

Spielmann, Keller's *Die drei gerechten Kammacher*, Storm's *Der Schimmelreiter*, Hauptmann's *Bahnwärter Thiel* and Kafka's *Das Urteil*.

Professor Ellis does not accept the conventional concept of *Novelle*, neither as to period nor as to definition. With refreshing straightforwardness he states in his introduction: "It is doubtful whether the search for defining features of the *Novelle* has ever been of much assistance for the interpretation of the texts themselves; equally doubtful is whether it has furthered understanding of individual texts to examine them in the light of concepts such as 'Realism'" (pp. 25-26). The first chapter of the book is, therefore, largely devoted to pointing out—quite convincingly—the shortcomings of earlier attempts at definition and periodisation of the genre. Ellis does not offer a definition of his own; rather, he wants "to demonstrate that to examine individual *Novellen* with conscious and systematic attention to their narrative structures *does* further understanding of them" (p. 26). In this, he does succeed. All eight examples serve to show that narration is important not only technically but also thematically; in this respect Ellis's book is part of the mainstream of recent research into the relationship between narrator(s) and reader(s). The bibliography should have been brought up to date, but otherwise Professor Ellis's book is still well worth reading.

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PAUL BRUSS

Conrad's Early Sea Fiction:

The Novelist as Navigator

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This study, which aims "to expose and elaborate upon some of the fundamental professional and sometimes metaphysical assumptions that underlie Conrad's use of navigational metaphor," makes no attempt to explain "the nuances of nautical situations and their appropriate terminology" in Conrad's early sea fiction (p. 9). Professor Bruss would, from the initial chapter, "isolate, first, Conrad's reflec-

tions upon his own initiations at sea and, second, the major attitudes that underlie his reflecting and, presumably, his fictionalizing upon life at sea" (p. 16). A few passages from *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906), *A Personal Record* (1912), *Notes on Life and Letters* (1921), and *Last Essays* (1926) are isolated to describe "the thrust" (p. 30) of Conrad's attitudes, thus summarized: "(1) supremacy of sails to steam, (2) sailing as a fine art and tradition, and (3) the significance of work as salvation" (p. 22). In accordance with his purpose, Professor Bruss rivets his gaze on the text of *The Nigger of the NARCISSUS*, "Karain," "Youth," *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, "Typhoon," "Falk," and "The End of the Tether." Nowhere in this study does he refer to the professional nautical texts available to mariners without the fiction; nor does he mention any of Conrad's literary antecedents. A few of Conrad's other tales are mentioned, but only in passing, and there is but one reference to a Conrad letter (and that taken from a secondary source).

The striving for fidelity to the text of each of the eight tales is the study's great virtue. The perception of "an essential irony at every juncture" (p. 62) in "Youth," for example, refutes readings of the tale as a merely sentimental recollection. Professor Bruss's commentary on "Typhoon" serves to deflate "any potential view of MacWhirr as Conrad's hero of strength" (p. 125): as the text makes plain, but which many critics have failed to see, it is MacWhirr's duty to avoid the typhoon. And a close reading of "The End of the Tether" shows that Captain Whalley of the steamer SOFALA is not the sentimental, innocent, and noble hero he is sometimes taken to be. But it is in its examination of the structure of "Karain" that *Conrad's Early Sea Fiction* knows its finest moment. The commentator's language here speaks simply and eloquently: "The first half of the tale centers upon Karain's activity by day (chapter 1), his activity by night (chapter 2), and finally, his arrival at the schooner amid the black thunderstorm (chapter 3); the second half, upon Karain's haphazard journey in the wilderness (chapter 4), his bewildering expectations of the narrator (chapter 5), and finally his regaining of the dawn via a new charm (chapter 6). These movements from light to black storm (chapters 1-3) and then—ironically—from the wilderness to light (chapters 4-6) clearly underscore the narrator's acute understanding of the

ironies in his involvement with Karain" (p. 56). As Morton D. Zabel remarks, Conrad's works "finally give an effect of repeating a single theme" ("Introduction," *Tales of East and West*, ed. Zabel [Garden City: Hanover, 1958], pp. ix-xxx). In these few words, Professor Bruss comes close to outlining that theme. It is perhaps ironic that such a perception does not require his thesis, namely, that, from *The Nigger of the NARCISSUS* to "The End of the Tether," may be traced a decline in the metaphor of navigation corresponding to the transition from the tradition of sail to the world of steam.

The study's great virtue, gained by a narrowing of focus, is also its weakness, as suggested by its reference to "the last of the three Marlow tales" (p. 161). The student of Conrad's entire opus will recall a fourth, in *Chance* (1913). When, for example, Professor Bruss proposes that the hopelessly Quixotic young Conrad rejected "the aristocratic tradition of his family" to step into "the tradition of navigation" (p. 19), he seems to take little or no account either of Uncle Bobrowski's bourgeois world or of Calderón's playhouse universe in *La vida es sueño*, the endlessly equivocal drama of Polish aristocrats which provided the epigraph of Conrad's second novel, *An Outcast of the Islands*, and his perennial theme, the ironic relation of illusion and reality. Apollo Korzeniowski, an aristocrat of honor and duty, and Victor Hugo, a favorite of the Polish nobility whose *Les Travailleurs de la mer* (1866) first turned Conrad's attention toward the sea, join those who are excluded from *Conrad's Early Sea Fiction*. Professor Bruss's account of the Conradian principle of duty and work, central to the study's thesis, is also deprived of the benefits which a larger context might have conferred. Conrad's protagonists, as Professor Bruss rightly points out, do find in work "occupation, protection, consolation, the mental relief of grappling with concrete problems, the sanity one acquires from close contact with mankind" (*The Arrow of Gold* [Dent Collected Edition], p. 242). But, as Conrad mentions in his own voice in an essay of 1918, "work will overcome all evil, except ignorance" (*Notes on Life and Letters* [Dent Collected Edition], p. 194)—a theme earlier suggested in *An Outcast of the Islands* (Dent Collected Edition, p. 197) and *Nostromo* (Dent Collected Edition, p. 66). Captain Allistoun of the sailing ship NARCISSUS and Captain MacWhirr of the steamer NAN-SHAN both belong to the brother-

hood of "ignorant hearts that know nothing of life" (*The Nigger of the NARCISSUS* [Dent Collected Edition], p. 31). As Conrad writes in "Outside Literature," an imaginative mariner "would simply . . . be not fit for his job"; the "ideal of perfect accuracy" is captured only "by a steady, prosaic mind" (*Last Essays* [Dent Collected Edition], pp. 39-40). MacWhirr is possessed of such a mind. As for fidelity, even Ricardo, Heyst (*Victory* [Dent Collected Edition], pp. 269, 203), and General T (*Under Western Eyes* [Dent Collected Edition], p. 51) can cite it in support of their treachery, witting or not. As the anguished seaman and narrator of "The Tale" relates, "the word . . . 'Duty' . . . contains infinities"; reality, like comedy, "is but a matter of the visual angle" (*Tales of Hearsay* [Dent Collected Edition], pp. 61, 62). "Everything is relative" (*Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 13). Perhaps Professor Bruss has not followed the Conradian irony far enough when he states "MacWhirr's fundamental unsuitability for life in Conrad's seas" (p. 124), and offers as "fact" that "navigation in steam" is nearly a contradiction in terms" (p. 161; his italics). In "Typhoon," as in *Lord Jim*, *Heart of Darkness*, and Conrad's final, uncompleted fiction, *Suspense*, "facts appraised by reason preserve a mysterious complexity and a dual character" (*Suspense* [Dent Collected Edition], p. 38).

It is omission that permits Professor Bruss to see strong disjunctions (world of steam/tradition of sail, waking/sleeping, acceptance/rejection, ignorance/enlightenment, work/ambivalence, and folly/understanding, for example) when there are but weak ones. Mankind, according to Conrad, is "the intimate alliance of contradictions" (*A Personal Record* [Dent Collected Edition], p. 36). In the Conradian universe, the "appointed end" of all voyages is "Truth itself," which is "One—one for all men and all occupations" (*A Personal Record*; p. 18). *Conrad's Early Sea Fiction* contributes to an understanding of an aspect of that truth. The reader familiar with all of Conrad's writings will draw most benefit from the study.

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