



Testimony on Trial: Conrad, James, and the Contest for Modernism

Brian Artese

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Who is a more authoritative source of information — the person who experiences it firsthand, or a more ‘impartial’ authority? In the late nineteenth century, testimony became a common feature of literary works both fact and fiction. But with the rise of new journalism, the power of testimony could be undermined by anonymous, institutional voices — a Victorian subversion which continues to this day.

Testimony on Trial examines the conflicts over testimony through the eyes of two of its major combatants, Joseph Conrad and Henry James. Brian Artese finds an overlooked yet direct inspiration for *Heart of Darkness* in the anti-testimonial scheming of Henry Morton Stanley and the *New York Herald*. Through new readings of works including *Lord Jim* and *The Portrait of a Lady*, Artese demonstrates how the cultural conditions that worked against testimony fed into a nascent conflict about the meaning of modernism itself.

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