

## **BACHELARDIAN SPACE IN JOSEPH CONRAD’S “AMY FOSTER” AND LUIGI PIRANDELLO’S “LONTANO”**

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**Summary:** The aim of the present article is to explore the problem of space in Joseph Conrad’s short story “Amy Foster,” written in 1901 and collected in *Typhoon and Other Stories* in 1903, and in Luigi Pirandello’s “Lontano” [Far Away], published for the first time in the *Nuova Antologia* of January 1902. Convinced that a place transcends geography, both Conrad and Pirandello seem to explore what Gaston Bachelard defines as “topoanalysis.” I therefore seek to present striking parallels between the two stories, applying Bachelard’s phenomenology of intimate inner/outer spaces in contrast with hostile ones. Since the French philosopher formulated his theories after Conrad’s and Pirandello’s death and was not familiar with the analyzed short stories, the affinity between them cannot be viewed in terms of a direct influence. Still, Bachelard’s dichotomy of inner and outer space may be quite illuminating in the analysis of Yanko Goorall and Lars Cleen – the main protagonists of “Amy Foster” and “Lontano.”

**Key words:** Luigi Pirandello, Joseph Conrad, space, Gaston Bachelard.

The aim of the present article is to explore the problem of space in Joseph Conrad’s short story “Amy Foster,” written in 1901 and collected in *Typhoon and Other Stories* in 1903, and in Luigi Pirandello’s “Lontano” [“Far Away”], published for the first time in the *Nuova Antologia* of January 1902, applying Gaston Bachelard’s phenomenological approach. In his book entitled *The Poetics of Space. The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*, Bachelard, stressing a spiritual relation between a human being and his or her surroundings, investigates the impact of various spaces upon human inhabitants and vice versa. Being a phenomenologist of space, Bachelard distinguishes two major kinds of space – outer one, that is visible, geometrical space, and inner one, that is invisible, oneiric space existing in thoughts, memories, and dreams. Being convinced that “[i]nhabited space transcends geometrical space” [Bachelard 1994, p. 47], Bachelard strongly rejects the Aristo-

telian priority of a place to a thing, supporting Martin Heidegger's sense of space. According to Heidegger, the place is never empty but exists thanks to its physical or spiritual content – in other words, the place cannot exist independently of the thing. If the human being is being-in-the-world, then any outer space, if inhabited and experienced, can become inner one. The individual is not a subject distinct from a world of objects but thanks to a human impact on each inhabited space, this space is elevated to the role of a subject and has a kind of "psyche" [Mstowska 2010, s. 58–65], which is also explored in Conrad's and Pirandello's short stories.

"Amy Foster" focuses on a character who, while living an orderly and quiet life, is suddenly confronted with a traumatizing experience. Once the crystallized existence collapses, the individual is forced to open up to an unknown and terrifying life. Mario Curreli argues that restlessness is innate to the human condition, adding that in Conrad's stories of restless souls, the author explores not only conflicts of feelings, but also emotional, psychic, and existential disturbances of alienated characters crushed by circumstances [Curreli 1990, p. 7]. Interestingly, the above statements can also be applied to another twentieth-century short story – Luigi Pirandello's "Lontano." Indeed, the two stories reveal some striking similarities concerning the role and the interpretation of space and the motif of a displaced protagonist lost in it.

"Amy Foster" tells the story of Yanko Goorall, a young emigrant from the East Carpathian mountains. Bound for America but, unfortunately, cast upon the hostile shores of Brenzett, Yanko, a survivor of a shipwreck, may be regarded as the embodiment of the disturbing Intruder rejected by the adopted community. Conrad's descriptions of the excluded Other resonate with Pirandello's portrayal of Lars Cleen, a Norwegian sailor, who does not reach America but disembarks in Sicily, in the port area of Agrigento, from a ship infected with typhoid. Not accepted by the Agrigento community, the voyager experiences hostile local attitudes and the pain of exclusion. Strikingly enough, both protagonists appear in their new homelands through misfortunes – Yanko because of shipwreck, and Lars because of his illness aboard *Hammerfest*. In both, it is a futile quest to reach America that constitutes a disturbing background presence. Finally, both Conrad and Pirandello, convinced that a place transcends geography, seem to explore what Gaston Bachelard calls "topoanalysis," that is "the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives" [Bachelard 1994, p. 8]. I therefore seek to present striking parallels between the two stories, applying Bachelard's phenomenology of intimate spaces in contrast with hostile ones. Since the French philosopher formulated his theories after Conrad's and Pirandello's death and was not familiar with the analyzed short stories, the affinity between them cannot be viewed in terms of a direct influence. Still, Bachelard's dichotomy of inner and outer space may be quite illuminating in the analysis of "Amy Foster" and "Lontano."

The impact of inhabited space on the protagonists of "Amy Foster" is investigated by Mary Harris, who puts emphasis on Conrad's particular portrayal of the concept of "homeland" as a carrier and repository of identity [Harris 2020, p. 206].

Harris also notes that, for Conrad, topography has a significant shaping influence on the personality of human beings [Harris 2020, p. 206]. The scholar claims further that in his fiction, Conrad delineates “archetypal” communities, which are shaped by a close contact with the land and the sea, constituting a peculiar intimacy [Harris 2020, p. 208–209]. Harris’ observations can also be applied to “Lontano,” as topography plays a significant role in Pirandello’s works. The role of Sicily in his plays, novels and short stories is highlighted, among others, by Lesław Eustachiewicz, who not only underlines the influence of Sicilian customs and traditions on Pirandello’s fiction, but also emphasizes the shaping presence of Sicilian ethnic atavisms and landscapes [Eustachiewicz 1982, p.7]. Sicily, Pirandello’s beloved homeland and repository of his identity, can therefore be regarded as a gigantic scene, on which the drama of human existence takes place. Significantly enough, this scene was for Pirandello a metaphor of human fate, allowing for exploring psychological intricacies experienced by his characters. Of a similar opinion is Joanna Ugniewska [Ugniewska 1985, p. 20], who observes that the topos of *theatrum mundi* was used by the Sicilian writer and playwright to present the elusiveness of reality and the inexplicability of the human psyche. A strong dependency on topography is indeed intrinsic to Lars Cleen’s and Yanko Goorall’s psychological and social selves, as the two male protagonists have “intimate” relationships with their respective landscapes – the East Carpathian mountain ranges and the sea.-

Both Yanko, an East Carpathian mountaineer, and Lars, a brave and handsome sailor, represent the embodiment of masculinity. In their essay entitled “The Sociology of Masculinity”, Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett deconstruct the notion of monolithic masculinity, that is a stable and fixed one, and insist on using the word in the plural form. They define masculinities as “those behaviours, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine” [Barrett, Whitehead 2001, p. 15–16]. Not discouraged in the face of danger and the unknown, the two protagonists are characterized by faith in what seems to be impossible, quest for the unattainable and hope for the future. It is Lars’ youthful enthusiasm and mastery in seamanship that are the sources of his unshakeable faith and the ability to regard the tussle with the sea as an unforgettable adventure and a trial of life. Constantly being at sea, Lars is detached from the values of civilization: his character and personality have been shaped during seafaring. It is the sea’s overwhelming vastness, unpredictability and changeability that are both fascinating and awe-inspiring. As the young sailor perceives the sea as a force to define himself against, Lars regards the ocean as the area of his achievement. As its tremendous power affords a chance of success, it is encouraging to his longing for being tested and proving victorious. Being courageous, charismatic and resourceful, the Norwegian seaman fully realizes himself only in a constant struggle with the sea, which enables him to live in absolute freedom, as well as to discover his courage and perseverance. Hence, Lars’ seafaring, connoting unrestricted freedom, represents the protagonist’s maritime identity.

Similarly, Yanko, an uneducated peasant strongly attached to his homeland, regards inhabiting the East Carpathian mountains as an apotheosis of freedom. Having spent most of his life at a high altitude, Goorall identifies himself with open, mountainous spaces. Strong, independent and not discouraged by misfortunes, the mountaineer, like Lars, subscribes to the hegemonic masculine ideal. In "Amy Foster," Conrad delineates traditional masculine experiences, such as taking risk, acting independently and inhabiting unlimited spaces, constructing an image of the ideal highlander as daring, demonstrating mastery and living in union with powerful nature. However, Conrad is far from assuming that these qualities are permanent. On the contrary, for him being masculine means being subjected to a series of tests, challenging the masculine identity and proving victorious. In other words, in Conrad's fiction hegemonic masculinity is not associated with possessing certain features of character but it needs to be constantly confirmed and exhibited. Therefore, he stresses the importance of the mountainous East Carpathia to the construction of hegemonic masculinity. Conrad presents this region as the ideal proving-ground of human character, providing an opportunity to test the mountaineer's strength and skills. The ability to meet the challenge of the awe-inspiring mountain ranges may be regarded as a manifestation of power, traditionally reserved for men.

Strikingly enough, both Lars and Yanko regard themselves as powerful enough to domesticate the sea and mountains, respectively. As every "really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home" [Bachelard 1994, p. 5] the young protagonists associate the sea and mountainous space with the feelings of safety and security. Interestingly, in "Lontano" and "Amy Foster," intimate, home-like space encapsulates the sea and mountain ranges. Having domesticated the vast and open spaces of their homelands, the two protagonists perceive them as the essence of the notion of home. It is Lars' and Yanko's childlike imagination and extreme sensitivity that enables them to oneirically inhabit the sea and the mountains of their homelands. In their eyes, the interiorized sea and mountainous space becomes greater than reality and are elevated to the role of a subject. Bachelard's statement, which may be regarded as a very interesting way of perceiving vast spaces, is also applicable to the sea space presented in "Lontano." Lars, who feels safe on *Hammerfest*, is powerful enough to reduce the immensity of the ocean and to regard sea space as intimate one. The ocean becomes for him what Bachelard calls *l'immensité intime* (intimate immensity). The philosopher believes that there is a "correspondence between the immensity of world space and the depth of 'inner space'" [Bachelard 1994, p. 205]. He also states that "the impression of immensity is in us, and not necessarily related to an object" [Bachelard 1994, p. XXXIX]. If it were not for Yanko's and Lars' "inner immensity," the two protagonists would never be able to domesticate mountains and the sea, and, in consequence, to feel the desire to experience and interiorize the vast spaces of America.

In his book entitled *The Italian Emigration of Our Times*, Robert Franz Foerster states that the departure of emigrants to America is often caused by "the threat of that slow decline, that death in life, which may make the act of emigration almost

like a simple reflex action or obedience to an inexorable behest” [Foerster 1969, p. 406]. Foerster states further that Italians are not predisposed to emigrate because this agricultural folk is characterized by “an identification of the whole content of existence with home and habitat” [Foerster 1969, p. 416] which is perfectly illustrated in “Lontano.” For them a journey to America, the country which is often idealized and associated with abundance and happiness, resembles the exodus to *Terra Promessa*. Foerster concludes that to feel fulfilled and satisfied in America, the provincial and emotional Italian must be willing to undergo a metamorphosis [Foerster 1969, p. 395], which is connected with extreme sacrifice. Foerster’s observations on the nature of the emigration to America and on shattered dreams of the Promised Land are applicable to the interpretation of Conrad’s and Pirandello’s short stories.

Believing in the American dream promising prosperity for people of every rank, Yanko decides to emigrate to America, hoping to achieve a better and richer life. Since his rendition of the American Promised Land is not rooted in reality but shaped by imagination, the protagonist’s dreaming is over during his passage to America. Shipwrecked on the Kentish coast and regarded by the local community as an intruder, the protagonist experiences a bitter awakening. Extremely disillusioned, he discovers that not only narrow-mindedness and hostility, but also fear of the unfamiliar and the unknown are endemic to the group of English villagers living in Brenzett. Transplanted to alien soil, Yanko is afflicted with nostalgia for his homeland and feels permanently displaced: “He didn’t know where he was. Somewhere very far from his mountains – somewhere over the water. Was this America, he wondered?” [Conrad 1973, p. 246] Yanko’s strong attachment to the landscapes of his homeland only exacerbates his emotional traumas and his lack of a sense of belonging: “He was different; innocent of heart, and full of goodwill, which nobody wanted, this castaway, that, like a man transplanted into another planet, was separated by an immense space from his past and by an immense ignorance from his future” [Conrad 1973, p. 249]. According to Yannick le Boulicaut, who analyzes “Amy Foster” from a religious stance, Brenzett may be regarded as a representation of purgatory. Heavy people living there, mere Shades belonging to the Kingdom of the Dead, seem to be separated from the rest of the world [le Boulicaut 2020, p. 274].

Yanko’s immigrant experience and his sense of exile in the English countryside in many ways resembles Lars’ plight in Agrigento, which may also be regarded as a bitter awakening. Lars does not reach America – in his case it is Sicily that becomes an antithesis of the Promised Land: “[...] is it possible? Was this small sea side village in Sicily, so far, far away, the destination chosen by fate for his life? Had he arrived at his destiny unknowingly? Did he fall ill almost to the point of death, for this? To restart, from there, the road to a new existence? Who knows!” [Pirandello 2000, p. 74; Tuccini 2014, p. 175]. If Yanko’s Kent can be compared to purgatory, then Lars’ Sicily is a hellish place. A prisoner of the land longing for the freedom of the sea, Lars experiences destructive immobilism on the largest island of the

Mediterranean Sea. For the protagonist, a *homo viator*, travelling seems to be the necessary condition for living. A free spirit fated to continual journeys, he suffers immensely when being motionless. Convinced that there is nothing to live for in Sicily, Lars feels useless and depressed. He strongly believes that the imperishable and everlasting sea is the only element to which he can resort to find consolation. Longing for the open space of the sea, Lars enters a kind of wonderland, where everything seems to be extremely fragile and phantasmagoric. Pirandello juxtaposes the sacred character of the sea with the profane of Sicily, resembling an inferno, standing for suffering, rejection and resignation. The sea, whose fat sheet shimmering in the sunshine functions as a mirror, produces blurred and hazy images of reality. The mirror of the sea functions as a means of communication between past and present, thanks to which Lars' imagination travels back in time.

However, the fire of youth and strength burning in young Lars' heart grows dimmer and smaller and, eventually, is dulled by the motionlessness of the land. In Sicily, which is paradoxically a dark and cold existential prison, the flame of life expires and is replaced by pessimism, passivity and nostalgia for the past:

At nightfall, the town seemed dead, watched by the four kerosene lanterns. It seemed that men, between the constant quarrels and mistrust of the war for profit, did not even have time to look after their love-life, whereas the women showed themselves as listless and apathetic. The husband was made to work, and the wife to look after the house and breed children. –‘Here?’ Thought Cleen, ‘here, all my life?’ And he felt his throat tighten ever further from a knot of tears [Pirandello 2000, p. 92–93; Tuccini 2014, p. 176].

Lars' Sicily, the island in the deep South, has therefore nothing in common with the world of Dionysus of ancient Greece, dense with symbolic connotations [Tuccini 2014, p. 161]. South, standing for fire, light and warmth, also symbolizes passion, manifestation of youthfulness and the flame of life that cannot be extinguished. By contrast, North, symbolizing earth, connotes darkness and coldness. If South is connected with the body and action, then North is associated with the mind and reflection. However, in “Lontano,” the symbolism of North and South is reversed. In his article entitled “The Southern Frontier. Images of the Other in Luigi Pirandello's ‘Lontano’,” Giona Tuccini has convincingly described Lars' Italy as “the Other Italy” [Tuccini 2014, p. 172] and the situation of the presented characters as “the disproportion between ideals and reality, universal and local, the Northern world and Southern frontiers [...]” [Tuccini 2014, p. 164]. As in Sicily Lars is not rooted in any space, he experiences a kind of painful homelessness.

Underlying the spiritual content of the house, Bachelard puts emphasis on the fact that home space evokes reminiscences and dreams of safety, security, and happiness. The philosopher characterizes home space as *l'espace intime* (intimate space), “not open to just anybody” [Bachelard 1994, p. 78]. Being convinced that houses are to be experienced and interiorized, Bachelard gives primacy to the spiritual aspect of home over the physical one. He also stresses the fact that in each



house there are corners where the inhabitants can hide to find solitude, essential for meditations and reflections upon the world and human condition. However, Bachelard's theses concerning home space, regarded as "the non-I that protects the I" [Bachelard 1994, p. 5], are not applicable to the interpretation of "Lontano" and "Amy Foster," as this sort of domestic security is denied both to Lars Cleen and Yanko Goorall. Lars' hut in Sicily and Yanko's cottage in Kent are deprived of any spiritual and protective aspect whatsoever.

Not only in "Lontano," but also in "Amy Foster" infinite, limitless and immeasurable sea and mountainous space is sharply contrasted with finite, limited and measurable geometrical space of the hut. Neither experienced nor interiorized, the space of Lars' and Yanko's huts is reduced to its physical aspect and can therefore be interpreted only in terms of geometry. Constructing notions of home in the protagonists' adopted homelands, both Conrad and Pirandello present the space of the characters' new homes as having no *genius loci*. Since the seemingly intimate space of the two huts provides no existential shelter, it resembles Pirandellian existential prison of form. Adriano Tilgher, a well-known theater critic who became an enthusiast of Pirandello's work, recognized the essence of his theater in *Studi sul teatro contemporaneo* [*Studies on contemporary theater*] as showing the antagonism of a fluid, changeable life and a rigid, limiting form [Ugniewska 1985, p. 18]. The distinction proposed by Tilgher in 1923 was adopted by Pirandello himself, who applied it to all his works, including novels and short stories.

An extremely important theoretical statement on the life/form dichotomy is Pirandello's essay entitled *L'umorismo* [*Humorism*] from 1908, in which he presents a tragicomic vision of the human condition. Showing a human being as a moving puppet on the gigantic stage of *theatrum mundi*, Pirandello proves that the individual is unable to distinguish between form and life. The life of the actors on the gigantic stage of the world is reduced to automatic movements of the puppet, the existence of which is closed in forms. Pirandello defines "form" as not only the images and ideals that make a person feel coherent, but also all the fictions thanks to which the individual feels stable [Pirandello 1986, p. 159]. According to Marco Manotta, the Pirandellian form can be regarded as the conventionality that guides life or, in other words, reality immobilized in patterns, formulas and concepts [Manotta 1998, p. 106]. In the face of the lack of spontaneity and authenticity, an immobile facial expression becomes a clear symbol of the existence trapped in the form of a lifeless, inarticulate puppet. In *L'umorismo*, the Sicilian writer and playwright, referring to the topos of *theatrum mundi*, shows life as both a prison and a theater – the places where his protagonists are brought against their will. Pirandello's characters are thus part of a dehumanized and lifeless community, living in an existential prison of forms, compared by Giovanni Macchia to a torture chamber [Macchia 1992, p. 59].

Indeed, Yanko's plight in England is nothing but constant torment. Having no status, the main protagonist does not even merit a name – the patronym "Goorall" is not his real name. In his in-depth analysis of Conrad's short story, Claude Maissonnat calls Yanko's experience of a foreign emigrant "a foredoomed process of

identification with the new world that surrounds him" [Maisonnat 2017, p. 368]. Stressing Conrad's broad knowledge concerning the mechanisms of identification through language, Maisonnat compares the language of the closed community of Brenzett, in which Yanko is given no meaningful place, to a fortress: "To some extent then, the English language functions for him as a fortress to which access is denied, as no one seems to be aware that what is needed is to open a door that would symbolize inclusion" [Maisonnat 2017, p. 376]. According to Maisonnat, Yanko, resembling a child using baby talk in his attempt to master the language of the villagers, is to be regarded as an *infans* [Maisonnat 2017, p. 367]. Therefore, his struggle with the English language, "a second mother tongue that eludes his grasp" [Maisonnat 2017, p. 368] can be compared to a child's futile effort to take control over a well-protected fortress. Portrayed as a child figure, Yanko is no longer the incarnation of the essence of masculinity: "a sort of anxious baby-talk" [Maisonnat 2017, p. 237] "his broken English [...] resembled curiously the speech of a young child" [Maisonnat 2017, p. 233]. However, a strong emphasis should be put on the fact that the foredoomed, childlike protagonist is cast away not only from his name, his native language and his sense of masculinity, but also from the space of Conrad's short story. Indeed, the title "Amy Foster" may suggest that there is no room for Yanko Goorall in the text [Maisonnat 2017, p. 382], which perfectly illustrates his being "the archetypal Outsider, the eternal Alien" [Schaffer 2018, p. 175].

Lars Cleen, an alienated Norwegian, cast off from his homeland, also seems to embody the archetypal Outsider. Cast into Sicilian culture, the young sailor, like Yanko, becomes "the epitome of nothingness" [Tuccini 2014, p. 163] – part of Lars' identity is repressed, as a new fabricated name, *L'arso*, is attributed to him. Tuccini describes Lars as "the bearer of diversity, a diversity that would never be incorporated into the archaic Sicilian identity" [Tuccini 2014, p. 166] stressing the young Norwegian's obliviousness to Sicilian traditions, customs and accepted social norms. As Lars' presence in Agrigento is perceived as a threat to the collective identity of the community that hosts him, there is no place for him there. Interestingly, Lars is *lontano*, far away, not only from his homeland, but also from the title of Pirandello's short story. Maria Teresa Chialant's observations on the figure of the Outsider can be applied to Lars Cleen. Chialant notes that the protagonist's geographical isolation and his condition of the outcast at a paratextual level reinforce the perception of the young foreigner as the incarnation of Otherness [Chialant 2015, p. 116]. The exile from his mother tongue and the broken Italian language that he uses for communication with the Agrigento community reduce him to a helpless and alienated child, laughed at by the local inhabitants. Staying within Maisonnat's metaphor of the well-protected fortress, it can be admitted that Lars, waiting to be guided through the intricacies of the new language and culture, is left on the threshold [Tuccini 2014, p. 165].

Both Yanko and Lars, "homeless" and disoriented in hostile space, decide to marry local, simple girls. Although Yanko is perceived by the Kentish community as a weird person of unknown origin, for Amy, he becomes the embodiment of



masculinity and the object of her desire. Conrad, using the *lux-tenebrae* dichotomy, operates on contrasts. Yanko's black eyes, dark hair and olive complexion are contrasted with Amy's light hair and pale skin. What is also stressed by Conrad is the fact that Yanko's indecipherable language, his distinctive clothes and long hair, as well as his fondness for fir trees, which are typical of his country, are alien to the Brenzett-Colebrook community. However, it is not only Yanko's outlandishness in Kent, but also "primitivity" of the cultures of the East Carpathian mountaineers and the Kentish villagers [Harris 2020, p. 204] that is one of the reasons for the lack of understanding about each other's manners, customs and traditions:

But here on this same road you might have seen amongst these heavy men a being lithe, supple and long-limbed, straight like a pine, with something striving upwards in his appearance as though the heart within him had been buoyant. Perhaps it was only the force of the contrast, but when he was passing one of these villagers here, the soles of his feet did not seem to me to touch the dust of the road. He vaulted over the stiles, paced these slopes with a long elastic stride that made him noticeable at a great distance, and had lustrous black eyes. He was so different from the mankind around that, with his freedom of movement, his soft – a little startled, glance, his olive complexion and graceful bearing, his humanity suggested to me the nature of a woodland creature [Conrad 1973, pp. 232–233].

The cultural incompatibility and the unbridgeable distance between Yanko and Amy lead to her estrangement from the husband. Frightened by Goorall's inexplicable strangeness, Amy keeps him away from their baby, Johnny, and does not allow her husband to speak his native language to his son. As the protagonist falls ill, lies in bed and is condemned to baby talk, he resembles a suffering child and a prisoner of a symbolic torture chamber. Yanko's place is marginal and the position he becomes associated with is vertical, carrying connotations of "heaviness, fall, sadness and death" [Maisonnat 2017, p. 383]. Suffering from physical and linguistic isolation, the ill-adapted, maladjusted protagonist may therefore be regarded as the archetypical Christ figure [Boulicaut 2020, p. 286], for whom "[d]eath seems to be the only possible conclusion" [Chialant 2015, p. 120]. Although Amy Foster is supposed to love Yanko and to take care of him, as "Amy" connotes *amare* [to love] in Italian and to "foster" means "to nurse," in the climactic scene she runs away with her baby, leaving her dying husband alone and letting him die of thirst.

Not only in "Amy Foster," but also in "Lontano," the protagonists' tragedy is caused by their being transplanted to a foreign country and their status of a stranger among the local community. Representing a Scandinavian view of things, Lars, like Yanko, is regarded as the Other and rejected by the Sicilian community:

A bevy of barefoot rascals, with torn clothes, some inveterately naked, toasted by the sun, followed Lars Cleen each time on his walks. They spied on him, exchanging views and comments out loud that soon turned into laughing. He, dazed and dazzled in the air that sparkled in the light, turned toward the one,

then to the other, smiling. Sometimes he had to threaten the more insolent ones with a stick, and then sat on the low wall of the pier to watch the moored ships and the sea that appeared on fire by the reflection of vespertine clouds. People stopped to watch him, while he stood with that attitude, that lost and ecstatic attitude: The people looked at him as if looking at a crane or a stork; tired and lost, descended from the sky. The fur hat, the pallor of his face and the extremely blonde beard and hair particularly attracted their curiosity. Eventually he got tired and slowly but surely returned home, saddened [Pirandello 2020, pp. 70–71; Tuccini 2014, p. 175].

Even when the protagonist marries Venerina, a poor Sicilian girl who takes care of him during his recovery, and lives in Agrigento with his wife and son, he is still too outlandish to be accepted by the natives. His physical and cultural differences, for example his pale complexion, blond beard and light hair may be regarded as the fixed image of the incomprehensible Other. The pale northern man is therefore contrasted with the dark southern woman, whose greatest desire is to become a mother. Having achieved her goal, Venerina behaves in an unloving and indifferent way towards her husband, whom she does not love. Tuccini compares the female protagonist to the warm and dark womb [Tuccini 2014, p. 164], seemingly constituting a place of recovery for childlike Lars. However, Tuccini also observes that the name "Venerina" connotes venereal diseases [Tuccini 2014, p. 164], which stresses her destructive potential. Cold and impenetrable, she resembles a fortress, the access to which is denied to Lars. Although she is supposed to guide Lars through the oddities of Sicilian culture, she, like Amy, fails to perform the appointed task. What is underlined in Pirandello's short story is the lack of communication and the clash of cultures, which leads to Lars' utter loneliness and immobilism, as defined by Maisonnat. The paralysis motif is figuratively presented in "Lontano" as inertia and depression, condemning Lars to the horizontal position of lying on the bed. No longer regarded as the incarnation of the essence of masculinity, he is reduced to the role of a child. Trapped in his domestic prison, the protagonist, a broken man, is indeed able to identify himself only with the space of the bed. Although Lars desperately wants to escape, he sacrifices himself for the family and remains in Sicily, which psychologically destroys him.

As my reading of "Amy Foster" and "Lontano" has demonstrated, there are several striking similarities between the two short stories. As for space, the vast mountain ranges in "Amy Foster" and the sea in "Lontano," symbolizing not only unrestricted freedom, but also the sense of belonging and identification, are sharply contrasted with Yanko's and Lars' huts, connoting entrapment and lack of protective domesticity. Another resemblance between the two texts concerns the main female characters – Amy and Venerina – who fail to guide the male protagonists through the intricacies and oddities of their native languages and cultures. Victims of prejudice and rejection, Yanko and Lars perceive the space of their new homes as hostile. Reduced to the role of a child, they identify themselves only with the space of the bed, in which Yanko dies and Lars lies half dead during his illness,

which represents their exclusion and suffering. The local communities of Brenzett and Agrigento, respectively, regard Yanko and Lars as the embodiment of unacceptable foreignness, condemning them to unbearable isolation and utter loneliness, which results in the former's death and the latter's depression.

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## **BACHELARDOWSKA PRZESTRZEŃ W OPOWIADANIACH „AMY FOSTER” JOSEPHA CONRADA I „LONTANO” LUIGIEGO PIRANDELLA**

**Streszczenie:** Celem artykułu jest analiza problemu przestrzeni w opowiadaniu Josepha Conrada pt. „Amy Foster,” napisanym w 1901 roku i wydany w tomie pt. *Tajfun i inne opowiadania* w 1903 roku, oraz w utworze Luigiiego Pirandella pt. „Lontano” [Daleko], opublikowanym po raz pierwszy w czasopiśmie *Nuova Antologia* w styczniu 1902 roku, przy zastosowaniu fenomenologicznego podejścia Gastona Bachelarda. Zarówno Janko Góral w utworze Conrada, jak i Lars Cleen w opowiadaniu Pirandella zostają wykorzeni z bliskiej im, zinterioryzowanej przestrzeni i wrzuceni we wrogo nastawione społeczności hrabstwa Kent oraz sycylijskiego Agrigento. Pozornie „intymna” przestrzeń ich nowych domów staje się dla Janka i Larsa egzystencjalnym więzieniem, swego rodzaju izbą tortur, co ostatecznie prowadzi do destrukcji obu bohaterów. Chociaż Bachelard sformułował swoje teorie po śmierci Conrada i Pirandella, jego tezy dotyczące przestrzeni rzucają nowe światło na interpretację „Amy Foster” i „Lontano.”

**Słowa kluczowe:** Luigi Pirandello, Joseph Conrad, przestrzeń, Gaston Bachelard.