

Terra Incognita : the Feminine in Joseph Conrad's Works Borders and Boundaries

While undiscovered lands are disappearing from the maps thanks to such explorers as David Livingstone, Conradian fiction turns towards other uncharted territory: man but also – or perhaps mostly – woman. If for Freud in 1926, woman and her sexuality remained “a dark continent”, she also remains an enigma in Conrad's fiction. The latter often introduces female characters who, though seldom full-fledged heroines, appear mysterious, ungraspable and call for attention. Like those undiscovered lands which rouse imagination, speculation and even the worst fears – on some maps, these zones used to bear the inscription *hic sunt dracones* – the feminine appears as an active force in Conrad's works, an invisible source from which the text springs or into which it is absorbed and dissolves. Jacques Derrida, quoted by Claire Joubert, writes: “the issues of art, style, truth cannot be dissociated from that of woman. But the mere wording of this common issue suspends the question: ‘what is a woman?’ It becomes impossible to look for woman, femininity or feminine sexuality. Or, more exactly it becomes impossible to find them with the usual means: knowledge or concept, even though one cannot help looking for them.” The one-day conference organized by the Institute for Transtextual and Transcultural Studies (I.E.T.T.) aims at questioning the nature of the line between the feminine and knowledge or concept: is it a boundary beyond which it is impossible to go, or is it a border that can be crossed? Is it stable, moving, fluid, porous? Is the feminine bound to remain *terra incognita*? Can it be perceived in the text, and how inseparable is it from Conrad's art, style and truth? If considered *terra incognita*, could the feminine also be seen as one of those *arva vacua* – another word referring to as yet uncharted territories – an empty space which can only be perceived thanks to that which frames it? In Conradian fiction where female characters rarely occupy centre-stage, is the feminine condemned to remain in the periphery, or is the periphery or margin the only possible opening onto “the dark continent”? Are the notions of periphery and centre still relevant? Besides, we will wonder what becomes of the feminine enigma when, with the film adaptations of Conrad's novels or with the works they have inspired, the borders between texts and media are crossed. If the feminine is linked to the writing style of one individual, is it fated to disappear in any act of literary appropriation?

These issues that revolve around the feminine and space, the known and the unknown, will be explored in this one-day conference that follows the 2006 conference in Limoges entitled: “ ‘Femininity, a privilege – not feminism, an attitude’: the ‘feminine’ in Joseph Conrad's fiction: from ideology to a poetics of heterogeneity”. Building on the ideas evoked during this event, which included notions of stereotypes and the way in which Conradian fiction brings to light new gender representations and explores the link between patriarchy and imperialism, the Lyon conference invites participants to further investigate the relationship between the feminine, ideology and politics, into the nature of the borders that separate or link these different territories together.

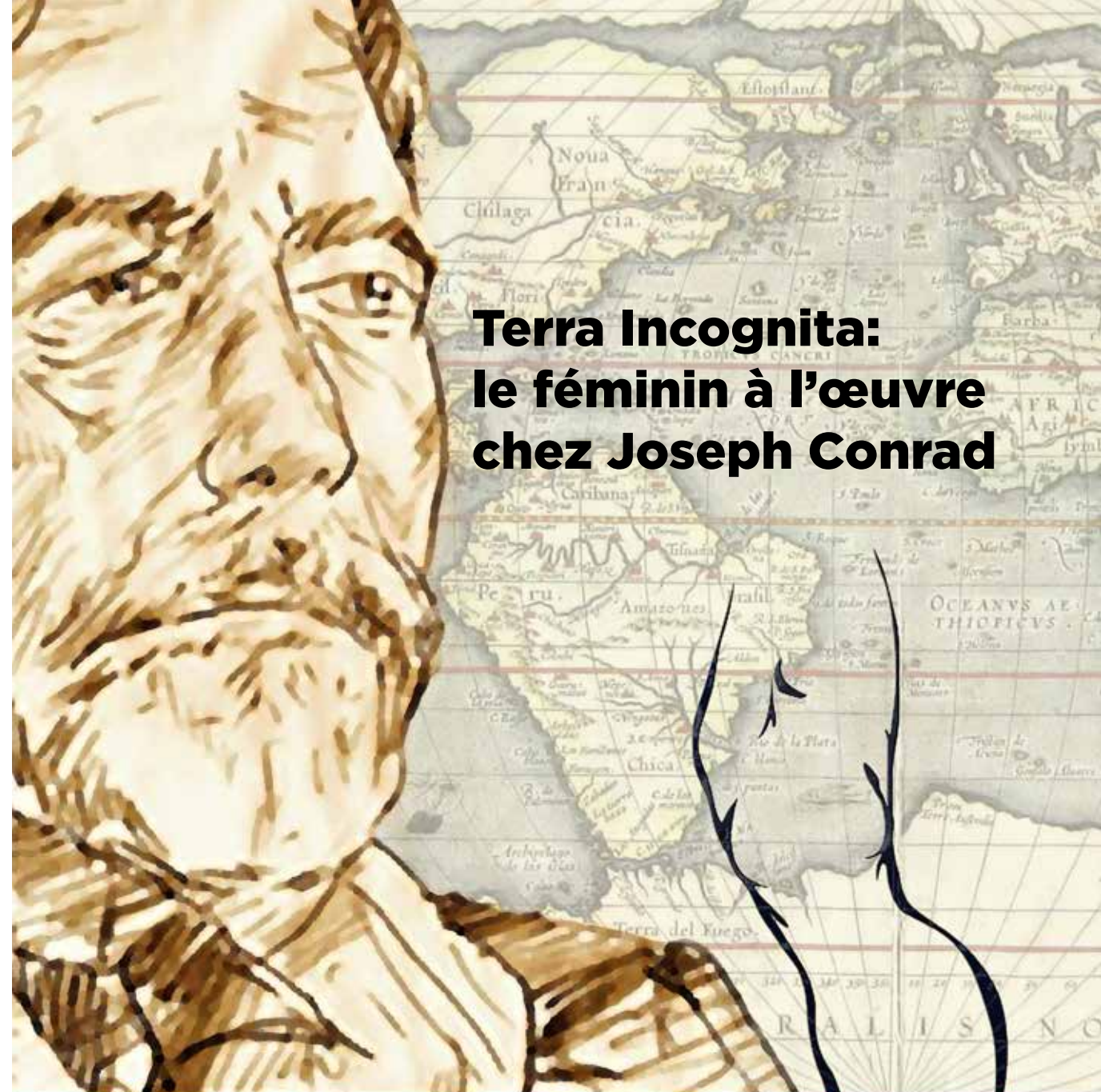
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**SOCIÉTÉ
CONRADIANNE
FRANÇAISE**



Terra Incognita: le féminin à l'œuvre chez Joseph Conrad

Programme du 12 décembre 2014

8h30 Accueil des participants

8h45-10h15 Chair Claude Maisonnat

8h45-9h15 Robert Hampson (*Royal Holloway, University of London*)
“Fiancées, Wives and Fallen Women”

9h15-9h45 Nathalie Martinière (*Université de Limoges*)
“Genre and Gender: Playing with Stereotypes in *Chance*”

9h45-10h15 Richard Ambrosini (*Università di Roma Tre*)
“Jewel to Lena: How and Why the Female Protagonist Ended Up Stealing the (Tragic) Scene in Conrad’s Novels”

10h15-10h30 discussion

10h30-10h45 pause café

10h45-12h Chair Robert Hampson

10h45-11h15 Jakob Lothe (*Université d’Oslo*)
“The Woman as Intelligent Observer: Female Characters in *Heart of Darkness* and *Nostromo*”

11h15-11h45 Josiane Paccaud (*Université Lyon 2*) :
“Marlow, Jewel, the Intended: Conrad’s ‘Strange Uneasy’ Romances”

11h45-12h discussion

12h15-14h15 Déjeuner

14h30-16h15 Chair Josiane Paccaud

14h30-15h Claude Maisonnat (*Université Lyon 2*)
“From Theatricals to Tragedy: The Defeat of Feminine Desire in ‘Freya of the Seven Isles’”

15h-15h30 Annick Droesdal-Levillain (*Université de Strasbourg*)
“Joseph Conrad and Edvard Munch: l’énigme du féminin”

15h30-16h Catherine Delesalle-Nancey (*Université Lyon 3*)
“ ‘Amy Foster, c’est moi’: Conflicting Identifications in ‘Amy Foster’”

16h-16h15 discussion

16h15-16h30 pause café

16h30-17h45 Chair Catherine Delesalle-Nancey

16h30-17h Michel Arouimi (*ULCO*)
“Héroïnes funèbres de Conrad”

17h-17h30 Padmini Mongia (*Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania*)
“Eating Out: Conrad, Food, Gender.”

17h30-17h45 Discussion et clôture du colloque