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## Conrad's Lord Jim

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*Fabrica*. "The publication of the *De Humani* of Andrea Vesalius in 1543 marks the beginning of modern science. It is without doubt the greatest single contribution to the medical sciences." In 1950 Vesalius's illustrations were published in Cleveland, with a biographical sketch by Saunders and O'Malley. This book was shown opened to page 86, to exhibit the most admired figure in Vesalius's osteologic series—a "skeletal Hamlet soliloquizing beside the tomb of some poor Yorick."

20. Rodericus Zamorensis, *Der Spiegel des menschlichen Lebens*; Augsburg, Gunther Zainer, about 1475. These two illustrations, showing early metal-workers, were reproduced in *Some German Woodcuts of the Fifteenth Century*; Hammersmith, Kelmscott Press, 1897. The reproduction was made from a volume in the possession of William Morris.



### CONRAD'S LORD JIM

By DAVID C. WEBER

*Harvard College Library*

THE year 1900 was busy and memorable for Joseph Conrad. It was begun with great anxiety over the troublous South African war, and Conrad took the war to heart. For instance, he wrote: "I am so utterly and radically sick of this African business that if I could take a sleeping draught on the chance of not waking till it is all over, I would let *Jim* go and take the consequences." When a London publisher solicited a contribution to an anthology, the proceeds of its sale to go to the relief of sufferers in Ladysmith—a town in Natal which had suffered severely from want of food during the four-month siege by the Boers—Conrad gave, without remuneration, "An Outpost of Progress," from his recent *Tales of Unrest*. Curiously

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enough, *The Ladysmith Treasury* (Sands & Co., 1900) is now not only a very rare book but it seems to be unknown to Conrad scholars and is not mentioned in any book or bibliography about him. Yet there is real biographical interest to be found in this bibliographical treasure.

The *Jim* to which Conrad referred above was originally planned as a short story in a collection of four which he was preparing about May, 1898. In his Author's Note, written for the 1917 Dent edition of *Lord Jim*, Conrad says: "After writing a few pages . . . I became for some reason discontented and I laid them aside for a time." The "few" pages were probably the twenty-eight entitled "Tuan Jim; a Sketch" in his commonplace book, now in the Harvard College Library. This much-worked-over manuscript covers what eventually were the first two paragraphs of chapter one, and chapter two in its entirety. Conrad's new start, when "the late Mr. William Blackwood suggested I should give something again to his magazine," may be assigned to December, 1898, from a letter of the next April to Mr. Spiridion Kliszczewski. The next October, publication in *Blackwood's Magazine* was begun, long before Conrad completed the writing of the story; and from this date on, he had the pressure of the publisher on him.

In October he wrote E. L. Sanderson: "I am now trying to finish a story which began in the Oct. No. of *Blackwood*. I am at it day after day, and I want all day, every minute of a day, to produce a beggarly tale of words or perhaps to produce nothing at all." And in a letter to John Galsworthy he related how he finally finished it the morning of July 16, 1900:

The end of *L.J.* has been pulled off with a steady drag of 21 hours. I sent wife and child out of the house (to London) and sat down at 9 A.M. with a desperate resolve to be done with it. Now and then I took a walk round the house, out at one door in at the other. Ten-minute meals. A great hush. Cigarette ends growing into a mound

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similar to a cairn over a dead hero. Moon rose over the barn, looked in at the window and climbed out of sight. Dawn broke, brightened. I put the lamp out and went on, with the morning breeze blowing the sheets of MS. all over the room. Sun rose. I wrote the last word and went into the dining-room. Six o'clock I shared a piece of cold chicken with [my dog] Escamillo.

The novel was finished, but Conrad was not really pleased with it. Four months later, even after revising the serial text for book publication, he still said: "About *L.J.* . . . most unhappy about it and yet idiotically exalted."

The serialization in *Blackwood's Magazine* ran through November, 1900. There was no complete serialization of the novel in any American magazine, though a selection called "Big Brierly," which was less than half of chapter six, appeared in the *Living Age* (229: 331-334) for May, 1901. On October 15, 1900, before the serialization was completed, the English edition of 2893 copies was published by Blackwood, from the magazine text which Conrad had revised. Shortly thereafter Doubleday and McClure issued an American edition for which Conrad disclaimed any responsibility. He wrote in Richard Curle's copy of the American book: "Set up probably from English proofs but neither revised nor in any other way corrected by me. It is probably much nearer the text of *B'woods Maga.* than the first English Ed. of book form." And Americans had to wait until 1923 for a satisfactory edition of their own. In England a second impression appeared in 1900, a third in 1904, a fourth in 1905, and a fifth in 1914; whereas in America there were at least eight impressions in the same number of years, and to date there can be found at least thirty-five different issues of the book, excluding all appearances in sets. Foreign translations have been made into at least French, Italian (no less than four different translations), German, Norwegian, Portuguese, and Estonian.

Conrad's *Jim* has steadily grown in popularity to its

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present classic stature. "There can be little doubt," wrote Curle, "that Conrad's fame as a novelist rests chiefly upon *Lord Jim*. And perhaps the main reason for this is that it raises a fierce moral issue in a very definite form and carries it through on a high level of creative intensity." J. Donald Adams was getting at the same thing when he called Conrad's *Lord Jim* "the most representative of all that he stands for in English literature," and added: "I do not know where else one may find a better portrait of an incurable romantic, a more sensitive reflection of the sense of lost honor."

It is now just fifty years since *Lord Jim* was given to the world; and the work of the artistic Pole has long since proved its quality. The "lump of clay," as Conrad once called the book, is more vital in 1950 than ever.



### ALBUM BENEFACTORUM

**I**N the famous Bodleian Library at Oxford, all visitors may see an open volume entitled *Album Benefactorum*. A little card nearby carries a note explaining that this "Register of Benefactors was begun in 1600 under the personal care of Sir Thomas Bodley. The Latin Statutes of 1610 provide that it shall be kept up to date and always exposed to view, both as a mark of gratitude to benefactors and as an encouragement to others who may be ready to follow them."

To our own Register of Benefactors we must add the following names, with the reasons for our gratitude for their interest in our Library and their gifts to it:

To Mr. Merton L. Miller, of the Class of 1890, we are indebted for eight volumes of Laws regarding Spanish colonies in the West Indies: *Recopilacion de leyes de los reynos de las Indias*, Madrid: four volumes published by Paredes in 1681, and four published by Ortega in 1774.