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## LITERARY AND EDITING STUDIES IN THE CLASSROOM: EXPERIMENTAL TEXTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

**Abstract.** *The aim of the article is to demonstrate the connection between literary and editorial studies and their mutual dependence in the process of analysing and interpreting texts of literature on the basis of a passage from Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim. In this essay, significant outcomes will be reported to, later, show the specific analysis of the literary passage in the process of answering questions from textual through contextual considerations.*

**Keywords:** *editing studies, Joseph Conrad, textual criticism, classroom analysis, Lord Jim.*

As can be argued on the basis of contemporary literary and cultural criticism, the idea of literary works functioning in the traditional paper-form book is being challenged, and Joseph Conrad's oeuvre is not situated beyond the spheres of this process. The aim of this essay is to discuss the results of the editorial and e-editorial classroom experiment conducted on Conrad's literary text as well as evaluating those outcomes. Bearing in mind the recent interest in the influence of paratextual aspects on the creation, circulation, reception, interpretation, adaptation, appropriation, and republication of literary works, especially of those present on the Internet, expressed, for example, in *Examining Paratextual Theory and Its Applications in Digital Culture* edited by Nadine Desrochers and Daniel Apollon, the paper addresses selected examples of such an impact on Conrad's oeuvre, too. The findings presented below have not been published yet. However, their preliminary aspects were shared during one of the international Conradian conferences and generated positive comments from the participants<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The essay is an exploration of my presentation "In the Sea of Digital Paratextuality: Selected e-Editorial Approaches to Joseph Conrad's Oeuvre," delivered at the conference "Twixt Land and Sea," organised by the Warmia and Mazury University and Warsaw University, Olsztyn, 17–18 November 2017.

As argued by Corey Pressman, the new technological changes involving the function of texts in both digital and mobile era have brought the following reconsiderations about:

The earliest artifacts of expression, represented by cave art and carved statuettes, had a paratext of their own that surrounded and supported their significance. However, there is a fundamental difference between the way these artifacts operated in society and the way writing and print operate. Writing and print are associated with a print culture centered on fixity, social isolation, and authority. This opposes a preceding emphasis on orality, fluidity, and social communication. However, the hegemony of print culture has been challenged by the binary revolution. The widespread success of e-readers, apps, the Web, and electronic reading in general indicates a nascent post-book era. The essential difference between a paper book and its electronic analog is the stripping of the former's paratextual elements [1. P. 334].

The passage quoted is significant in the context of the classroom experiment to be reported in this article: in the first part of it, the students were confronted with the text, the print one, supplied with no paratextual elements except the ones featuring in the regular print format – simple print handouts with basic typographical formatting. Thus, contrary to Pressman's observations regarding the difference between print and digital forms of the same text, it was the paper format of the work which had formerly been "stripped" of the paratext as much as possible.

### **1. Joseph Conrad's oeuvre in editorial and textual contexts: examples**

Editorial aspects of the creative, publishing and receptive contexts in which Conrad and his works functioned and have functioned have already gained interest among scholars and practitioners. And even if the main perspectives concern textual considerations related to the print editions, there are exceptions regarding the presence of Conrad in the realm of e-textuality.

At the beginning of the essay "On Editing Conrad" by Kenneth W. Davis, David Leon Higddon and Donald W. Rude, one can find the following observation about the writer's preoccupation with the power, exactness and precision of the word, symbolically understood as the editorial outcome, the textual manifestation of a work intended by the creator: "In a letter to John Galsworthy <...> Joseph Conrad observed 'every word is an object to be considered anxiously with heart searchings and in a spirit of severe resolution...' <...>. These words, expressing the author's attitude towards

the craft of fiction, provide a motto for all textual scholars editing Conrad texts. Indeed, from his very uniqueness as stylist and as fastidious craftsman stem many of the most challenging problems facing those who would give his works the careful attention they need and so richly deserve” [italics in the original; 2. P. 143]. The authors of the essay point to the importance of the textual constitution of the work in the process of conveying Conrad’s senses expressed in the writer’s personal correspondence and they consecutively refer to the origin and the basis of their argument, but also to their own textual and editorial endeavours involving Conrad’s texts. They address the meticulousity and care with which Conrad’s oeuvre should be handled by editors, but it should also concern all the agents involved in the editorial and the publishing processes: compositors, typesetters or cover designers [see 2. P. 143–144].

By way of another illustration, in “The Composition and Publication History of Joseph Conrad’s *A Set of Six*,” Professor John G. Peters offers a crucial examination of the writer’s work within textual and editorial scholarship. In the introduction, one finds the reconstruction of the creative process and the development of the intention of the author regarding the stories – and the intention of the author, so much disowned in contemporary literary criticism, is a significant concept in textual and editorial studies, as propagated, for example, by Konrad Górski. The focus on the changing intention of the creator is given in the following example: “<...> it is difficult to say exactly what Conrad thought about *A Set of Six*, since he was notoriously self-deprecatory toward even his finest works” [3. P. 31]. And the quote comes from the book which is only a single example of Professor John Peters’ enormous contribution to the theory and practice of editing Conrad’s works.

In yet another contribution by a different scholar, and quite a recent book (2017), concepts in textual research are applied to discover new literary features in Conrad’s poetics. *Joseph Conrad and the Voicing of Textuality* by Claude Maisonnat is thus advertised: it offers an original approach to Conrad’s work rooted in linguistics and psychoanalytic theory. Claude Maisonnat provides fresh insight into the poetics of textuality by introducing the concept of textual voice, as opposed to the traditional conceptions of authorial voice and narrative voice. Understood as the main vector of poetics in a text, textual voice is an offshoot of the Lacanian object-voice trimmed to fit a literary context. It enables the reader to uncover deeply

concealed motivations and perceive unsuspected connections to the biographical background of the texts. At the same time, it offers new ways of structuring close reading and opens vistas into the mysteries of creation [4].

The passage should be treated as vital in justifying the structure of the classroom experiment conducted among university students and described in the second part of this article. The crucial phase of the experiment was the individual practice of close reading with the focus on the text – and these concepts, too, are stressed in the promotional information above. The approach thus outlined demonstrates the multi-layered textual structure of Conrad's works, and this complex composition as a matter of fact concerns the works presented in various textual manifestations, to use the distinction suggested in new bibliographical studies across Anglophone editorial theory. If multi-layered stratification can perfectly be used to describe handwritten, typed, printed and published editions of the same work or its parts at various stages of its creation, editing, publication, reception and consumption, Maisonnat is interested in the internal stratification of "textual voice". Still, it can be argued that paratextual functions described by Genette, whose narrative approaches, as Professor Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech notices in *Lord Jim Conrad. Interpretacje*, bear relevance to Conrad's novel, can also be employed in the interpretative quest.

Maisonnat places Conrad's works in the centre of his discussion, and editorial as well as textual considerations can be referred to as the context for literary hermeneutics. However, in textual scholarship one can also find references to Conrad. For instance, John Lavagnino, in his essay "Reading, Scholarship, and Hypertext Editions" places the writer in the context of hypertextual considerations: one of the "reasons" for hypertext editions <...> is that it is very difficult to actually "read" a version (with textual variants in print). It involves constantly moving back and forth between text and notes, and careful study of the notes to pick out the variants for the version you care about from all the others listed there. There is little evidence that apparatus of this traditional sort gets used very much by literary scholars today. What happens instead is that there is one version at the center of the edition – the version whose text is the main text – and other versions are subordinated to this central version by being relegated to the notes. Moreover, the apparatus is typically incomplete for many modern works: editions of Dreiser and Conrad, for example, will tell you that there are just too many variants in the surviving versions to include, given the

constraints of paper publication. So versions other than the main text may not be completely recoverable from the data presented in the edition [5].

Conrad is situated in the multitude of digital editions characterised by their hyperlinked content, which, as individual texts, can start their life on their own. The existing versions of Conrad's works, if dynamically transferred to their digital formats, can ultimately become the copy without the original, the text as close to the intention of the author as possible. Yet there is the other side of the coin signalled in Lavagnino's essay: the original ideas so thoroughly subject to processes of being expressed and re-expressed, shaped and reshaped, created and recreated, by means of the textual composition of the English language, as stressed by Davis, Higddon and Rude, might become distantly positioned, or even lost, in the digital variety offered by the Internet and characterised by paratextual, hyper-lining, versatility. Thus, I would challenge Lavagnino's thinking and contend that this apparently imperfect print-based publishing of Conrad's works could be more dedicated to the writer's authorial rendition of his own works.

And on the website of the recently organised conference "Remaking the New: Modernism and Textual Scholarship," one can also find Conrad situated in the present-day textual developments involving the literary contributions of the key modernist writers: "The last ten years have seen a textual turn in modernist literary studies. New editions of modernist authors are now in progress, transforming the materials with which critics have worked. Current projects include editions of T. S. Eliot, Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, and many more" [6]. Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech notices editorial, publication and translation interests in *Lord Jim*, too, to give an example [see 7. P. 17–19, 157–193].

The Cambridge University Press has placed the following information on its website with reference to the Cambridge edition of Conrad's works: Joseph Conrad's novels, short stories, plays and non-fiction have circulated in defective texts since their original publication. Typists misread his handwriting, editors intervened to correct his grammar and he himself made mistakes in drafting. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad, based on research into the original documents, supplies readers for the first time with critical texts that represent the writer's own work as reliably as possible. <...>. This Edition will encourage revaluation of individual works and the writer's canon [8].

The passage exemplifies the complexity involved and to be involved in the process of rendering Conrad's texts in terms of editorial and publishing processes and their outcomes. Yet, in this article, the examples quoted

serve to support and justify the decision behind selecting a passage from *Lord Jim*. What is worth noting is that the students participating in the classroom experiment did not know anything about the justification for that selection prior to the completion of the experiment.

## **2. The textual, editorial and contextual experiment: procedures and outcomes**

Bearing in mind the textual and editorial complexity of Conrad's fiction, I decided to conduct a seminar experiment based on a textual extract. As already signalled, a section from the first chapter of Conrad's *Lord Jim* was used to illustrate the connections between literary and editorial considerations. The seminar experiment was carried out among two groups of students: third-year BA and second-year MA groups. Both were faced with the introductory part of *Lord Jim* and both were given about ninety minutes to apply close reading to the text deprived of any external, paratextual and epitextual features. The decision behind selecting Conrad, and in particular *Lord Jim*, apart from the reasons stated in the first part of this essay, stems from the 2017 commemoration of the 160th anniversary of Conrad's birth as well as from the compositional, narrative, interpretative, artistic, and translation complexities of the novel itself, as already depicted and as explored, for example, by Professor Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech, who also takes note of the popularity of the work in the publishing context [see 7. P. 17–19].

The title of Conrad's work and the name of the author were removed, and the participants were supposed to focus only on the passage they were faced with and to answer specific questions related to the textual and literary, and, in the second group, also translation questions. In the second part of the experiment, the students were asked to use the library and Internet resources to investigate the publishing and editorial contexts of the passage and the whole work. The participants were given questions related to various formats and editions in which *Lord Jim* has appeared so far.

As regards the first part of the teaching experiment, the passage was excerpted from the beginning of Chapter One of *Lord Jim*, in which the title character is introduced. The students commented that the central figure in the passage is presented through the knowledge of the narrator and the indirect opinions expressed by those who have been in contact with

the character. The students paid attention to two direct addresses with the pronoun “you” in the opening sentence – “He was an inch, perhaps two, under six feet, powerfully built, and he advanced straight at you with a slight stoop of the shoulders, head forward, and a fixed from-under stare which made you think of a charging bull” [9. P. 45]. Yet their reception of the passage did not signal further changes and complexities in the narrative voice, or voices, waiting in store for the audience. The initial focus on the appearance and mysterious behaviour was noticed. Yet the social and educational background of Jim, provided, or just indicated and implied, at the beginning of the book, and accompanied by the detailed descriptions of various places were also discussed. The initial section containing a comment on Jim’s quest for a heroic deed, as expressed in the sentence “He saw himself saving people from sinking ships, cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through a surf with a line” [9. P. 47], and a mystery behind his frequent departures from places, his status as a “seaman in exile from the sea” [9. P. 46] raised a lot of interest, similar to capital letters used in the case of such words as “Ability,” which appears several times [9. P. 46, 47], or “the Intolerable” [9. P. 47].

The questions which the students were supposed to answer after a close-reading practice included the following selection:

- How would you describe the narrator and the manner in which the narration is presented in the passage?

- Can you identify the central character? What features does this figure possess? What is the character’s social and educational background?

- How can you describe the diction, tone and the mood? How do they contribute to the atmosphere and the feelings you might be experiencing when reading the passage?

- What is the subject of the passage? Can you predict any themes the work will convey? [10].

The questions thus reflect a common teaching approach to literary works, and novels, as features in such studies as *Understanding Novels: A Lively Exploration of Literary Form and Technique* by Thomas C. Foster, where typical issues inherent in the process of textual comprehension of a literary text comprise “style,” “tone,” “mood,” “diction,” “point of view,” “narrative presence,” “narrative attitude,” or “time frame” [11. P. 25–29]; but the list is not complete.

With reference to the second part of the task, the students were supposed to work in small groups in the computer laboratory and to apply the web- and online library-quest method to find answers to the questions related to the editorial and publishing history, context, and presence of the work. The assumption behind the task was to elicit a contextual critical thinking about the work and to find analogies between literary, textual and editorial research. The list of questions in the second part of the experiment comprised the following:

1. Can you find any information about the context in which the work was created, published and distributed?
2. Can you go on the Internet to find different textual forms in which the work has appeared? Do you think that such editorial aspects influence the way in which the work can be analysed and interpreted?
3. Please browse Google Images for different covers of the work. What is – and what should be – the link between the cover and the work?
4. Can you comment on the paragraph organisation of the text?
5. Analyse the language used in the passage. What difficulties should be overcome in the process of translation?
6. Imagine that your task is to interpret the passage by means of a cover design. How would you create it? [10].

The task which stimulated most interest related to the features of existing covers, their illustrative or interpretative connection to the work, or lack of such, and the students' own ideas for cover designs. The participants also focused on the typographical and layout considerations of the pages on which *Lord Jim* has been encased since the time of its initial series publication in *Blackwood's Magazine* from 1899 to 1900 [see 12]. However, making use of the Internet in the students' discussions led to discoveries of various e-formats in which the work has appeared so far, their variety and similarity, the presence of the novel in the author- and canon-focused anthologies whose pages, although frequently displayed as images on the screen, are just an example of the underlying structures behind the "screen essentialism" [see 13. P. 55], currently investigated in editorial theory and practice.

In the final part of the experiment, the major aim was to elicit more universal conclusions on the basis of individual and pair work. Three general questions pertaining to the connection between editorial and textual research were asked:

- Do editorial aspects influence the way in which works of literature can be analysed and interpreted?



– Are editorial approaches important in the process of reading works of literature?

– Do you pay attention to editorial features when approaching a work of literature? [10].

The students noticed the importance of editorial context in literary studies; however, as already signalled, they were more interested in the observation of how apparently literary questions can be answered by means of drawing on textual and editing terminology, methodologies and approaches. They paid attention to the peritextual contexts in which *Lord Jim* has surfaced so far and commented upon the presence of the work in the anthology used to conduct the experiment, *Three Great Works*, with *Heart of Darkness* and *Nostromo* being the other major texts included there. They interpreted this occurrence as the canonical importance of the novel and, in addition, expressed their views on the simple and traditional page layout and condensed typography in which the works were typeset in the anthology.

Still, the most favoured question which provoked a lot of discussion was the one concerning the existing covers in which *Lord Jim*, both as a text and as a work, has been accompanied with. Some of them supposedly illustrate the main story line but others attempt to offer interpretations and shape the ways in which *Lord Jim* should be read. The one which accompanies the *Three Great Works* Oxford Paperbacks edition contains a “detail from *Charting the Boundaries of the Congo*, from *Le Petit Journal*, November 1913” [9. Front cover], and the students were willing to argue for the difficulty in selecting an appropriate cover for anthological manifestations of *Lord Jim*. The differences in cover designs created for the same novel and the impossibility for the readers to decipher the title given the cover image only encouraged a heated debate. For instance, the Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics and the Wordsworth Classics editions were juxtaposed in terms of the uses of “‘Banana Tree – Nassau’ by Winslow Homer” [14. Front cover] in the former and a “Detail from a Busy Port Scene, China (19th Century)” [15. Front cover] in the latter. As the first peritextual elements the reader is faced with when approaching *Lord Jim*, the cover images can shape the reading process.

## Conclusion

The contributors to the development of *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad* have already stressed [8] the priority of textual

purity in accordance with the intention of the writer. This, I believe, can be achieved with the removal of the paratextual content which might act against the process of comprehending and interpreting literary texts as much as facilitating such a process. The process is the key word – and the one from close reading of a passage (considering the text in the centre of textual criticism) to searching for other contexts, applied in the classroom experiment, shows how meanings progress. Close reading practice based on a single passage plays a crucial role in the experiment – and its use corresponds with its importance already noticed in *Joseph Conrad and the Voicing of Textuality*, as signalled in the promotional synopsis of the book quoted in the first part of this essay.

The students were faced with the paratextual dimensions of Conrad's work in the second and third phases of the experiment – and these could develop the senses drawn after completing the first phase. However, I would conclude that there is also danger already posed or yet to be posed by paratextual formations of Conrad's works, and not only the textual aspect of paratextuality but its iconic, graphic and electronic varieties, found for example on Google Play or in App Store, with the use or overuse of hypertextuality, which, as argued by Lavagnino [5], can offer editorial possibility but which, as I would contend on the basis of the experiment, can pose a threat as well. That is why, as the experiment showed, the literary analysis can safely begin with the examination of the pure text, deprived of the paratextual elements yet still the print one, to slightly contest Pressman's arguments and perhaps to partly inscribe itself in the assumptions regarding the validity of close reading expressed by Maisonnat in *Joseph Conrad and the Voicing of Textuality*.

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### **Literary and Editing Studies in the Classroom: Experimental Textual and Contextual Analysis**

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**Keywords:** editing studies, Joseph Conrad, textual criticism, classroom analysis, *Lord Jim*.

The problem addressed and solved in the essay concerns the complexity of drawing and mediating senses in the reader's interaction with the text through the process of context-detached close reading followed by the step-by-step disclosure of biographical, editorial, publishing, and literary contexts. Through the demonstration of the observations based on the seminar in-class workshop activity, the author's aim is to demonstrate the connection between literary and editorial studies and their mutual dependence in the process of analysing and interpreting texts of literature on the basis of a passage from Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*. In this essay, significant outcomes are reported on the example of the specific analysis of the literary passage in the process of answering questions from textual through contextual considerations. As regards the research material used,

the author uses a page-long passage of Conrad's *Lord Jim* as the underlying text used in the analysis. The text was in its basic textual format with as much paratextual content removed as possible: the font was simple and its size of standard kind, the spaces between lines and paragraphs were kept in the default setting, thus ensuring there were no typographical sources of distraction. The passage was presented in its paper format. Using external resources and digital devices was not possible. In the consecutive stages, the analysis made use of the textual, editorial, publishing, literary, biographical, encyclopaedic, and other contextual studies accessed via the university online reading services available in class, which was possible due to the classroom infrastructure available and indispensable for the completion of the project. In the later stages, visuals related to *Lord Jim* found online were also used. In terms of the methods employed, the author has based the research on the principle of from-detached-to-contextual reading and the discussion approach. The opening method concerned individual interaction with the textual passage deprived of as many paratextual elements as possible, so that making it possible for the reader to extract as much information and as many meanings from the excerpt as possible. In the consecutive stages, contextual aspects were gradually disclosed through the system of questions requiring research on specific points related to the text. The course of the research involved consecutive sessions of the university seminar on textual and editorial aspects of literary works. Each phase involved specific patterns of interaction between the literary text and the readerly audience. The conclusions show the directions in which senses progress following the close reading session and through the gradual disclosure of particular contextual aspects. They also demonstrate both the complexity of the reading interaction – involving textual, literary, editorial, typographical, publishing and biographical contexts – and the importance of such a combination in the process of drawing senses initially based on the passage detached from its paratextual dimensions.

**Конечняк Г. Занятия по литературному редактированию в классе: экспериментальный текстовый и контекстуальный анализ.**

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**Ключевые слова:** редакторский анализ, Джозеф Конрад, текстологический анализ, аналитическая работа со студентами, «Лорд Джим».

**Аннотация.** Цель статьи – показать связь литературоведческого и редакторского анализа и их взаимозависимость в процессе осмысления и интерпретации литературных текстов на материале фрагментов из романа Джозефа Конрада «Лорд Джим». Сообщены важные результаты анализа текстовых отрывков, проведенного со студентами в текстовальном и контекстуальном аспектах.