ANGLICA

An International Journal of English Studies

30/1 2021

EDITORS
Marzena Sokołowska-Paryż [m.a.sokolowska-paryz@uw.edu.pl]
Anna Wojtyś [a.wojtys@uw.edu.pl]

ASSOCIATE EDITORS
Silvia Bruti [silvia.bruti@unipi.it]
Lourdes López Ropero [lourdes.lopez@ua.es]
Martin Löschnigg [martin.loeschnigg@uni-graz.at]
Jerzy Nykiel [jerzy.nykiel@uib.no]

ASSISTANT EDITORS
Magdalena Kizeweter [m.kizeweter@uw.edu.pl]
Dominika Lewandowska-Rodak [dominika.lewandowska@o2.pl]
Bartosz Lutostański [b.lutostanski@uw.edu.pl]
Przemysław Uściński [przemek.u@hotmail.com]

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITOR
Barry Keane [bkeane@uw.edu.pl]

ADVISORY BOARD
Michael Bilynsky, University of Lviv
Andrzej Bogusławski, University of Warsaw
Mirosława Buchholtz, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń
Jan Čermák, Charles University, Prague
Edwin Duncan, Towson University
Jacek Fabiszak, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań
Elżbieta Foeller-Pituch, Northwestern University, Evanston-Chicago
Piotr Gąsiorowski, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań
Keith Hanley, Lancaster University
Andrea Herrera, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs
Christopher Knight, University of Montana,
Marcin Krygier, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań
Krystyna Kujawińska-Courtney, University of Łódź
Brian Lowrey, Université de Picardie Jules Verne, Amiens
Zbigniew Mazur, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin
Rafał Molencki, University of Silesia, Sosnowiec
John G. Newman, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Jerzy Rubach, University of Iowa
Piotr Ruszkiewicz, Pedagogical University, Cracow
Hans Sauer, University of Munich
Krystyna Stamirowska, Jagiellonian University, Cracow
Merja Stenroos, University of Stavanger
Jeremy Tambling, University of Manchester
Peter de Voogd, University of Utrecht
Anna Walczuk, Jagiellonian University, Cracow
Jean Ward, University of Gdańsk
Jerzy Wełna, University of Warsaw
Florian Zappe, University of Göttingen

GUEST REVIEWERS
Jean Anderson, Te Herenga Waka / Victoria University of Wellington
Dagmara Drewniak, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań
Andrew Francis, independent scholar
Glenn Jellenik, University of Central Arkansas
Izabella Kimak, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin
Ewa Kujawska-Lis, University of Warmia and Mazury, Olsztyn
Mark Llewellyn, Cardiff University
Ágnes Matuska, University of Szeged
Beate Neumeier, University of Cologne
Dominika Oramus, University of Warsaw
Natália Pikli, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest
Tadeusz Pióro, University of Warsaw
Tadeusz Rachwał, SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Warsaw
Paweł Stachura, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań
Jadwiga Węgrodzka, University of Gdańsk
Tomasz Wiśniewski, University of Gdańsk
Beata Zawadka, University of Szczecin

UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THEMATIC SECTION
(RE)IMAGINING AUSTRALIA

Gerhard Fischer
Remembering Mudrooroo (1938–2019) 5

Zuzanna Kruk-Buchowska
Slow Food Terra Madre: A Novel Pathway to Achieving
Indigenous Australian Food Sovereignty? 21

Krzysztof Kosecki
"Mixed identity of circumstances": Bronisław Malinowski
in Australia and Melanesia 35

Ian Willis
"My box of memories": An Australian Country Girl Goes to London 53

Barbara Klonowska
Counterspaces of Resistance: Peter Carey's *Bliss* 67

VARIA

Agnieszka Żukowska
Rich Ornaments and Delightful Engines: The Poetics of Failed Festivity
and Figural Automation in William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* 79

Robert McParland
Identity, Fidelity, and Cross-Cultural Relationships
in Joseph Conrad's *Almayer's Folly* 97

Bartłomiej Błaszkiewicz
On the Idea of the Secondary World in Susanna Clarke's *Piranesi* 111

Maria Antonietta Struzziero
A New Voice for an Ancient Story: Speaking from the Margins of Homer's *Iliad* in Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles* 133

Alireza Farahbakhsh and Peyman Hoseini
Living through Precarity: A Butlerian Study of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* 153

Celina Jeray
Sex, Dr(a)gs and Rock'n'Roll: Diverse Masculinities of Glam Metal, Sleaze Metal and Hair Metal 171

Anglica 30/1 2021
ISSN: 0860-5734
DOI: 10.7311/0860-5734.30.1.07

Robert McParland

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4047-2101
Felician University

Identity, Fidelity, and Cross-Cultural Relationships in Joseph Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*

Abstract: *Almayer's Folly* (1896) by Joseph Conrad challenged the conventions of the fictional romance while confronting the need of native-born Malayans and other Asian individuals to find voice and identity in an imperial context. Along with the narrative voice in this text are the many other voices of those who have been colonized. Fidelity to one's identity and openness to relationships across cultures lies at the crux of this study. Conrad's critics of the 1950s and 1960s dismissed his first novel as a romance with a weak subplot. However, that subplot, about Almayer's daughter Nina and her love affair, sets forth moral claims of loyalty and fidelity that must be taken into account. For her relationship with a Malay prince expresses a love that is binding and enduring, one that crosses boundaries and divisions and is an apt model for our culturally convergent world. Conrad creates a dialectic of intercultural subjectivities to make a point about identity, loyalty, and self-fashioning. Whereas Almayer is portrayed as foolish and inflexible, his daughter, Nina, faces significant issues of identity, as she has to choose between the traditional, indigenous heritage of her mother and her father's modern European aspirations. With *Almayer's Folly*, Joseph Conrad showed himself to be an international novelist who could develop a story with an inter-racial and intercultural cast of characters.

Keywords: Joseph Conrad, Almayer, Malay, Europe, identity, narrative, fidelity, ethics, cross-cultural, colonial

1. Introduction

Almayer's Folly (1896) by Joseph Conrad challenged the conventions of fictional romance while confronting the need of native-born Malayans and other Asian individuals to find voice and identity in an imperial context. Along with the narrative voice come the many other voices of those who have been colonized. In Conrad's novel, among these subaltern voices there is Nina Almayer, wrestling with cultural identity. As

a child of a colonizer and a native Malayan, her hybridized identity "calls into question the naturalness and legitimacy of hegemonic identities," as postcolonial critic Homi K. Bhabha suggests (151). Inclined toward romance, she is engaged in what Stuart Hall refers to as "the production of identity" in "an act of imaginative rediscovery" of her mother's indigenous roots while she wrestles against the signifying practices of the colonizer that might reduce her individuality (423). Following *Almayer's Folly*, Conrad extended the issues of identity, fidelity, and cross-cultural relationship across what became a Malay trilogy with *Outcast of the Islands* and *The Rescue*.

Conrad's critics of the 1950s and the 1960s dismissed his first novel as a romance with a weak subplot. For example, Thomas Moser objected to the subplot romance between Nina and Dain Maroola as contrived and lacking "moral and psychological interest" (12). This essay argues that critics like Moser missed a significant point: the subplot concerning Nina Almayer and her Malayan lover Dain Maroola is central to the identity politics of the novel. Rather than being a plot that can "obscure the meaning of the novel," as Moser contended, it parallels and supports the novel's main plot by underscoring the moral significance of fidelity in this cross-cultural relationship. As John H. Hicks has observed, the moral claims of loyalty and fidelity must be taken into account in this story. The growing love of Nina and Dain Maroola is not only sensual and sexual, as some critics have insisted; it is a higher love that is binding and enduring, one that crosses boundaries and divisions and is an apt model for our culturally convergent world. This cross-cultural relationship and the mutual fidelity and sense of identity it exemplifies are key thematic threads in Conrad's novel, as this essay shall demonstrate.

Conrad's narrative focus on Almayer and his daughter Nina – a female of mixed racial background – foregrounds the issue of silencing and marginalizing of the female and native voice by the imperial center. With *Almayer's Folly*, Joseph Conrad showed himself to be an international novelist who could develop a story with an inter-racial and intercultural cast of characters and create a dialectic of intercultural subjectivities to make a point about identity, loyalty, and self-fashioning. Almayer's daughter, Nina, faces significant issues of identity, as she must choose between the traditional, indigenous heritage of her mother and her father's modern European aspirations. In this way, Conrad's novel reflects what was occurring in the British Empire overseas, as well as in the Dutch colonial possessions, and at home in London before the turn of the 20th century. The novel's many voices and inner unease mirror a kind of potential transformation of culture fostered by emigration, commercial interest, and the convergence of Eastern and Western people. At a time when Britain believed in the superiority of its civilization, readers could read in Conrad's fiction of the ingenuity of Malay people and the hapless machinations of Conrad's Dutch characters. The novel challenged British readers with a subtle critique of European imperialism laced with anthropological relativism and challenges to their own imperial identity.

Conrad gives his readers Kasper Almayer: an ambitious fool in quest of a colonial fortune, who loves his daughter, Nina. In *A Personal Record*, Conrad wrote that he envisioned a man with "incredible assumptions and grandiose dreams" (76). Almayer lives with the illusion that the achievement of material prosperity alone will result in human dignity. He is the protégé of Lingard, who has married him to his adoptive Malay daughter: a move which is supposed to signal her acceptance into the world of the Europeans. Lingard believes that this adopted Malay woman and her daughter Nina can attain the benefits of Western civilization. He is mistaken, for both become women with divided allegiances. Money alone cannot wipe away all the cultural differences, condescension, and racial prejudices that surround these women. Almayer deals commercially with Malay natives and Dutch traders, but he is thoroughly unable to deal with his wife, a Malay woman. Outspoken and strong, she has been placed in the untenable position of being "at odds with her Malay people and their traditions," as Hicks observes (22). Through her and the other Malay natives who appear in the story, Western readers of *Almayer's Folly* are presented with an environment that, for them, embraces the exotic reaches of the Pacific. However, by this they are reminded of the pathos of life at home and of how belief or ideology may conflict with practice. For Mrs. Almayer can see that, in contrast with the religious sisters' claims about Christian love, tolerance and love are not practiced toward her (42–43). As Hicks has pointed out, Mrs. Almayer turns against Almayer to assist the Malay trader Lakamba, who is in competition with him (24–25). She is suspended between the white and Malay world and falls into isolation (22).

Nina Almayer is in a similar liminal position, caught between cultures. Nina is held by her father as "the inner meaning of his life" (Conrad 2002, 102). Kasper Almayer rationalizes his greed for gain by assuming that he is pursuing this course for Nina's sake. He believes that she will have a fine future someday by escaping to Europe. However, Nina is attracted to Dain Maroola and their romance stands in marked contrast to her father's romantic illusions. Dreaming of Western commercial conquest and financial success, Kasper Almayer anticipates "millions" from speculation before his deal with Lingard collapses. Meanwhile, Nina's identity lies on the cusp of a new, multi-racial, multi-ethnic world. In her, the alterity of the Malay people within a colonial context is rendered problematic. For Nina can make her own choices in moral autonomy. She will not be subordinated to her father's schemes and visions of success. She says to him, "Can I not live my own life, as you have lived yours?" (190). Nina discovers her sense of purpose and individuality. She realizes that she and Dain Maroola must move on in their lives to "the great blue sea that was like life" (168). However, Kasper Almayer rejects Dain Maroola. For all his claims of love for his daughter, he is hostile to him and is against Nina's happiness because her choices are against his own self-interest. Almayer calls their affair sensual (176–178). While Nina insists "I love you no less than before" (180), much like Shakespeare's Lear, Almayer casts her off. "I

shall never forgive you," he says (181). Nina's choice feels to him like a betrayal of his goals (190). He seeks to erase her footprints; caught in the illusions of his subjectivity, he destroys his bond to her (195).

2. Revising the Fictional Romance

Conrad inverted the conventions of the romance novel. While his early novels involve maritime stories and narratives set in the Malay Archipelago and make use of the romance form, they also contest this form with innovations. Almayer, a rather naive and self-deluded trader in a remote area, dreams of riches. However, his romantic vision is faulty. He expects to become an heir to his mentor Tom Lingard's legacy. He has married Lingard's adopted Malay daughter with this expectation, but Lingard has lost his money and vanished in Europe. The story is problematized as Almayer, searching for gold, involves Dain Maroola, a Balinese ruler, in his quest. When Almayer's daughter Nina then falls in love with Dain Maroola, Nina is forced to search for her identity, even as her mother returns to her native roots. European colonialism is implicitly indicted when the Dutch arrive and arrest Dain Maroola, asserting that he has sought to overthrow their rule of the region. Much to Kasper Almayer's dismay, Maroola escapes and runs away with Nina. This romance underscores the conflict between their love and Almayer's quest for material acquisition.

The decision of Nina and Maroola corresponds with Conrad own strong ethic of duty, honor, and fidelity. They resolve to be true to themselves and realize a sense of purpose. Bertrand Russell wrote of Conrad that "his point of view, one might say, was the antithesis of Rousseau's. Man is born in chains, but he can become free. He becomes free, I believe Conrad would have said, not by letting loose his impulses, not by being casual and uncontrolled, but by subduing wayward impulses to a dominant purpose" (82, 84).

Contrary to the reviews of several of the novel's earliest critics, this was no conventional romance. With this first novel, Conrad immediately established his difference from his contemporaries. In *Almayer's Folly* Conrad works with the romance form but he weaves a series of tragic notes through it. The romantic affair does not have what we would consider a 'happily ever after' conclusion. Conrad's European readers encountered the Malay region portrayed in a way that is less appealing than in other romances of the period. Conrad also appears critical of the Eurocentric worldview. Almayer's daughter, Nina, chooses her native Malayan heritage against the European. She struggles with whether she is European or Malayan. The Westerners, meanwhile, appear prejudiced and demeaning toward her. In contrast with Kasper Almayer's foolishness, the Malayans appear crafty and intelligent. There is also an undertone of critique of the entire European imperialist enterprise. The rise of colonial presence and power is countered with questions

about the integrity of a declining man like Almayer and the prejudices and behavior of the Dutch. Almayer, living in a daydream of the future, has placed his hopes in becoming rich for his daughter. However, she plans to run off with Dain Maroola. In contrast with the typical heroine of Victorian romance fiction, Nina is an assertive young woman who chooses her own path. Her strength of character shows itself in her break with her father and with European values and her embrace of her Malayan heritage. With *Almayer's Folly*, Conrad writes a novel that is indeed different from conventional romance fiction.

With *Almayer's Folly*, Conrad's British readers were confronted with more than a conventional boy's adventure tale, as in Stevenson's *Treasure Island* or Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. Beneath Conrad's presentation of Almayer's foolish quest lies a moral interrogation of imperialist commerciality and colonial identity. Conrad's narrator critiques the adventurism and motives of European colonizers. From the first page of the novel, Almayer's thoughts are "often busy with gold" (3). He is an inflexible man who clings to a notion of identity that is based upon material gain. He lacks fidelity to deeper moral principles and fails to support cross-cultural relationships despite being married to a Malaysian woman and having a daughter who is both of Malay and European ancestry. His materialistic romance gravitates away from fidelity to his daughter and his wife, and he subsumes his identity beneath crass goals. Indeed, he loses the ground of his own identity to wistful dreams and the exploitation of the Western colonizers.

In contrast to her father, Nina performs her identity between the codes and traditions of East and West, as Robert Hampson has indicated. Following the thought of Homi K. Bhahba, we will see in the character of Nina a third space, a liminal and hybrid space of indigenous and European, besides the East/West binary (38). Her identity is unstable rather than fixed; she is in process of constructing her selfhood. In this character we may see how Conrad's moral vision is carried in the novel's intersecting relationships across racial and cultural lines. For love arises in this struggle to declare her integrity and her connection with her Malay lover amid the play of history and culture and power. This becomes an ethical relation of loyalty by which she actualizes her identity as an individual.

3. Post-colonial Readings

While Joseph Conrad was certainly a man of his time, carrying the attendant prejudices of his period, he was not the "thoroughgoing racist" that Chinua Achebe, writing in a different, post-colonial context, imagined him to be. Nor is his Nina a weak character who simply gives in to the attractions of Dain Maroola. She says that he is "the new principle of her life" (103), "the reason and aim of life" (152) and declares: "And I mean to love. I mean to follow him" (180). However, to follow him does not mean to subject herself entirely to him but, rather, to adopt Malay

traditions and assert her identity. It is not self-abnegation but a reclamation of her life to say, “Now I am Malay” (180).

Contrary to New Critical readings that followed F.R. Leavis in *The Great Tradition*, a post-structural and post-colonial reading of *Almayer's Folly* will see Nina's search for identity and meaning as pivotal for an understanding of the novel. Nina's quest cannot be dismissed as merely “high flown sentiments,” as Thomas Moser declared in his reading of the novel (53–54). Conrad was not merely creating, as Moser held, a romantic love sub-plot for melodrama because “most novels he knew […] included a romantic love story” (50–52). Rather, Nina's affair with Dain Maroola is a crucible in which she develops her sense of identity and a commitment of love and fidelity that transcends sensuality, as John H. Hicks has recognized. As Harry Sewhall has pointed out, the relationships across racial and cultural divides were not even mentioned by F.R. Leavis, who called *Almayer's Folly* mere “adjectival studies in the Malayan exotic” (218).[1] The rational Western mind is positioned in a binary, or dualism, against this stereotype of Eastern passionate nature. Mrs. Almayer, in *Almayer's Folly*, Kasper Almayer's wife and Nina's mother, stands at this divide. She is, as Christopher GoGwilt has pointed out, a *nyai* figure in whom questions about domestic respectability arise (423–424). As language tries to define her position within her mixed marriage with Almayer, she is his wife, but with the *nyai* connotations of housekeeper, concubine, or mistress.

A pronounced imperial subtext pervaded late Victorian England. The British reader's nationalist pride was shaped by the exhibition of artifacts from imperial territories, popular entertainments, images in galleries, and books. These exhibitions and spectacles, music hall shows and gallery imports, presumed to support this nationalist and imperial identity. In contrast, Kasper Almayer's daughter, Nina, who is not Malay or Dutch, cannot locate herself in either culture. Her voice reveals her as a character that is caught in between cultural worlds, “shivering and helpless as if on the edge of some deep and unknown abyss” (XI, 42). She lives amid two contradictory social systems and is unable to live in either. Unlike Rudyard Kipling's character Kim, who makes intelligent use of his multi-cultural background, Nina Almayer is caught in the tension of her liminal position: she is Dutch and Malay, West and East, a woman caught in between two worlds.

Joseph Conrad's own situation as a Polish expatriate was clearly similar to this. His identity as a writer living in England was as fluid as the ocean he had come from as a sailor. Conrad began writing *Almayer's Folly* in London in May 1889, after returning from service in the South Pacific. He was a quiet, reflective East European wondering at the energy of imperial London. In mid-1891, he rented rooms at 17 Gillingham Street near Victoria Station. London was a place of long walks and exploration for Conrad. In many of his early works, a returning sailor sees the city: a metropolis that clearly intends to express its preeminence and world role in its architecture. Yet, Conrad gives us a view of another London from the deck of the Nellie at the start of his novel *Heart of Darkness*. We see London in the grimy

jumble of its outskirts depicted in *The Nigger of the Narcissus* as the *Narcissus* travels up the Thames. This is not the stable city of imposing public monuments, a great financial district, and well-defined streets and avenues. In *Almayer's Folly*, Conrad, sitting in his rooms in London, gives his readers a region far away. Imaginatively recreating Malaysia, he recalls the far reaches of the Empire.

4. Crafting *Almayer's Folly*

Conrad completed *Almayer's Folly* on April 24, 1894. To Marguerite Paradowska he wrote on April 24 at 11 a.m.:

> My dear Aunt, I regret to inform you of the death of Mr. Kaspar Almayer, which occurred this morning at 3 o'clock. It is finished. A scratching of the pen writing the final word, and suddenly this entire company of people who have spoken into my ear, gesticulated before my eyes, lived with me for so many years, becomes a band of phantoms who retreat, fade and dissolve – and are made pallid and indistinct by the sunlight of this brilliant and somber day. (1940, 153)

Clearly, the novel was never intended to provide a realistic portrayal of Borneo. "Well, I never did set up as an authority on Malaysia" (130), Conrad wrote to William Blackwood, December 13, 1898. Despite this denial of realism, the story may have been, in part, drawn from types. In *A Personal Record* (September 1919), Conrad recalls meeting with "Almayer" and producing "an exact rendering of authentic memories" (25). It has been said that the character of Kaspar Almayer was drawn from William Charles Olmeijer of Berouw. Conrad drew upon his experience of the Vidar. Almayer is of Dutch background, a man who came to Borneo to be the agent of Tom Lingard. Ford Maddox Ford called Lingard Conrad's "most typical hero," possessing "an adventurer's romantic glamour" (*Personal Remembrances*, 167). Lingard appears in three Conrad stories: *Almayer's Folly* (1895), *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896), and *The Rescue* (1920), one of his last published works. Almayer is described by Ian Watt as "a Borneo Bovary" (51) who devotes his life to an obsessive fantasy. Watt also examines Conrad's narrative method and what it may owe to Flaubert (55–67). Almayer "illuminates the literary traditions Conrad drew upon and how he addressed technical problems of fiction" (Watt 55).

Indeed, the novel typifies Conrad's emerging craft as a novelist. However, it begins to unleash a critique of imperialism that Conrad would continue in *Heart of Darkness* and other stories. *Almayer's Folly* was well-received and there were laudatory reviews in *The Daily Mail* as well as in *The Saturday Review*. However, it was primarily viewed as a romance. H.G. Wells called it "a very powerful story indeed." *The Sun* named it "Book of the Week," calling it "a splendid region of romance" (9 June, 1895). H.L. Mencken commented, "If it is not a work of absolute genius, then

no work of absolute genius exists on this earth" (qtd. in Allen 14). The rapacity of the Dutch colonists, the struggles of Nina for identity, as an Asian-born woman, and the dilemmas of the novel's Malay characters were downplayed in these reviews.

Likewise, de-emphasized were the existential situation and linguistic dilemmas of Almayer and his daughter Nina. Almayer must choose whether to speak in Malay or in English. As the Russian Formalist critic Mikhail Bakhtin says, "[c]onsciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of having to choose a language" (295). The environment compels a person to orient himself or herself amid many languages. Almayer is the fool, the dreamer seeking fool's gold in the imperial context of Malaysia. Generally surrounded by the sounds of Malay, he is excited to hear the European speech of the Dutch traders. He chooses to speak in a European language.

Nina, who is caught between two societies, the Malay and the Dutch, belongs to neither. Her speeches reveal her personal and linguistic struggle. She is representative of anyone who is mediating two different cultures, such as a person raised in a bi-lingual family. Nina searches to belong and to give voice to her self-understanding. Often, Conrad's characters like Nina stand out from society, much like the heroes of Greek tragedy. They act in isolated worlds, dealing with their inner problems. Conrad gives us tragic heroes who to work out their relationship with society. Unlike the Greek heroes, they are not high-born and there is little glory that they move toward. They have moral, or what we might call inner, issues to contend with. These inner problems are mirrored in the external landscape, or in events. Nina's romance with Dain Maroola and her relationship with her mother persuade her to embrace her Malay culture. Yet, her fundamental struggle to define her identity is an existential one. Her choices are ones that she must make unaided. Even as her father, Almayer, falls further into his Don Quixote-like daydreams, Nina must find the resolve to be self-creating and to face the world on her own.

Mikhail Bakhtin suggests that the figure of the fool is introduced into fiction for the purpose of "making strange" the conventional world. Bakhtin writes:

> By representing stupidity, the novel teaches prose intelligence, prose wisdom. Regarding fools or regarding the world through the eyes of a fool, the novelist's eye is taught a sport of prose vision, the vision of a world confused by conventions of pathos and by falsity. (404)

Conrad sought to cut a path through such pathos and falsity toward truthfulness. He wished to render life clearly. In 1895, in his "Author's Note," Conrad writes:

> The picture of life, there as here, is drawn with the same elaboration of detail, coloured with the same tints. Only in the cruel serenity of the sky, under the merciless brilliance of the sun, the dazzled eye misses the delicate detail, sees only the strong outlines, while the colours, in the steady light, seem crude and without shadow. Nevertheless, it is the same picture.

> And there is a bond between us and humanity so far away. I am speaking of men and women – not of the charming graceful phantoms that move about in our mud and smoke and are softly luminous with the radiance of all our virtues; that are possessed of all refinements, of all sensibilities, of all wisdom – but, being only phantoms, possess no heart. (21)

Conrad's Malay people are human and imperfect. As John McClure has pointed out, "Conrad challenges the European representation of Malays as uniformly savage and inferior" but does not create an idyllic image of them (158). The Malay people do have agency and they scheme against the colonials. We see this again in *An Outcast of the Islands*: a story with its action set before *Almayer's Folly*. Like its predecessor, *Almayer's Folly* inverts the romance tradition. To this story would later be added a third novel, *The Rescue*, creating a Malayan trilogy. *An Outcast of the Islands* centers upon the experiences of Peter Willems, who is a protégé of Tom Lingard. Upon becoming a clerk for Hudig and Company, Willems embezzles money to pay off his gambling debts. As he tries to pay back this money, his criminal embezzlement is discovered. Trust and fidelity now are broken within this group of men. Meanwhile, Lingard has developed a trading monopoly. Offering Willems a second chance, he leads him along the secret route to Sambir, the more remote area where Almayer lives. The novel deals with the perplexities of Willems' affair with Assa, the daughter of a Brunei leader and his betrayal of Lingard's secret path to Sambir to an Arab trader, thus destroying Lingard's monopoly. Almayer sends for Willems' wife and son from the trading post where they had been abandoned. Willem is clearly an anti-hero, one guilty of the crime of betrayal. There is clearly no fidelity, loyalty, or moral code in his character. Conrad provides a moral tale that probes this lack of moral fiber in this character. In writing about this novel, one may again consider how the community and its values establish a moral standard that its members must abide by for the sake of solidarity and harmony. Willems is an outcast because he does not act responsibly. He neglects his wife, cheats his employer, and he blames others for his failings. Almayer is naïve and distracted by dreams of wealth and progress; Willems is corrupt.

Willems' self-centeredness is at issue. He lives by the illusion of his presumed superiority to the islanders: a false colonial delusion of grandeur. His clear lack of moral rectitude indicates that his sense of privilege is not merited. His condescension toward the islanders and his disregard of them is exposed as a prejudice linked with his lack of moral quality. This suggests a distorted identity, one that lacks the fidelity that secures one's moral center. In the figure of Willems, one may see Conrad pointing to the moral failures of the West in its colonial endeavors. One may further consider how this novel interrogates Western civilization from the standpoint of Eastern, or non-Western values.

5. Conclusion

Cross-cultural relationship and community may today be viewed as a theme that Conrad's *Almayer's Folly* is reaching toward while questioning it. Conrad was ever concerned with an ethical code that centered upon loyalty and fidelity. Likewise, he was often concerned with how the isolated individual could relate within a community, whether of sailors, or indigenous people. Conrad was also a master of the uses of point of view and irony. In the early years of the twentieth century there were, of course, critics, who could see how Conrad was recasting the romance novel as a critical tool forged with irony. Novelist-critics like Henry James, Virginia Woolf, and E.M. Forster all wrote about Conrad's work during his lifetime. Richard Curle in *Joseph Conrad: A Study* (1914), Hugh Walpole in *Joseph Conrad* (1916), and Wilson Follett in *Joseph Conrad: A Short Study* all produced useful studies. Curle called Conrad a realistic romanticist and inquired into his uses of irony. Follett was intrigued by Conrad's sense of the individual's struggle in an impersonal universe and one's need for human community. He begins to point to themes, such as the notion that this is an indifferent universe, that appear consistently throughout Conrad's novels.

After Conrad's death, several commentaries on his work appeared. Notable was Ford Maddox Ford's *A Personal Remembrance* (1924). Ford, a collaborator, friend, and sometime financial supporter of Conrad, offers thoughts on Conrad's writing methods and how some of Conrad's works emerged. Ford's recollections ought to be supplemented with other documented evidence, however. Some critics say that his book carries some biographical and historical inaccuracies and some embellishments. Likewise, Jessie Conrad's *Joseph Conrad as I Knew Him* (1926) has to be examined carefully, with a degree of curious skepticism. It appears that her information is colored by the attitude of a particular school of Conrad scholarship concerned with his reputation. Edward Garnett, the publisher's reader, was quick to dispute some of the material in this account. Facts have been established that run counter to some of the assertions in this book. G. Jean-Aubry's *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters* (1927) soon appeared, based upon biographical material and a collection of letters. Later critics, like Zdzislaw Nadjer, have identified Conrad's resistance to imperialism as deriving from his family's experience with Czarist Russia.

Throughout much of Conrad's writing there is a concern with identity amid the flux of experience. As Conrad experiments with point of view, the identity of any given character is seen from various points of view. Within the cross-cultural relationships we see in his works, fidelity to a code remains a moral center. This affirmation of fidelity to a moral code links Conrad's fiction with a long Western tradition, even as he raises questions about choice and chance and life in the modern world.

Almayer's Folly, Conrad's first novel, is rich with the lyricism that would appear in subsequent works. This lyricism anchors his work in a faithful respect

for Western literary traditions. Ian Watt has pointed out that some of Conrad's early "lyrical flights" are like those of a Greek chorus in their formal qualities. This is a stylistic mode which appears in *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. Perhaps with respect to Nina in *Almayer's Folly* this mode may suggest the moral voice of the Greek chorus that comments on the predicaments of Antigone or the Trojan Women. Nina, like Antigone, must remain true to her roots, her ancestry, and her sense of the higher call of love and dignity. John Palmer suggests that *Almayer's Folly's* elaborations sound more like fin de siècle lyrics disembodied from any structure whatever (8). Yet, *Almayer's Folly* sets forth strong beginnings of the critique of the human community which would follow in Conrad's ship symbols: the abandonment of refugees on the sinking *Patna* in *Lord Jim*, the ship sailing in cloudy night ambiguity in "The Secret Sharer," or the ship stuck in the river-mud of the Congo that symbolizes the futile and stalled colonial enterprise in *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad gives us his character Marlow in "Youth" and *Heart of Darkness* to address this community and its disintegration. Marlow seeks to maintain his identity and his sense of fidelity to the European community's colonial enterprise. He wishes to be faithful to a cause and a mission that he has embarked upon and he has to balance his code with his encounter with a new culture. There is skepticism in Marlow's voice, as he is on a voyage into the dark places of ambiguity. He offers a moral framework, one that is indeed metaphysical, that seeks the human soul and moral center of humanity. He looks beyond the material, commercial enterprise that so enamored Kasper Almayer. Conrad works toward an ironic modern mode, one quite different from the romance novel, a narrative enriched by modern symbolic and rhetorical methods.

Notes

1 Frederick Karl claimed that Willem, in Conrad's subsequent tale An *Outcast of the Islands*, had a passion for a "native seductress" and was thereby "cut off from civilization and "civilized feeling" (101). As Sewhall observed, Karl never defines what he means by "civilized feeling." Ian Watt sees Conrad's male character in *An Outcast of the Islands* as a victim of a seductive women: "Willems succumbs to a beautiful Malay girl" (73).

References

Achebe, Chinua. 1988. "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness," *Heart of Darkness*. Ed. Robert Kilbrough. New York: W.W. Norton. 251–262.

Allen, Jerry. 1965. *Sea Years of Joseph Conrad*. New York, Doubleday.

Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1982. *The Dialogical Imagination*. Ed. and trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson. Austin: University of Texas Press.
Conrad, Joseph. "Author's Note." 2002 [1896]. *Almayer's Folly: A Story of an Eastern River.* London: Folio. 21.
Conrad, Joseph. 2002. [1896]. *Almayer's Folly: A Story of an Eastern River*. London: Folio.
Conrad, Joseph. *An Outcast of the Islands*. 2003 [1896]. London: Folio.
Conrad, Joseph. 2000 [1897]. *Nigger of the Narcissus*. London: Folio,
Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. 1997 [1902]. London: Folio.
Conrad, Joseph. 2008 [1912]. *A Personal Record*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Conrad, Joseph. 2003 [1919]. *The Rescue: A Romance of the Shallows*. London: Folio.
Conrad, Jessie. 1926. *Joseph Conrad as I Knew Him*. London: Heinemann.
Conrad, Joseph. 1940. *Letters to Marguerite Paradowska*. Ed. and trans. John A. Gee and Paul J. Sturm. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Curle, Richard. 1914. *Joseph Conrad: A Study*. Garden City: Doubleday.
Jean-Aubry, G. 1927. *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters*. Garden City: Doubleday.
Follett, Wilson. 1915. *Joseph Conrad: A Short Study*. Garden City: Doubleday.
Ford, Ford Maddox. 1924. *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance*. New York: Ecco Press.
GoGwilt, Christopher. 2007. "The Vanishing Genre of Nyai Narrative: Reading Genealogies of English Modernism." *Comparative Literature Studies* (1 January): 423–424.
Hall, Stuart. 1966. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Thousand Oaks, CA., and London: Sage Publications.
Hampson, Robert. 1992. *Joseph Conrad: Betrayal and Identity*. London: St. Martin's Press.
Hampson, Robert. 1999. "Verdi in Berau." *Conrad's Century: The Past and Future Splendor; Conrad: Eastern and Western Perspectives.* Ed. Laura Davis. New York: Columbia University Press.
Hicks, John H. 1964. "Conrad's Almayer's Folly: Structure, Theme and Critics." *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 19.1: 17–31.
Karl, Frederick. 1979. *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives*. London: Faber and Faber.
Leavis, F.R. 1948. *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad*. London: Chatto and Windus.
McClure, John. 1985. "Problematic Presence: The Colonial Other in Kipling and Conrad." *The Black Presence in English Literature*. Ed. David Dabydeen. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Moser, Thomas. 1957. *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Najder, Zdzislaw. 1983. *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle*. Trans. Helena Carroll-Najder. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Palmer, John A. 1968. *Joseph Conrad's Fiction: A Study in Literary Growth*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Russell, Bertrand. 1956. *Portraits from Memory and Other Essays*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Sewlall, Harry. 2006. "Postcolonial/Postmodern Spatiality in Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands." *Conradiana: A Journal of Conrad Studies* (1 March).

Walpole, Hugh. 1916. *Joseph Conrad*. New York: Henry Holt.

Watt, Ian. 1979. *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

ROBERT MCPARLAND is the author of *How to Write About Joseph Conrad* (Infobase/Facts on File, 2012); "The Conrad-Ford Collaboration: A Bakhtinian Reading," in *Origins of English Modernism*, ed. Gregory Tague (Academia Press, 2006); "Chance and Betrayal in Conrad's Under Western Eyes," in *Critical Views of Joseph Conrad*, ed. Agata Szczeszak Brewer, Columbia: South Carolina University Press, 2015. His books include *Charles Dickens's American Audience* (2010), *Beyond Gatsby: How Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Other Writers of the 1920s Shaped American Culture* (2015), and *The People We Meet in Stories: Literary Characters That Defined the 1950s* (2020).