly, however, and the scene expressed that sense of leisure still to come which is perhaps the chief source of one's enjoyment of such a scene at such an hour. From five o'clock to eight is on certain occasions a little eternity; but on such an occasion as this the interval could be only an eternity of pleasure."* (fragment)

### Portfolio / Tasks / Questions

- Talk about Point of View in "*Portrait of a Lady*"
- How can you describe Isabel Archer to someone that never read "*The Portrait of a Lady*"? What are her most relevant character traits?
- How are family and marriage relationships presented in the novel?

## 1.3. Literary and Artistic Contemporary Movements

**Angry Young Men** is a journalistic catchphrase applied to a number of British playwrights and novelists from the mid-1950s, most of whom were associated with the Royal Court Theatre. The phrase was originally coined by

the theatre's press officer to promote John Osborne<sup>2</sup>'s *Look Back in Anger*. It later was used by British newspapers following the success of the play to describe young British writers. It is thought to be derived from the autobiography of Leslie Paul, founder of the Woodcraft Folk, who's "Angry Young Men" was published in 1951. The term, always imprecise, began to have less meaning over the years as the writers to whom it was originally applied became more divergent and dismissed the label as useless.

Their political views were seen as radical, sometimes anarchistic, and they described social alienation of different kinds. They also often expressed their critical views on society as a whole, criticizing certain behaviors or groups in different ways. On television, their writings were often expressed in plays in anthology drama series such as *Armchair Theatre* (ITV, 1956-68) and *The Wednesday Play* (BBC, 1964-70); this leads to a confusion with the kitchen sink drama category of the early 1960s. However, in the introduction to a collection of essays by individuals associated with the movement, Tom Maschler<sup>3</sup> commented: "(T)hey do *not* belong to a united movement. Far from it; they attack one another directly or indirectly in these pages. Some were even reluctant to appear between the same covers with others whose views they violently oppose."

Friendships, rivalries, and acknowledgments of common literary aims within each of these three groups could be intense (the relationship between

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<sup>2</sup> **John James Osborne** (1929–1994) was an English playwright, screenwriter, actor and critic of The Establishment. The stunning success of his 1956 play *Look Back in Anger* transformed English theatre. In a productive life of more than 40 years, Osborne explored many themes and genres, writing for stage, film and TV. His personal life was extravagant and iconoclastic. He came onto the theatrical scene at a time when British acting was enjoying a golden age, but most great plays came from the United States and France. British plays remained blind to the complexities of the postwar period. Osborne was one of the first writers to address Britain's purpose in the post-imperial age. He was the first to question the point of the monarchy on a prominent public stage. During his peak (1956-1966), he helped make contempt an acceptable and now even clichéd onstage emotion, argued for the cleansing wisdom of bad behavior and bad taste, and combined unsparing truthfulness with devastating wit.

<sup>3</sup> **Tom Maschler** is a British publisher and writer. The son of Austrian Jews, he was five when his family fled the Nazis in Vienna and brought him to England. As a teenager, he travelled widely, worked on a kibbutz and did national service before going on to become one of the most dynamic figures in publishing. In his role as head of Jonathan Cape, **he discovered and published many writers including Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Ian McEwan and Bruce Chatwin** to whom he acted as an informal patron. *On The Black Hill* was inspired by Chatwin's stay in Maschler's Welsh holiday cottage on the English-Welsh borders and it was there that Chatwin wrote most of the manuscript. He also was one of the key figures responsible for creating the **Booker Prize** in the late Sixties - envisaged as a British version of the French **Prix Goncourt**. His memoir, *Publisher*, was published in 2005.

Amis<sup>4</sup> and Larkin<sup>5</sup> is considered one of the great literary friendships of the 20th century). But the writers in each group tended to view the other groups with bewilderment and incomprehension. Observers and critics could find no common thread among them all. They were contemporaries by age. They were not of the upper-class establishment, nor were they protégés of existing literary circles. It was essentially a male “movement”. Shelagh Delaney, author of *A Taste of Honey* (1958), was described as an “angry young woman” (see Arthur Marwick (1998) *The Sixties*).

The perception of them as “angry” outsiders was the one point of coherence. It all had something to do with English “provincialism” asserting itself, in a world where James Joyce<sup>6</sup> (an Irishman) and Dylan Thomas<sup>7</sup> (a Welshman) had recently taken the literary high ground. Feelings of frustration and exclusion from the centre and The Establishment were taken up, as common sense surrogates for the Freud<sup>8</sup> and Sartre<sup>9</sup> of the highbrows. In a negative

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<sup>4</sup> **Sir Kingsley William Amis**, CBE (Commander of Order of the British Empire) - (1922 –1995) was an English novelist, poet, critic and teacher. He wrote more than twenty novels, three collections of poetry, short stories, radio and television scripts, and books of social and literary criticism. According to his biographer, Zachary Leader, Amis was ‘the finest British comic novelist of the second half of the twentieth century’. He is the father of the English novelist Martin Amis.

<sup>5</sup> See Unit 9

<sup>6</sup> See Unit 6

<sup>7</sup> **Dylan Marlais Thomas** (1914 –1953) was a Welsh poet, who wrote exclusively in English. In addition to poetry, he wrote short stories and scripts for film and radio, which he often performed himself. His public readings, particularly in America, won him great acclaim; his sonorous voice with a subtle Welsh lilt became almost as famous as his works. His best-known works include the “play for voices” *Under Milk Wood* and the celebrated villanelle for his dying father, *Do not go gentle into that good night*. Appreciative critics have also noted the superb craftsmanship and compression of poems such as *In my craft or sullen art* and the rhapsodic lyricism of *Fern Hill*.

<sup>8</sup> **Sigmund (Sigismund Schlomo) Freud** was an Austrian psychiatrist and founder of psychoanalysis, the most influential psychological theorist of 20th-century. Freud’s theories, including the concept of the Oedipus complex, have had an enormous influence on art, literature, and social thinking. Freud’s fundamental idea was that all humans are endowed with an unconscious in which potent sexual and aggressive drives, and defenses against them, struggle for supremacy. Freud once stated: “The only unnatural sexual behavior is none at all.” It is often asserted that Freud “discovered” the unconscious mind. However, the idea is found in the work of many thinkers and authors from the times of Homer. “*The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind.*” (from *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900)

<sup>9</sup> **Jean-Paul Sartre** (1905-1980) was a French novelist, playwright, **existentialist** philosopher, and literary critic. **Sartre** was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1964, but

description, they tended to avoid radical experimentalism in their literary style; they were not modernists by technique. That much fitted in with the overlapping *Movement* poets, identified as such a year or two before, also a journalistic label.

## 1.4. Literary Terms and Literary Theory

**Allusion** is usually an implicit reference, perhaps to another work of literature or art, to a person or an event. It is often a kind of appeal to a reader to share some experience with the writer. An allusion may enrich the work by association and give it depth.

When using allusions, a writer tends to assume an established literary tradition, a body of common knowledge with an audience sharing that tradition and an ability on the part of the audience to pick up the reference.

Different types of allusions can be encountered, such as:

1. In reference to events and people (like in Dryden<sup>10</sup> or Pope<sup>11</sup>'s satires);
2. In reference to facts about the author (like Shakespeare's puns on Will; Donne's puns on Donne, Anne and Undone)
3. Metaphorical allusions (many examples in TS Eliot<sup>12</sup>'s work);
4. Imitative allusions (like Johnson<sup>13</sup>'s to Juvenal in London)

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he declined the honor in protest of the values of bourgeois society. His longtime companion was Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), whom he met at the École Normale Supérieure in 1929. "*The bad novel aims to please by flattering, whereas the good one is an exigence and an act of faith. But above all, the unique point of view from which the author can present the world to those freedoms whose concurrence he wishes to bring about is that of a world to be impregnated always with more freedom.*" (from *What Is Literature*, 1947)

<sup>10</sup> **John Dryden** (1631–1700) was an influential English poet, literary critic, translator, and playwright who dominated the literary life of Restoration England to such a point that the period came to be known in literary circles as the Age of Dryden.

<sup>11</sup> **Alexander Pope** (1688–1744) is generally regarded as the greatest English poet of the eighteenth century, best known for his satirical verse and for his translation of Homer. He is the third most frequently quoted writer in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, after Shakespeare and Tennyson. Pope was a master of the heroic couplet.

<sup>12</sup> See Units 8 and 10

<sup>13</sup> **Benjamin Jonson** (c. 1572–1637) was an English Renaissance dramatist, poet and actor. A contemporary of William Shakespeare, he is best known for his satirical plays, particularly *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, and *Bartholomew Fair*, which are considered his best, and his lyric poems. A man of vast reading and a seemingly insatiable appetite for controversy, Jonson had an unparalleled breadth of influence on Jacobean and Caroline playwrights and poets.

**Pun** – is a figure of speech which involves a play upon words.

The Greek term is *paronomasia*; other names are *calembour*, *clinch*, *quibble* and *carwicket*.

One of the earliest types of wordplay, the pun is widely spread in many literatures and gives rise to a fairly universal form of humor. Puns are very often intended humorously but not always.

**John Donne**<sup>14</sup>, for example, puns elaborately and quite seriously in his *Hymn to God the Father* thus:

*“I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun  
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;  
But swear by Thy self, that at my death Thy Son  
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;  
And having done that, Thou hast done;  
I fear no more.”*

Here “Son” means both Christ and “the sun”, and the word “done” is a pun on the poet’s name.

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<sup>14</sup> **John Donne** (1572 –1631) was an English Jacobean poet, preacher and a major representative of the metaphysical poets of the period. His works are notable for their realistic and sensual style and include sonnets, love poetry, religious poems, Latin translations, epigrams, elegies, songs, satires and sermons. His poetry is noted for its vibrancy of language and inventiveness of metaphor, especially as compared to those of his contemporaries.

## Unit 2

*„Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future, and time future contained in time past.”*

- T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

### 2.1. The Author

#### Joseph Conrad or the Power of the Written Word

**Joseph Conrad (Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski**, 3 December 1857 – 3 August 1924) was a Polish-born English novelist and short-story writer, a dreamer, adventurer, and gentleman. In his famous preface to *THE NIGGER OF THE ‘NARCISSUS’* (1897) Conrad crystallized his often quoted goal as a writer:

*“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, above all, to make you see. That-and no more, and it is everything.”*

Among Conrad’s best-known works are *LORD JIM* (1900) and *HEART OF DARKNESS* (1902). Conrad discouraged interpretation of his sea novels through evidence from his life, but several of his stories drew the material, events, and personalities from his own experiences in different parts of the world. While making his first voyages to the West Indies, Conrad met the Corsican Dominic Cervoni, who was later model for his characters filled with a thirst for adventure.

*“We live, as we dream - alone.”*

(from *Heart of Darkness*, an initial quote from Shakespeare)

**Joseph Conrad** was born in Berdichev, in the Ukraine, in a region that had once been a part of Poland, but was then under Russian rule. His father Apollo Korzeniowski was an aristocrat without lands, a poet and translator of Shakespeare and Dickens and French literature. The family estates had been sequestered in 1839 following an anti-Russian rebellion. As a boy the young

Joseph read Polish and French versions of English novels with his father. English was Conrad's third language; he learned to read and write in French before he knew English. Apollon Korzeniowski became embroiled in political activities. After being imprisoned for six months, he was sent to exile with his family to Volgoda, northern Russia, in 1861. Two years later the family was allowed to move to Kiev.

By 1869 Conrad's both parents had died of tuberculosis, and he was sent to Switzerland to his maternal uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski, who was to be a continuing influence on his life. On his death in 1894, Tadeusz left about £1,600 to his nephew a sizable sum of money, well over £100,000 now. Conrad attended schools in Kraków and persuaded his uncle to let him go to the sea. In the mid-1870s he joined the French merchant marine as an apprentice, and made between 1875 and 1878 three voyages to the West Indies. During his youth Conrad also was involved in arms smuggling for the Carlist cause in Spain.

This was a turning point in his life. **Conrad** rose through the ranks from common seaman to first mate, and by 1886 he obtained his master mariner's certificate, commanding his own ship, *Otago*. In the same year he was given British citizenship and he changed officially his name to Joseph Conrad. Witnessing the forces of the sea, Conrad developed a deterministic view of the world, which he expressed in a letter in 1897:

***“What makes mankind tragic is not that they are the victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it. To be part of the animal kingdom under the conditions of this earth is very well but soon as you know of your slavery, the pain, the anger, the strife, the tragedy begins.”***

Conrad sailed to many parts of the world, including Australia, various ports of the Indian Ocean, Borneo, the Malay states, South America, and the South Pacific Island. In 1890 he sailed in Africa up the Congo River. The journey provided much material for his novel *Heart of Darkness*. However, the fabled East Indies particularly attracted Conrad and it became the setting of many of his stories. By 1894 Conrad's sea life was over. During the long journeys he had started to write and Conrad decided to devote himself entirely to literature. At the age of 36 Conrad settled down in England.

His first novel, *ALMAYER'S FOLLY* (1895) was about a derelict Dutchman, who trades on the jungle rivers of Borneo. It was followed by *AN OUTCAST OF THE ISLANDS* (1896), less assured in its use of English. *The*

*Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* was a complex story of a storm off the Cape of Good Hope and of an enigmatic black sailor. **Lord Jim**, narrated by Charlie Marlow, told about the fall of a young sailor and his redemption. “*You have fallen terribly, my boy, fallen, perhaps, through your own self-confident dreams. Get up and try again. No skulking, no evasion! Live this thing down, humbly and hopefully, in the light of day.*”

**Lord Jim** was originally intended as a short story, but was then enlarged into a novel. It is partly based on true events: in 1880 a British captain and his crew abandoned the steamship *Jeddah*, carrying Muslim pilgrims, when the ship started to leak. *Jeddah* was brought by another steamship safely to port. Particular blame was attached to A.P. Williams, the first mate, who had organized the desertion of the vessel. The protagonist of *Lord Jim* is a British naval officer, who is haunted by guilt of cowardice, when he left his ship, *Patna*, in a storm without taking care of the passengers. During the voyage towards Mecca, the ship had hit a submerged object, and when the small crew lowers a lifeboat, Jim impulsively jumps in it. Contrary to the crew's beliefs, the ship did not sink and Jim is left to stand in front of the Court of Inquiry. After disgrace Jim moves through a variety of jobs ashore and finds work as an agent at the remote trading post of Patusan. The misjudged Jim gains the confidence of chief Doramin and becomes a respected figure, proving that he is “inscrutable at heart.” When Gentleman Brown and his fellow European adventurers appear, Jim promises Doramin that Brown and his men will leave the island without bloodshed. He is wrong, Doramin's son is killed, and Jim is finally forced to face his past and he allows himself to be shot by the grieving Doramin. “*...Jim stood stiffened and with bared head in the light of torches, looking him straight in the face, he clung heavily with his left arm round the neck of a bowed youth, and lifting deliberately his right, shot his son's friend through the chest.*”

**Heart of the Darkness** was partly based on Conrad's four-month command of a Congo River steamboat. The book was written in 1899 and published in 1902 in youth: A NARRATIVE WITH TWO OTHER STORIES. Conrad had learned about atrocities made by Congo “explorers”, and created in the character of **Kurtz** the embodiment of European imperialism. Also the account of Commander R.H. Bacon, who travelled in Benin, described horrors:

“*... everywhere death, barbarity and blood, and smells that it hardly seems right for human beings to smell and yet live!*”

Moreover, Conrad was aware about Henry Morton Stanley's journey up the Congo river in the mid-1870s. Stanley's revelation of the commercial

possibilities of the region had resulted in the setting up of a trading venture. However, in the novel the journey become analogous with a quest for inner truths. Like in Henry Rider Haggard's novel *She* (1887). Conrad's vision has also drawn fierce criticism. In 1977 the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe described Conrad as "a bloody racist".

The narrator, again **Marlow**, who perhaps is not so reliable, depicts to his friends a trip into Africa, where he becomes curious about a man called Kurtz. Marlow works for a company that is only interested in ivory and he witnesses the suffering of the native workers. He travels up the Congo River to reach Kurtz, an agent whom Marlow expects by his reputation to be a "universal genius," an "emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and devil knows what else." As they near the inner station of the company, they are attacked, and Marlow's helmsman is killed. At the station they meet a Russian who idolizes Kurtz, a man who has made himself the natives' god and who has decorated the posts of his hut with human skulls. Marlow tries to get the seriously ill Kurtz away down the river, but Kurtz dies, his last words being, "*The Horror! The Horror!*" Back in Europe Marlow lies to Kurtz's fiancée, that "*the last word he pronounced was your name.*"

*Heart of the Darkness* has inspired several film version, starting from Orson Welles but his project for RKO never materialized. Kurtz fascinated Welles; a genius destroyed by inner conflicts, greatness gone wrong. During his career as a director and actor, Welles would play this kind of Faustian figure repeatedly, most notably as Citizen Kane, who also dies with a mysterious phrase on his lips. In a television performance from 1958 Boris Karloff was seen as Kurtz and Roddy McDowall as Marlow. Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) was based on the novella, Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, and John Milius' 1969 script. Nicolas Roeg's adaptation from 1993 followed Conrad's work closely. "In *Apocalypse Now*, the "horror" is symbolically repressed (killed), while in *Heart of Darkness* it is brought into the light, as horrible as it might be to do so. The film, then, accepts as a premise our capacity for evil, and goes ahead to show how the colonialist psychosis of Kurtz, and by extension Western culture, translates into a social nightmare."<sup>1</sup>

In *Youth* (1902) the title story recorded Conrad's experiences on the sailing-ship *Palestine*. *NOSTROMO* (1904) was an imaginative novel which again explored man's vulnerability and corruptibility. It includes one of

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<sup>1</sup> *Novels into Film* by John C. Tibbets and James M. Welsh, 1999