

grim and even terrifying, and their rein-
sertion further deepens the tone of the
work that is already regarded as Virginia
Woolf's darkest novel" (p. 81).

There are, of course, revisions which
aided the novel, and Radin is especially
helpful in revealing how Woolf, as she
worked and pared, inserted "patterns of
repetition," echoes and reechoes of words,
phrases, and incidents in an effort to give
the sprawling manuscript a resonance and
focus. But her conclusion is that the pub-
lished novel is flawed, the severe revisions
having left motivations unexplained and
characters ambiguous. "But when she was
writing *The Years*, the sense of 'impending
shape' that had sustained her in the past
was never completely secure" (p. 151). Ra-
din suggests that only by having discarded
the initial holograph version completely
could Woolf have brought a focus to the
novel.

This is an intelligent and illuminating
study and, with Leaska's cited above, gives
a thorough picture of a great artist strug-
gling with intractable material and her own
uncertainties.

There is an unfortunate typographical
error in the book. In a work dependent
upon dating, it is unfortunate that, on
page 113, the date 17 July 1933 is given
as the day when the first retyping was
completed. It is correctly given elsewhere
as 17 July 1935.

Dean Doner

IAN WATT

Conrad in the Nineteenth Century
Berkeley: University of
California Press, 1979
(pb. edition, 1981). Pp. 375.

"The nature and originality of Conrad's
narrative methods" and the "basic philo-
sophical assumptions" that these express
are what the distinguished critic Ian Watt
seeks to clarify in this study (Preface, pp.
ix-x). Biography and nineteenth-century
history, literary and intellectual, are the
appropriate means of coming to an un-
derstanding of Conrad's special place be-

tween the earlier age and our own. "The
Early Life: 1857-1894" introduces a close
scrutiny of four works only, *Almayer's Folly*,
The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, *Heart of
Darkness*, and *Lord Jim*, each of which re-
ceives a chapter.

The account of Conrad's early life fol-
lows the path marked out by previous
biographers. The summary is elegant and
urbane, proceeding with the generosity and
assurance that come of experience and
common sense. "No doubt" and "surely"
are repeated often. Professor Watt, here
as elsewhere in the volume, does not hesi-
tate to speak the truth of life: "Surely not
many people, especially when young, have
got into a spectacular mess and then told
the whole truth about it to anyone" (p.
12); "Very few sensitive people can have
struggled to adulthood without fantasies
of ceasing to battle with the peremptory
denials of reality" (p. 14). Such sayings
unexceptionable, of course. The governing
idea in the biography is provided by An-
drzej Busza's "Conrad's Polish Literary
Background" (*Antemurale*, 10 [Rome and
London, 1966]): there is in Conrad a con-
flict between two strains, the Bobrowski/
practical and the Korzeniowski/metaphys-
ical. For Professor Watt, the Bobrowski
"practical or Positivist set of values" be-
comes "the Conradian ethic" of solidarity
and fidelity (pp. 28-29). That ethic, as in
Jocelyn Baines's *Joseph Conrad: A Critical
Biography* (1960) and Jacques Berthoud's
Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase (1978), is
conflated with British empiricism (p. 30),
the values of which are reflected in Pro-
fessor Watt's own disinterested and gently
ironic observation, for example, that "the
English may not exactly be xenophobes,
but they do not take quickly and warmly
to foreigners" (p. 23). The following char-
acterizes the experimental science of *Con-
rad in the Nineteenth Century*: "There are
other, and more tangible, residues of his
early circumstances both in Conrad's life
and in his work. . . . Conrad's fiction is
virtually devoid of sons with moth-
ers . . . On the other hand, no doubt
because his father lived longer than his
mother, so that Conrad knew him better,
Conrad's fiction is very rich in father-son
relationships" (pp. 26-27). There is balance
here and experience. But what of logic?
As well, even some of the facts of life in
this chapter are ambiguous. When, for ex-
ample, Professor Watt remarks that suicide
in Conrad "often has a strong element of
heroic self-sacrifice for the good of others,
as with Captain Whalley in *The End of the*

Tether" (p. 14), he generously omits any reference to the near-blind captain's betrayal of the brotherhood of the sea, a treachery rich in ethical equivocation. In fact, the loving Whalley's pathetic suicide seals a fraud. The early Conrad, so the introductory biography concludes, was "old fashioned," that is, very much of the nineteenth century, when the movement toward "the ageless solidarities of human experience was much commoner" than in the age of alienation to follow (p. 33).

Madame Bovary (1857), *A Rebours* (1884), and *Axel* (1890) provide some of the context for Professor Watt's study of theme, narrative strategy, and chronological relation in *Almayer's Folly*. As though to avoid living Almayer's alienation, Conrad, like Flaubert, maintains "a detached and ironic attitude to the feelings" of his protagonist. "Almayer eludes us"—and so does Conrad. His handling of time is instrumental in achieving that effect. As with Conrad, so with Professor Watt and the reader he takes with him: ". . . like Conrad, we shrink from committing too much of our sympathy to a hero who comes out of the past only to tell us that the present is merely epilogue" (p. 67). Are we here on the solid ground of shared experience?

Chapter 3, on *The Nigger of the NARCIS-SUS*, includes an explication of the famous 1897 Preface to Conrad's first deep-sea fiction. On the subject of Conrad's oft-cited definition of art as "a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of Justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect," Professor Watt remarks, facetiously perhaps: "As professional philosophers, we are justly affronted by Conrad's cavalier circumvention of so illustrious a metaphysical puzzle" (p. 79). How do we go from the evidence of the senses to the truth underlying that evidence? The answer is evident in Conrad's art of mirror-analogies, as evident, perhaps, as is Professor Watt's epistemology in his criticism. It is when he turns from philosophy to Conrad's handling of group psychology and the mixed narrative point of view in *The Nigger* that Professor Watt is more at home. In this tale, Conrad "compels us . . . to acknowledge our solidarity with" such as Singleton, "those who cannot write and who read Bulwer-Lytton" (p. 125). Particularly useful is the cultural history which brings works by Ferdinand Tönnies and Emile Durkheim to bear on the society manning the NARCIS-SUS (pp. 112-15).

Of the valuable things in Chapter 4, on *Heart of Darkness*, none is more instructive than Professor Watt's historical account of Impressionism, linking that term to David Hume's philosophy of sensation. "All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS," Hume had opened *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) (cited on p. 171). *Heart of Darkness* is impressionist in that "it accepts, and indeed in its very form asserts, the bounded and ambiguous nature of individual understanding" (p. 174). By another kind of assertion of the limitations of "sense" and "reason," *Heart of Darkness* is symbolist as well (p. 196). Though experience must lead to skepticism, Professor Watt urges this conclusion: ". . . neither Conrad nor Marlow stands for the position that darkness is irresistible" (p. 253).

The closing chapter, on *Lord Jim*, is particularly rich in erudition. Bergson, Freud, Condillac, Jean Paul, Gide, the Gilgamesh epic, Schopenhauer, Mallarmé, and Unamuno—these but begin to suggest the range of reference here. The analysis of Stein's "destructive element," though, might have profited by reference to Goethe's *Torquato Tasso* and to Ortega y Gasset's "In Search of Goethe from Within," where this student of Hegel and Calderón observes: "Life is, in itself and forever, shipwreck. To be shipwrecked is not to drown. The poor human being, feeling himself sinking into the abyss, moves his arms to keep afloat" (*The Dehumanization of Art* [New York: Doubleday, 1956], p. 126). Professor Watt's perspicacious reading of the 1900 novel in a historical context strives to reenact Conrad's dramatization of "the waning of certainty, the fading of vision, the absence of final truth" (p. 330). Ambiguous Jim is one of us, there is no doubt. And so is Marlow. As Conrad will come to mention in 1918, "work will overcome all evil, except ignorance" (*Notes on Life and Letters*, Dent Collected Edition, p. 194), a tragic condition which even the nineteenth-century Marlow experiences. The stage is set for the second volume announced by Professor Watt in the preface, a reading of Conrad in the twentieth century.

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