

# THE CONRADIAN

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This issue of *The Conradian* is dedicated

*In memoriam*

**Michael Lucas**  
(1935 – 2007)

**Sylvère Monod**  
(1921 – 2006)

**Martin Ray**  
(1955 – 2007)

*Fratres, avete atque valete*



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## **“The Fitness of Things”: Conrad’s English Irony in “Typhoon” and *The Secret Agent***

**Hugh Epstein**  
*London*

“I was not fully aware how thoroughly *English* the Typhoon is. I am immensely proud of this, of course. There are passages that simply cannot be rendered into French – they depend so much for their meaning upon the very genius of the language in which they are written.”<sup>1</sup>

IT MAY SEEM perverse to unite a text more dedicated to a representation of the sea and sea weather in all its materiality than any other in the Conrad canon (except, arguably, *The Nigger of the “Narcissus”*) with that novel of his which so single-mindedly buries its action amidst the “inhospitable accumulation of bricks, slates, and stones” (48) of a “monstrous town” (“Author’s Note” to *The Secret Agent*, 6). The purpose of doing so is to claim for “Typhoon” a seminal importance in Conrad’s ironic writing, and its composition as a major step in his development as an English novelist. A secondary purpose will be to ponder whether such irony liberates the reader to look upon the world more freshly and fully for having enjoyed its playfulness, or whether it merely circumscribes us in a clever game of reading ironically, leaving us a privileged audience rather comfortably in possession of the key that permits mockery but unlocks no new sustaining vision.<sup>2</sup>

From the moment when we read of MacWhirr’s physiognomy that “in the order of material appearances ... it was simply ordinary, irresponsible, and unruffled” (3), it is apparent to the reader that Conrad’s concern in “Typhoon” is with a recognizably British sensibility of reserve, one that, within a few lines, will become subject to comic scenes that display MacWhirr as “Having just enough imagination to carry him through each successive day, and no more” (4). “Typhoon” is not the first time that Conrad has exercised an ironic style upon displays of

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<sup>1</sup> Conrad to J. B. Pinker, 10 May 1917, upon receipt of André Gide’s translation of “Typhoon” (CL6 88-89).

<sup>2</sup> The present essay is offered as a footnote to Allan H. Simmons’s current work on Conrad and Englishness and England, particularly, Simmons 2004.

irresponsive stupidity. In “An Outpost of Progress,” he begins an examination of institutionalized complacency that will culminate in *The Secret Agent* by displaying for our amused scorn the folly of Kayerts and Carrier, of whom the narrator declares “No two beings could have been more unfitted for such a struggle” (87). The irony of “An Outpost” lies in the exploitation of the characters’ inability to understand what they see and what they are involved in, by a narrator who exposes to the reader the nature of the colonial enterprise with lacerating directness.

“Typhoon”’s greater comic subtlety arises from Conrad’s negotiation of specifically British sensibilities that creates for the first time an irony of indirectness, a playful setting at odds tones and registers familiar to the English ear, to produce the comedies of incomprehension that flourish in a society in which people rarely say (or even know) what they feel. Carolyn Brown, in a most perceptive essay on the story’s comedy, claims: “Indeed, the whole of ‘Typhoon’ is a comic agon between stolid, unimaginative MacWhirr and the whirring imagination of his creator” (1992: 3). To paraphrase Brown rather liberally, just as “the hurricane ... had found this taciturn man in its path, and, doing its utmost, had managed to wring out a few words” (90), so Conrad’s creative vitality finds MacWhirr, finds the MacWhirr in himself (“the product of twenty years of my life. My own life” says the “Author’s Note”, vi), in its vision, and delights in dramatizing that encounter of conflicting sensibilities. Brown’s persuasive characterization of the “creative combat” (as she terms it) in “Typhoon,” however, does not *quite* account for the vital mobility in Conrad’s ironic writing here, which makes the writing of “Typhoon” the decisive experience in naturalizing his English prose. Conrad’s continual exploration of how man “fits” or does not in an indifferent universe is nuanced by an encounter with a peculiarly British temperamental incuriosity and complacency about “the fitness of things,” demanding an ironic style to convey the tragicomedy of such a condition. The ironic style he lights upon for “Typhoon” will become the medium for his definitive picture of this condition in *The Secret Agent*.

## I

Conrad said of “Typhoon” to J. B. Pinker, “This is my first attempt at treating a subject jocularly,” which recalls his jaunty exclamation against the “ghastly, jocular futility of life” expressed in a slightly earlier letter to Cunninghame Graham (CL2 304, 5), a condition he thought that Graham had caught so well in his story “Snækoll’s Saga.” Surely there is no better



hint as to the general feeling that animates *The Secret Agent* than this phrase thrown off to the recipient of his most mordant letters. It is, perhaps, indicative that Graham is the dedicatee of the *Typhoon* volume, and one might speculate, as its predicated reader, how much the Conrad-Graham relationship had to do with the creation of this jocular ironic style.

At its inception, however, this style is less disdainful in tone, less concerned that its play with incongruities will, as Conrad famously puts it in his "Author's Note" to *The Secret Agent*, "enable me to say all I felt I would have to say in scorn as well as in pity" (7), than he is in the later, more substantial and deliberate work. Rather, in "Typhoon," the effort goes into catching the reticences and assertions that mark the odd from the expected in what is held to be an orderly progress of existence:

It was, in truth, as impossible for him to take a flight of fancy as it would be for a watchmaker to put together a chronometer with nothing except a two-pound hammer and a whip-saw in the way of tools. Yet the uninteresting lives of men so entirely given to the actuality of the bare existence have their mysterious side. It was impossible in Captain MacWhirr's case, for instance, to understand what under heaven could have induced that perfectly satisfactory son of a petty grocer in Belfast to run away to sea. And yet he had done that very thing at the age of fifteen. It was enough, when you thought it over, to give you the idea of an immense, potent, and invisible hand thrust into the ant-heap of the earth, laying hold of shoulders, knocking heads together, and setting the unconscious faces of the multitude towards inconceivable goals and in undreamt-of directions.

His father never really forgave him for this undutiful stupidity. (4)

The evident delight in exercising small linguistic flourishes ("in truth," "so entirely given to," the syntactic parallelism of "It was impossible," "It was enough") and flights of fancy (such as that with which the paragraph ends) so entirely beyond the bounds of MacWhirr's own habits and comprehension is tempered by less facetious ironies that comprehend the social expectations, and the common language of those expectations, of an English social milieu that Conrad is taking full possession of for the first time.

*The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* is packed with a range of British voices, but the subtle irony of the above passage arises from its method of in-

fusing both a representation and a critique of the national temperament in the narration itself. The translation of “What in heaven’s name could have made that perfectly happy lad run away to sea?” into “what under heaven could have induced that perfectly satisfactory son of a petty grocer in Belfast ...” is masterly in its use of a species of free indirect speech simultaneously to render the habits of mind of the MacWhirr household, to convey amusement but not dismissive contempt at a *petit-bourgeois* vision of things, and to hint at wider conceptions beyond the immediate intentions of the original speakers in the slight infraction of idiom suggested by “under heaven.” This sort of hint is amplified, but with easy-going familiarity (“It was enough, when you thought it over ...”) in the extended image of the “immense, potent, and invisible hand,” prophetic of “the mischievous hand” that will disarrange MacWhirr’s cabin, which has the power to turn people towards the “inconceivable” and the “undreamt-of.” The world that can see such unrecognized impulses simply as “undutiful stupidity” has been comprehended but not disregarded within a narrative voice that can make the general proposal “Yet the uninteresting lives of men so entirely given to the actuality of the bare existence have their mysterious side” in such steadily grave tones that the reader is not absolutely sure whether this is a serious authorial judgement after all or a piece of mischievous licence.

The narration’s propensity to reach for these sorts of effects is everywhere. To take another at random, where MacWhirr “stood confronted by the fall of a barometer he had no reason to distrust. The fall – taking into account the excellence of the instrument, the time of the year, and the ship’s position on the terrestrial globe – was of a nature ominously prophetic; but the red face of the man betrayed no sort of inward disturbance ... ‘That’s a fall and no mistake,’ he thought. ‘There must be some uncommonly dirty weather knocking about’” (6). MacWhirr’s language, the language of a hardened but sober-minded sailor, only causes the reader to laugh because of its juxtaposition with the narrative procedures of the preceding sentences. Not only the slightly absurd elaboration of the diction in “excellence of the instrument” and “on the terrestrial globe” but also the syntactical arrangements in the verb phrases – “stood confronted by” and “he had no reason to distrust” – are both incongruous in their stilted and gentlemanly formality with the red face, the common phrasing, and with the chaotic weather that is about to burst upon the ship. Yet what this phrasing suggests – and not simply at MacWhirr’s expense – is the well-upholstered complacency that accompanies British good-workmanship (and not so good, as the

“rubbishy locks” testify), world-proof even as it continues its imperial and mercantile conquest of the earth.

Conrad’s ear has the measure of the solid, just slightly unctuous but not bombastic, confidence of his adopted homeland, which effortlessly informs his irony in a comic mode, the full scope of which his readers were not always ready to hear. Ironic effects, as J. H. Stape has said, “depend upon an especially intimate negotiation between author, audience, and culture” (2000: 177). This is a world in which the fitness of things finds its self-evident testimony in the British Merchant Service, in the shipyards of Dumbarton, in a son’s young woman, and in her unexceptionable life of leisure in a “five-and-forty pounds a year” house (14). In other words, Conrad’s irony is not a matter of holding up targets for satirical demolition. It is an irony that derives from an appreciation of the depth of sustaining human experience a culture can contain – and which it can also suppress and refuse.

A concern to delineate the sort of “fit” the English make, and who the English are (an irony of the period in itself as “English” – as in this essay – serves to comprehend Scots, Northern Irish, and Welsh) was a recurring theme for Conrad’s fellow men of letters. Ford Madox Hueffer followed *The Soul of London: a Survey of a Modern City* (1905) with *The Spirit of the People: an Analysis of the English Mind* (1907). While the former offered Conrad brilliant impressionistic prompts from which to fashion his depiction of London in *The Secret Agent*, the latter, sadly, serves rather to exhibit how penetrating is Conrad’s novelistic irony in comparison to the claims of the polemical essayist when it comes to depicting the characteristics of Englishness. Hueffer writes:

For it must be remembered that what humanity has most to thank the English race for is not the foundation of a vast empire; the establishment of a tradition of seamanship; the leading the way into the realms of mechanical advance. It is not even for its poets that England must be thanked; it is certainly not for its love of the fine arts or its philosophies. It is for its evolution of a rule of thumb system by which men may live together in large masses. It has shown to all the world how great and teeming populations may inhabit a small island with a minimum of discomfort, a minimum of friction, preserving a decent measure of individual independence of thought and character, and enjoying a comparatively level standard of material comfort and sanitary precaution. (1907: 26)

As far as I can tell, this picture of the condition of England is offered unironically, as if Hueffer has failed to read in *The Secret Agent* Conrad's disintegrating exposure of exactly this modestly self-congratulatory account of the state of the nation's millions of lives buried in darkness. Conrad can appreciate the mirror that England would hold up to itself and, while he finds some of his most cherished values there, he looks into it rather more searchingly than Hueffer, through the device of artfully detached narrators in "Typhoon" and *The Secret Agent*.

A further illustration of the coincidence and divergence of Hueffer's and Conrad's views about England and the English shows how Conrad developed his ironic style in response to contemporary representations of what, despite having become naturalized in 1886, he continued to observe with eyes and ears not made dull by habit. Later in the same chapter, tellingly entitled "The People from the Outside," Hueffer writes:

In dealing with his neighbour, in fact, the Englishman is singularly apt to be lacking in that imagination which is insight ... In a sort of mathematical progression this almost ferocious lack of imagination has made, in the English race, for an almost imaginative lack of ferocity. You may set down the formula as this: i. I do not enquire into my neighbour's psychology; ii. I do not know my neighbour's opinions; iii. I give him credit for having much such [*sic*] opinions as my own; iv. I tolerate myself; v. I tolerate him. And so, in these fortunate islands we all live very comfortably together. (1907: 28)

Here, of course, both MacWhirr and Verloc inescapably come into view (and the irony that Conrad chooses an Ulsterman and a Continental to represent these allegedly "English" characteristics offers its own commentary on English self-regard), and we might also wonder whether Hueffer recalled what Conrad had already done with the imperturbable Winnie's "ferocity." To have done so, however, would have spoilt the symmetry of his mathematics and revealed to him how much more disturbing is Conrad's exploration of temperamental incuriosity than his own celebration of the English tolerance from which Conrad undoubtedly benefited.

This idea of English inexpressiveness is, however, directly repudiated by G. K. Chesterton, who, although he was anti-Empire in a manner that may today seem more progressive than Conrad's generally pro-Empire position, has fuelled the Little England movement in a fashion that is baleful for tolerance of the outsider, quite opposite to the effect of

Conrad's novels. In "Smart Novelists and the Smart Set," collected in his *Heretics* (1905), Chesterton proclaims: "The idea that there is something English in the repression of one's feelings is one of those ideas which no Englishman ever heard of until England began to be governed exclusively by Scotchmen [*sic*], Americans, and Jews" (209). Later he writes: "This ideal of self-repression, then, is, whatever else it is, not English ... it does not come, I think, from any racial or national source. It is ... in some sense aristocratic; it comes not from a people, but from a class" (213). There is perhaps some truth worth attending to in the last two remarks despite their belligerent xenophobia. Conrad and Chesterton shared not only a veneration of Nelson but also a profound understanding of Dickens. It is with this more attractive aspect of his thought that Chesterton ends his chapter: "It means that the living and invigorating ideal of England must be looked for in the masses; it must be looked for where Dickens found it" (214). And then immediately we see how different was what each drew from Dickens: for Chesterton, an affirmation of English vigour in ordinary people who could dispense with the gentry; for Conrad, a comically ironic vision of English life and institutions, conducted in high rhetoric and low mimetic, which tuned the outsider's ear to a wonderful meeting of literary and non-literary English but did not co-opt him for any programme for defence of the realm.

In *The Words of Selves* (2000), Denise Riley sub-titles one section with an assertion that goes to the heart of the ethical problem that Conrad's fictions pose for the reader: "Irony is not antithetical to solidarity." She says, "It is not my detachment from my attributed condition that leads to my irony, but on the contrary my deep involvement in it." Whether, in 1900, we should take Conrad's "attributed condition" to be "some bloody amazing foreigner," the writer "Conrad," or an English gentleman, it is his involvement in this threefold complexity that authors his style of fiction writing at this point in his career. Denise Riley quotes Edmond Jabès: "Don't adopt the erroneous idea that the foreigner, just because he insists on his difference, is incapable of solidarity." And she adds, "this differing solidarity may well present itself in the very mode of irony" (172, 173).

Part of the brilliance of "Typhoon's" irony is to offer the reader a false alliance by apparently making of Jukes the down to earth yet imaginatively awakened reader of the ironies of over-elaboration that rather weightily grace the narration as soon as MacWhirr is in the picture. Conrad offers the relief of awareness and articulation (and perhaps the strategy is not unlike Jane Austen's use of the Crawfords in *Mansfield*

*Park*) by giving him an unbuttoned style, apt at dissecting stuffiness, a deconstructive style such as we might award ourselves: “As to our old man, you could not find a quieter skipper. Sometimes you would think he hadn’t sense enough to see anything wrong. And yet it isn’t that. Can’t be. He has been in command for a good few years now” (17). Jukes’s idiomatic use of language with regard to the flag must also be the reader’s (though certainly not his conclusions!), and he is involved in much of the language for our reading of the onset of the storm, as much of Chapter 2 and nearly all of Chapter 3 is focalized (not unsympathetically) through Jukes’s experiences of trying to communicate to his captain the seriousness of the “dirty weather” and his feelings of apprehension.

Yet, just as his receptiveness to impressions will be exposed by the storm as a weakening in the necessary resistance to fit him for survival, so, in practice, the narration from the outset surrounds Jukes with ironies perhaps more subtle than those that cause us to laugh at MacWhirr, and again they are ironies derived from Conrad’s quite remarkable sense of register in English. Jukes shows Bun-Hin’s clerk the coolies’ ’tween-decks quarters. After cruelly mangling the pidgin English, he aids his explanation of the freedoms allowed the coolies with gestures:

With his mouth and hands he made exuberant motions of eating rice and washing clothes; and the Chinaman, who concealed his distrust of this pantomime under a collected demeanour tinged by a gentle and refined melancholy, glanced out of his almond eyes from Jukes to the hatch and back again. “Velly good,” he murmured, in a disconsolate undertone, and hastened smoothly along the decks, dodging obstacles in his course. He disappeared, ducking low under a sling of ten dirty gunny-bags full of some costly merchandise and exhaling a repulsive smell. (13)

Jukes comes out of this so badly precisely because Conrad has gauged exquisitely how English so often conveys more than it says when a national temperamental inclination towards understatement is brought into various sorts of collision with an abundance of alternatives in lexical choice. So “exuberant” we know is thoroughly misleading about the sad provision that will be available to the coolies, and “distrust” of this over-expressiveness is exactly what we feel momentarily before it is written for us. A “gentle and refined melancholy” offers itself as more delicate and discerning than anything we have read so far and performs a dignified absorption of Jukes’s unconvincing display. The comedy of

MacWhirr's taciturnity being conveyed by a narrator with a taste for a wordy Latinate vocabulary is paralleled by the comedy of finding "a collected demeanour" on the deck of the *Nan-Shan*, especially when it has to dodge and duck under "ten dirty gunny-bags," which are themselves swiftly dignified again by the egregious verb "exhaling," as if to fit the Chinaman's sensitivity and restraint. It comes as little surprise that it is Jukes who is revealed by the end of the story to be the racist, utterly unconcerned at the coolies' fate, while MacWhirr is adamant: "Give them the same chance with ourselves" (88).

The ironic suggestiveness of this descriptive paragraph about Bun-Hin's clerk is entirely of a piece with a narration that takes delight in loading an excess of language onto the doings of those with few words at their disposal or who use words for literal reference only. So the next paragraph takes us to the chart room "where a letter, commenced two days before, awaited termination" (14). Of the chartroom we are told, "And he indited there his home letters" (15). Lexically and syntactically the narration goes out of its way not to use language natural to its subject, and the resources for doing so draw upon the extensive history of French and Latin imports into English and the social, occupational, class, and regional fissures encoded in this linguistic variety. Exactly this narrative procedure, of course, creates the much more visible "ironic treatment" applied in *The Secret Agent*, the usual account of which seems to be that Conrad shares (or asks the reader to share) the unruffled urbanity and high-minded disdain so conspicuously paraded by the narration at the expense of a "humanity, rich in suffering but indigent in words" (223).

Such a reading tends to miss the saving comedy of this very funny book, one that depends upon the reader's hearing how the collision between the subject matter and the means of conveying it is infused with social inflections that Conrad recognizes but does not necessarily endorse. This is, perhaps, no more than an intuitive grasp of idiom, something that can be shared but not explained, a grasp initially tutored by Conrad's reading of Dickens but now flourishing independently as part of an astonishing gift for anatomizing the self-repressing smallness of Englishness even as, in life, he was seeking to adopt the more expansive security of an English gentleman.

Opening a page at random, there is this quite unremarkable piece of narrative, for instance, about The Professor:

His single back room, remarkable for having an extremely large cupboard, he rented furnished from two elderly spinsters, dress-makers in a humble way with a clientele of servant girls mostly. He had a heavy padlock put on the cupboard, but otherwise he was a model lodger, giving no trouble, and requiring practically no attendance. (53)

While the irony of this perhaps very dangerous man living in quiet domesticity as “a model lodger” is obvious, and indeed is the whole novel’s ironic premise, a reader is unlikely to be warmed by the play of comedy in these two sentences unless the ventriloquism is heard in “rented furnished” and “giving no trouble,” the slightly more genteel – or literary – inflection in “in a humble way,” and then the unplaceable hint of the slightest oddity, perhaps arising from a flavour of French, in “remarkable,” “clientele,” and “requiring practically no attendance.”

Conrad is not a social commentator bent upon explanation; he is an artist, creating from the finest threads of resonance a texture from which a reader may *sense* the fabric of lives and a life.<sup>3</sup> In this transformation from what is heard to what is to be read, Conrad’s ironic gift to the English novel is to be able to render a slight infraction of boundaries, to be inward, but never to hear completely from within as does Dickens. As Denise Riley puts it with disarming frankness, “If verbal irony states the opposite of what its speaker or writer means, the listener or reader must ‘get it’ – but must have already have grasped enough of something to realize that something does need to be got” (2000: 147). In this sense, a reader’s immediate grasp in “Typhoon” and *The Secret Agent*, that there is something that needs to be “got” here, is like Conrad grasping exactly that about England precisely because he hears with a foreigner’s ears.

In this respect, Professor Dan Jacobson has offered an account of emigrating from South Africa to England in 1950 that brilliantly explains

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<sup>3</sup> It could be seen that this sort of narrative procedure in *The Secret Agent* has a more extreme successor in Joe Orton’s black farce *Entertaining Mr Sloane* (1964), a play whose dialogue is built upon phatic language, with phrases from different discourses incongruously and imperturbably sitting down side by side without pausing for breath or raising an eyebrow. The disjunction between murder and small talk is elided in every utterance, the non-sequiturs all run together seamlessly to give a comic soundscape of the way in which contemporary English talk accommodates, flattens, and disperses emotional tensions into the familiarity of commonplace phrases. Mrs MacWhirr comes to mind.



the ironic ear for British reserve that so characterizes Conrad's writing about England:

In England ... since they took their own presence for granted, it did not occur to them to dispute the presence of others whose behaviour was marked by the same reserve as their own ... they knew enough about each other to leave one another alone, and to know it was safe to do so. This unspoken, mutually accepting *modus vivendi* between persons seemed to me extraordinarily deep-rooted; it was a central feature of the society as a whole. Yet so was its obverse or underside too – by which I mean the appetite the English had for “placing” not only a stranger to the country like myself, but perhaps even more pressingly those who were not strangers, who were native to the islands ... The combination of wariness and voracity with which the English went about this detective work reminded me at times of an insect stroking an object ahead of it with its feelers, or of a cat sniffing a person's shoes ... the curiosity was always there, always ready to be brought into play, always expressing the same seemingly contradictory truths about the society as a whole: a) that it was deeply, obsessively divided by a host of invidious, criss-crossing “social indicators” that would go a long way towards determining relations between its members; and b) that it, the society as a whole, was also familial or quasi-familial in its feelings about those who indubitably “belonged” to it, no matter what tangled branch of the family they came from or just where among its maze of hierarchies they actually stood.<sup>4</sup>

Whilst Jacobson, in 2004, is describing a world that he considers has largely disappeared in the fifty years since his arrival in England, in its startling consonance with Hueffer's claims and its comprehension of Chesterton's more embattled class awareness this pointedly describes the dominant social outlook in operation sixty years previously. It delineates with generous objectivity the claims of both solidarity and irony upon those, like Conrad, who sought to belong but not at the expense of the integrity of their perceptions.

Of course, in *The Secret Agent* the incongruity between the voice of the narration and the psychological and social world of the characters is generally much more marked than in the passage about The Professor's

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<sup>4</sup> From the 10th Alan Marre Maccabbeans Centenary Lecture at University College London, November 2004 (Jacobson 2005.)

room quoted above. Such a collision is at its most percussive, so to speak, in the great chapter of the cab-ride, almost surreal in its intensity yet realized in a language rich in human inhabitation. Stevie has elected to get down and walk to relieve the decrepit cab-horse of some of the weight, and then has given in to Winnie's entreaty to get back on the box:

The cabby turned at him his enormous and inflamed countenance truculently. "Don't you go for trying this silly game again, young fellow."

After delivering himself thus in a stern whisper, strained almost to extinction, he drove on, ruminating solemnly. To his mind the incident remained somewhat obscure. But his intellect, though it had lost its pristine vivacity in the benumbing years of sedentary exposure to the weather, lacked not independence or sanity. Gravely he dismissed the hypothesis of Stevie being a drunken young nipper. (123)

Is this a case of the cabby being belittled for his occupation, his tendency to drink, his befuddled mind, and limited understanding, a dull horse ripe for the narrator to perform linguistic acrobatics upon and whose verbal whipping in high Latinate terms and drolly archaic syntax we are invited enthusiastically to back? I would suggest otherwise: there is rather a comic interchange here, in which the narrator's verbal armoury of self-satisfaction is as exposed by its stark subject as being just that, as much as the cabby is to be scorned for his grimy debasement. Both exhibit the "undeveloped heart" of the English at home (to adopt E. M. Forster's famous phrase and alter its application). If our reading aligns itself totally with the narrator here, then we are left in a bare place indeed, with only the furnishing of witty cleverness for comfort, a place Wayne C. Booth would probably have characterized as "The Snotty Sublime." In practice, without any sentimentality or softening of the hard ironic light that Conrad shines upon his chosen darkness, the taciturn MacWhirr and half-crazed Stevie respectively resist their talkative narrators and make the reader pause to reflect upon the weight of their few words amid the whirling description and supercilious comment.

In "Typhoon," when Conrad wants to judge and belittle he can do it quite directly. The destination of MacWhirr's letters is a house "in a northern suburb": "He paid five-and-forty pounds a year for it, and did not think the rent too high, because Mrs MacWhirr (a pretentious person with a scraggy neck and a disdainful manner) was admittedly ladylike,

and in the neighbourhood considered as ‘quite superior’” (14). While this exhibits all the mobility of free indirect speech discussed above, the parenthesis provides a more clearly authorial position – plain and direct in language and judgement – which is a counterpoint to the narratorial elaborations that produce the habitual irony.

The statement that is made throughout “Typhoon” by this ironic style is something of the order of: “I am quite aware that there is a more direct manner of recounting this available, but I wish to suspend my two creations, MacWhirr and Jukes, in a solution of deferential and slightly circumlocutory phrasing because in that way I can represent the insulations, evasions, suppressions, insensitivities, and unwarenesses involved in the fabric of an also admirable English stoicism, enterprise and decency.” So at the end of the same paragraph about the MacWhirr household we learn of his children: “The lanky girl, upon the whole, was rather ashamed of him; the boy was frankly and utterly indifferent in a straightforward, delightful, unaffected way manly boys have” (15). The unnecessary flourish at the end is wonderful in its ironic economy, conveying without batting an eyelid, as it were, the boy’s rudeness in ignoring his father in a way that would have hurt MacWhirr had he allowed himself to become aware of it, and also the favouring, mollicoddling acceptance lavished on the child on account of his being a boy. To incorporate so effortlessly the comic means by which the English both do and do not show awareness of themselves into one’s attempts to write the literary prose of one’s third language goes a long way to justifying Conrad’s claim that English adopted him rather than the other way around.

A final example of this setting at odds a language of urbane civility and the rough-and-ready conditions aboard ship that it offers to convey must suffice to show how pervasive in “Typhoon” is the technique that Conrad was to go on and use “with deliberation” and even more pointedly in *The Secret Agent*. It extends beyond the portrayal of MacWhirr and Jukes. In Chapter 4, for instance, the boatswain (whom Jukes considers a “fraud” and MacWhirr a “first-rate petty officer”) is depicted as trying to keep up the crew’s spirits without much success, with one of them declaring “It was making him crazy to lie there in the dark waiting for the blamed hooker to sink”:

“Why don’t you step outside, then, and be done with it at once?” the boatswain turned on him. This called up a shout of execration. The boatswain found himself overwhelmed with reproaches of all sorts. They seemed to take it ill that a lamp was

not instantly created for them out of nothing. They would whine after a light to get drowned by – anyhow! And though the unreason of their revilings was patent – since no one could hope to reach the lamp room which was forward – he became greatly distressed. He did not think it was decent of them to be nagging at him like this. He told them so and was met by general contumely. He sought refuge, therefore, in an embittered silence. At the same time their grumbling and sighing and muttering worried him greatly, but by and by it occurred to him that there were six globe lamps hung in the 'tween-deck, and that there could be no harm in depriving the coolies of one of them. (54)

Instead of using direct speech to recount this episode, or the sustained free indirect speech of the boatswain, Conrad chooses to move in a supple fashion between the boatswain's free indirect speech and a language that, although it represents the boatswain's alternate goodwill and hurt feelings, is surely not his. Several words and phrases – “execration,” “the unreason of their revilings was patent,” “general contumely,” “sought refuge” – are patently incongruous, while others, such as “reproaches,” “take it ill,” “greatly distressed,” and “decent,” seem to have crept in from a genteel tea-party, a feeling confirmed when we read, a few lines later, the coarser report that “Somebody told him to go and put his head in a bag,” an oath used in direct speech in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus*.

The writer who can modulate his English in this way not only knows about the English habit of self-deprecating understatement, but also knows that he can presume upon an ironic awareness of it in his readers. Whatever Conrad's intention, the effect of so swiftly running up and down the gamut of registers that English makes available reminds the reader of his own comfort (like that of Mrs MacWhirr), sheltered in part by the words of a discourse that has refined itself out of any real human contact, words that are less adequate to the situation in hand than the coarser spoken idiom that has been comically overlaid, for our protection as it were, by this self-regarding performance. “Typhoon” is an examination of the fitness of men to face the worst that the sea can throw at them, but in the manner of its telling it becomes an examination of the Englishness inscribed in the various competing and overlapping ways that present themselves to tell this story.

## II

The dynamic of reading “Typhoon” is a progressive, though fairly gentle, detachment from Jukes and a corresponding realization that if MacWhirr is the butt of the narrator’s irony, he is also granted by the author a substance – a “resistance” – necessary if storms are to be endured and people treated equitably.

We have cleaved with our mental ear to Jukes’ apprehension of the storm through much of Chapters 2 and 3, but in Chapter 4, rather than the focalizer that he has been, Jukes becomes the object of our more objective appraisal. He stands convicted of lack of moral concern for others and lack of knowledge of himself. Hearing the plight of the Chinamen, “Jukes remained indifferent, as if rendered irresponsible by the force of the hurricane, which made the very thought of action utterly vain” (51). However, this severer perspective doesn’t harden into the sort of point-scoring that “An Outpost of Progress” conducts against Kayerts and Carlier. Jukes’s state of mind is pursued in a paragraph of far-reaching enquiry into a general condition:

It was rather like a forced-on numbness of spirit. The long, long stress of a gale does it; the suspense of the interminably culminating catastrophe; and there is a bodily fatigue in the mere holding on to existence within the excessive tumult; a searching and insidious fatigue that penetrates deep into a man’s breast to cast down and sadden his heart, which is incorrigible, and of all the gifts of the earth – even before life itself – aspires to peace. (52)

The movement into the present tense for that extraordinary second sentence, which projects itself into multiple (multiplying, almost) phrases and clauses in its search to articulate the quality of this “numbness,” announces the sort of declaration that asks for an ironic acknowledgement from the reader almost of a rueful nature. The brilliantly judged second noun phrase (“the interminably culminating catastrophe”) indeed seems to suspend disaster not only in front of but also, in the slow turmoil of “interminably,” within us too. And this sense of having already reached the lowest point of resistance, while never reaching it, is sustained through the almost intolerable extensions of the sentence beyond its hoped-for ending at “sadden his heart,” extensions that feel like fingers probing our own unadmitted desires.

This sentence does not, however, cast Jukes as a consciousness in the novella co-terminus with the predicated responsiveness of a reader.

We are asked here to understand the Jukes in ourselves more comprehensively than he is granted understanding of himself, and in the next paragraph we are returned from these general thoughts as to what “a man’s breast” succumbs to, to the particularity of Jukes’s own case, “a momentary hallucination of swift visions” restoring the vivid uniqueness of the fictional character. The distance of comedy, however sympathetic, is maintained. We have, for instance, just read: “Besides, being very young, he had found the occupation of keeping his heart completely steeled against the worst so engrossing that he had come to feel an overpowering dislike towards any other form of activity whatever”(51).

Conrad enjoys this comic correspondence between “occupation” and the loss of the capacity for action. Verloc, beset by Vladimir’s demand that he “go in for astronomy,” stares out of the window at the London night: “Mr Verloc felt the latent unfriendliness of all out of doors with a force approaching to positive bodily anguish. There is no occupation that fails a man more completely than that of a secret agent of police” (48). That “positive” is the ironic masterstroke here as it locates without saying so the extent of Verloc’s lassitude, such that this abysmal contemplation represents his strongest exertion in the novel so far. If the passage in “Typhoon” acknowledges that our longing for peace can come to be greater than for life itself, Verloc is the melancholy embodiment of this feeling projected into a world in which the violence enacted by the city upon the spirit of the citizen outdoes that which the storm inflicts upon the endurance of man in “Typhoon.” Customers of the Verloc shop in Brett Street are announced by a bell that is “difficult to circumvent ... at the slightest provocation it clattered behind the customer with an impudent virulence” (10). Impudent virulence is a perfect description of the narrator’s ebullience in describing the furtive, the silent, and the temperamentally incurious: a deliberate excess of writing provoked by the inertia, ineffectiveness, and taciturnity of the subjects. “Numbness of spirit,” indeed, could be taken as the whole subject of Conrad’s ironic treatment of personal, social, and institutional relations in *The Secret Agent*, conducted in a style incongruously full of zest and life.

Unsympathetic critics of the novel, such as Martin Price, would claim that a “numbness of spirit” extends to the readers as we enjoy its lacerating procedures making victims of the characters. This is to read its irony as satire, in which we are disallowed from taking up any sympathetic position that would enable us to inhabit a character’s perception of the world. We can read such a satire upon the English temperament in “The Return” and its “perfectly delightful men and women who feared

emotion, enthusiasm, or failure, more than fire, war, or mortal disease” (*Tales of Unrest* 113). However, it is part of the nervous discomfiture experienced in reading *The Secret Agent* that we are made to feel more inward with Verloc than with any other character, right up to the point of his death in Chapter 11.

The irony of our reading is that we cannot detach ourselves to execrate Verloc as a perpetrator of an outrage, as the rosy coloured newspapers would have us do, because our involvement in a language of orderly domestic arrangements has made us accomplices to the events that lead to Stevie’s death. So the two intensely realized scenes of Verloc’s *aporia* at the end of Chapters 3 and 8 are accompanied by an invitation to share Verloc’s view of Winnie couched in a language that at the same time lays a decent restraint upon such an intrusion into privacies:

Mr Verloc’s anxieties had prevented him from attaching any sense to what his wife was saying. It was as if her voice was talking on the other side of a very thick wall. It was her aspect that recalled him to himself.

He appreciated this woman, and the sentiment of this appreciation, stirred by a display of something resembling emotion, only added another pang to his mental anguish. (49)

The ironic presupposition of such a textual moment is not so much that Mr Verloc’s “anxieties” are how to blow up the first meridian, but that the reader knows well this very different sort of thick wall, the degrees of a comfortable settledness implied by “appreciation,” and the hesitancy with which emotion is approached in married life. This reminds us how similar are the conditions of communication on the *Nan-Shan*, and indeed how demanding of domestic peace are the *lares* and *penates* on board ship as well as in the northern suburb and in the home of the Assistant Commissioner.

The second occasion, to those who see the novel’s irony as a sustained expression of scorn rather than pity, might be paraphrased as “moral cowardice encounters the system of defensive incuriosity.” However, this would be to simplify the way in which Conrad moves the reader into and out of Verloc’s vision of things in such a manner that the character’s awareness of what he appreciates and his obtuseness to his moral condition arrive within the same paragraph:

At that moment he was within a hair's breadth of making a clean breast of it all to his wife. The moment seemed propitious. Looking out of the corners of his eyes, he saw her ample shoulders draped in white, the back of her head, with the hair done up for the night in three plaits tied up with black tapes at the ends. And he forbore. Mr Verloc loved his wife as a wife should be loved – that is, maritally, with the regard one has for one's chief possession. This head arranged for the night, these ample shoulders, had an aspect of familiar sacredness – the sacredness of domestic peace. She moved not, massive and shapeless like a recumbent statue in the rough; he remembered her wide-open eyes looking into the empty room. She was mysterious, with the mysteriousness of living beings. The far-famed secret agent  $\Delta$  of the late Baron Stott-Wartenheim's alarmist dispatches was not the man to break into such mysteries. He was easily intimidated. And he was also indolent, with the indolence which is so often the secret of good-nature. He forbore touching that mystery out of love, timidity, and indolence. (137)

Of the multiple ironic reflections we may have as we are moved from the free indirect speech of Verloc in “within a hair's breadth of making a clean breast of it all” to the grander abstractions of “the sacredness of domestic peace,” the most literary will be that Verloc's reification of Winnie into a “recumbent statue in the rough” will return upon him animated by “the simple ferocity of the age of caverns” (197) in the plunging blow delivered to his chest, and the peculiar move – “he remembered [when?] her wide-open eyes” – is suggestively proleptic of that hilarious moment later in the kitchen when “he was startled by the inappropriate character of his wife's stare. It was not a wild stare, and it was not inattentive, but its attention was peculiar and not satisfactory, inasmuch that it seemed concentrated upon some point beyond Mr Verloc's person” (181).

We can be smugly gleeful that, assuredly, he does not see the writing on the wall. But what are we to make of Verloc's reflection, “She was mysterious, with the mysteriousness of living beings”? Does it not carry some of the weight of the implied author behind it? It is certainly not to be laughed away as myopia as so much of the novel goes to show how we *do* make mysterious beings of each other. Equally, is the ironic offer of Mr Verloc's “good-nature” simply to be reversed in the familiar manner of reading ironically? Is not the collocation of “love, timidity, and indolence” a telling one, and is it clear that it lies beyond Mr Verloc's consciousness, to be enjoyed as the superior narrator's disdain at this



display of self-unawareness put on for the gratified illumination of the reader? Disengagement from Verloc is a much less certain experience than many accounts of the novel suppose for the reader who hears all the notes of Conrad's ironic presentation of his London inhabitants. Irony requires collaboration, and those who can read their own implication can collaborate most fully.

Disengagement from Mr Jukes is a clearer matter, although no less subtly done. There is a point after which the reader is inclined to find a deeper perception of what the storm entails in human terms awarded to the "enlarged imagination" of the stolid MacWhirr rather than the receptively terrified apprehension of the imaginative Jukes. It is indicative that the extraordinarily vivid representation of the mayhem in the hold in Chapter 4 is seen through Jukes's eyes as an impressionistic sensation of detached limbs, eyes, noises, objects, by which he "was confounded": "The whole place seemed to twist upon itself, jumping incessantly the while" (63). This is exciting reading, but there are other sensations that have greater authority in guiding our judgement and have already begun to do so. The reader's detachment from Jukes is a matter of moral concern, and it is the word "concern" that signals it. Immediately after the "forced-on numbness of spirit" already recounted, "Captain MacWhirr's voice was speaking his name into his ear. 'Jukes! Jukes!' He detected the note of deep concern" (52).

Jukes's perceptions of the scene are still the reader's main guide, as they have been throughout Chapter 3, to what is happening to the ship: "Jukes, rigid, perceived in her motion the ominous sign of haphazard floundering. She was no longer struggling intelligently. It was the beginning of the end; and the note of busy concern in Captain MacWhirr's voice sickened him like an exhibition of blind and pernicious folly" (53). Precisely in the sentence following "intelligently" do Jukes's free indirect speech and the narration's endorsement of it part company. MacWhirr's is the more fully alive voice "that would not be silenced," the necessary dogged assertion of human connectedness and enterprise that maintains "concern" in the face of indifference. Immediately, the narration alerts us that it is no longer Jukes whom we can take to be flexibly responsive in his apprehensions: "The spell of the storm had fallen upon Jukes. He was penetrated by it, absorbed by it; he was rooted in it with a rigour of dumb attention" (53). The last phrase is interesting: what has been undermined in Jukes is precisely that ability that led Conrad elsewhere to maintain that "A good book is a good action" (*CL* 137) and which he expresses in his "Author's Note" to "Typhoon" in this manner: "But in

everything I have written there is always one invariable intention, and that is to capture the reader's attention, by securing his interest and enlisting his sympathies for the matter in hand, whatever it may be, within the limits of the visible world and within the boundaries of human emotions" (vii). Just as, in the engine-room, "grouped letters stood out heavily black ... emphatically symbolic of loud exclamations ... and the fat black hand pointed downwards to the word Full, which, thus singled out, captured the eye as a sharp cry secures attention" (69) signifying with what committed urgency and dedication the ship is attempting to make way through the seas, so MacWhirr seeks to secure the attention of Jukes to the human lives aboard the ship rather than to the disintegrating terrors of the storm.

While Jukes has inwardly declared "the men on board did not count" (45), MacWhirr's "frail and resisting voice ... as if it had come suddenly upon the one thing fit to withstand the power of a storm ... seemed to gain force and firmness for the last broken shouts: 'Keep on hammering ... builders ... good men. ... And chance it ... engines. ... Rout ... good man'" (47-48). Concern for the men is indissolubly tied to a belief in the fitness of all that is implied in the English idiom, "good man" – an association of craftsmanship, the work ethic, and moral decency that recognizably emerges from a certain conception of the nineteenth-century British artisan class – the fitness of such qualities to withstand a storm that loots, hates, hustles, and strikes that is imaged extravagantly as a lawless mob.

### III

This analysis has suggested that Conrad's rather extraordinary sensitivity to idiomatic English makes a fundamental contribution to the texture of the narrative in "Typhoon"; and my claim that it is in "Typhoon" for the first time that his ear for English ironies is the generating factor for his prose style.<sup>5</sup> It is summoned by a sustained set of reflections about British temperament – the remainder of the *Typhoon* volume, after all, contains "Amy Foster" and "To-morrow." And while "home" is England in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, the first part of "Youth," and the last part of "Karain," obviously in "The Return" and rather more distantly in *Lord Jim*, the language of "home" is not yet the subject for

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<sup>5</sup> I am aware that Michael Lucas identifies "Falk" as the fault-line in Conrad's novelistic English (2000: 92) where I place it one volume earlier, in "Typhoon."

scrutiny that it becomes from “Typhoon” onwards. The play between the comic and the respectful that lends the newly English inflection to the writing seems to have been encouraged by Conrad’s contemplation of peculiarly English conceptions of what is fitting and how these are accommodated to the actualities thrown in his characters’ way.

Paul Kirschner, in his excellent Introduction to *Typhoon and Other Stories* (1990), reminds us of the letter of September 1900 to David Meldrum in which Conrad announces “I must make a fresh start without further delay” (CL2 289) and says “The ‘fresh start’ was ‘Typhoon,’ the first story of a volume promised to William Heinemann.” And Kirschner concludes his Introduction: “Conrad knew that his ‘fresh start’ in *Typhoon* had marked his departure from the late nineteenth century and his land-fall in our own” (4, 27). We might add that, as on many occasions, Jessie Conrad shows herself more aware of what was involved in Conrad’s writing than she is often given credit for when she says “Later, much later, the literary critics seemed to find that the end of the Blackwood period marked a change in Conrad’s manner.” And also, “But if he was evolving a new manner, then the volume called *Typhoon*, standing as it does between the end of the Blackwood phase and the beginning of a phase marked by *Nostramo*, may be regarded as a transition book” (1926: 49, 50). This modernization of himself from a “bloody furriner” writing exotic tales and sea-fiction into the most penetrating political novelist in English takes one of its most decisive steps by ironically assimilating strains of class-inflected English, from the complacencies of the establishment to those of lodging-house boarders, into a method of narration grounded in free indirect speech.<sup>6</sup>

A fascinating light is thrown upon this aspect of Conrad as he simultaneously assimilates *himself* into the life of an impecunious English gentleman-author by Jessie’s recollection of Conrad and Ford working on *Seraphina* downstairs in The Pent at exactly the time when Conrad was also composing “Typhoon”:

The small house seemed at times full to overflowing and there were days when the two artists with their vagaries, temperaments and heated discussions made it seem rather a warm place. Still, to give F. M. H. his due, he was the least peppery of the two, being a native of a less excitable nation and his drawling voice made a

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<sup>6</sup> Conrad extends the method with great audacity to represent the linguistic and cultural collisions that he fashions into the seamless narrative texture of *Nostramo* (see Epstein 1999).

sharp contrast with the quick, un-English utterances of the fellow collaborator.  
(Jessie Conrad 1935: 66)

While this is, of course, very telling for any reading of “Amy Foster,” it reminds the reader of “Typhoon” how far Conrad’s compositional world was a soundscape, and the ways in which that story reflects Conrad’s own sensitivities to pitch and rhythm, to excess and restraint, from the “gust of hoarse yelling” (57) to which the mild boatswain is exposed when he opens the door to the ’tween-deck bunker and how “All that the boatswain, out of a superabundance of yells, could make clear to Captain MacWhirr was the bizarre intelligence that ‘All them Chinamen in the fore-’tween-deck have fetched away, sir” (51) to Jukes’s overwrought anxiety while “groping for the ear of his commander”:

His lips touched it – big, fleshy, very wet. He cried in an agitated tone, “Our boats are going now, sir.” And again he heard that voice, forced and ringing feebly, but with a penetrating effect of quietness in the enormous discord of noises, as if sent out from some remote spot of peace beyond the black wastes of the gale; again he heard a man’s voice – the frail and indomitable sound that can be made to carry an infinity of thought, resolution and purpose, that shall be pronouncing confident words on the last day, when heavens fall, and justice is done – again he heard it, and it was crying to him, as if from very, very far –  
“All right.” (44)

It is instructive to hear how different this is – the most sustained authorial affirmatory dictum – from similar moments in *The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus.’* The invocatory and transcendental note has been abandoned, and the appeal to the heavens carries the uncertain irony about justice being done to mirror the even more unstable foothold for the reader of “man’s voice ... pronouncing confident words,” the voice that has just secured the possibility of a “remote spot of peace.” It is significant that this long sentence allows both Jukes and the reader the relief of arrival at an idiomatic English phrase with a multitude of uses – “All right.” The mobility of the narrator in “Typhoon,” we can speculate, is derived from the un-English ear listening intently to the signification of all the noises it hears in the intercourse of this unexcited nation.

In the most English of Conrad’s novels, *Chance*, young Powell is disconcerted to find “the captain’s wife” to be so much younger than the expectation aroused by that phrase, and Marlow takes the opportunity to

pontificate: “You understand that nothing is more disturbing than the upsetting of a preconceived idea. Each of us arranges the world according to his own notion of the fitness of things” (289). While the first half of that second sentence proposes individual agency, the familiar concluding phrase suggests how far one’s own notions might be a product of received opinion. The frame narrator reports Marlow’s attitude to Powell at this point to be “amused perhaps but not mocking” (289), as if in ironic recognition of common ground in a disposition towards settled notions of how life is to proceed, notions that the demands of life in its unsafe contingencies will challenge at every turn for both characters.

How “the fitness of things” presents itself to MacWhirr is of a piece with the sturdy undemonstrativeness that is at once the source of the humour and of the moral invigoration of the story.<sup>7</sup> Nothing could illustrate more clearly than the transition from the deck, where Jukes is the focalizer, to the sustained scene in the cabin, where the focalizer is MacWhirr, that Conrad’s narrative prose is not a neutral medium, its stylistic choices are always *active*:

The still air moaned. Above Jukes’ head a few stars shone into the pit of black vapours. The inky edge of the cloud-disc frowned upon the ship under the patch of glittering sky. The stars too seemed to look at her intently, as if for the last time, and the cluster of their splendour sat like a diadem on a lowering brow.

Captain MacWhirr had gone into the chart-room. There was no light here; but he could feel the disorder of that place where he used to live tidily. His armchair was upset. The books had tumbled out on the floor: he scrunched a piece of glass under his boot. (83)

The transcendental gestures of the first paragraph are abruptly cut short by the prosaic yet intimate material realities of the second. In its tremendous evocation of the forces of the typhoon, what the novella as a whole cannot fail to impress upon the reader is that there is no ordained fitness of things, no providence, no design. Yet what it also shows us is that the MacWhirrs of the world, in their dogged attention to work and

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<sup>7</sup> The currency of the stock phrase “the fitness of things” seems to have derived from Samuel Clarke’s ethical philosophy of fitness. The *OED* cites first usage as Clarke’s *The Evidence of Natural and Revealed Religion* (1706). Both George Eliot and Thomas Hardy predate Conrad’s ironic use of this phrase. See *Middlemarch* (1871–72), Book 2, Chapter 14: 203; and *The Life and Work*, entry for 28 April 1888 (cited in Millgate 1984: 217).

their belief that one may get through, impose upon the shapelessness of things an order, comic in its inability to see the larger suggestiveness of signs, admirable in seeing to the immediate duties we owe to one another.

This is not the starched-collared, self-preserving, apple-pie order of the Chief Accountant of "Heart of Darkness," who would simply have disintegrated into a handful of dust had *his* rulers, pencils, and inkstand been plucked from their "safe appointed places." MacWhirr's ponderousness is never to be seen as hollowness:

The hurricane had broken in upon the orderly arrangements of his privacy. This had never happened before, and the feeling of dismay reached the very seat of his composure. And the worst was to come yet! He was glad the trouble in the 'tween-deck had been discovered in time. If the ship had to go after all, then, at least, she wouldn't be going to the bottom with a lot of people in her fighting teeth and claw. That would have been odious. And in that feeling there was a humane intention and a vague sense of the fitness of things. These instantaneous thoughts were yet in their essence heavy and slow, partaking of the nature of the man. (85)

"The trouble in the 'tween-deck" represents MacWhirr's suitably contained conception; the sanction for the larger thoughts that arise from this filter down from the currency of his social superiors in the form of Tennyson's most popular phrase, slightly misquoted, the Latinate seriousness of "odious," and the complacently handed down "fitness of things," which presents itself as a somewhat Anglican sign for the Judeo-Christian order, but which also contains the germ of the Darwinism that challenges it. The slight ironic charge of language looking at itself that lies under each of these phrases co-exists, however, with the striking authorial endorsement of "a humane intention" in providing for the conditions for everyone aboard to meet death with dignity. Unlike Jukes, this "stupid man" (102) never succumbs to the stupefaction of the storm, and he emerges as heroically constructing whatever fitness the reader can find in the contingent universe portrayed in the story.

*The Secret Agent* is, of course, written in less optimistic mood than "Typhoon" and portrays a world in which any notion of "the fitness of things" is a matter for sour joking. It is a specious term, here nakedly exposed as one that conveys the unruffled ease of the establishment in preserving its power by appeal to providential arrangement. Conrad's vision of institutional relations calls forth in his narrator a confidentially advisory tone, as of one who knows this world (*the world*) almost too

well and keeps it in its place with fastidious precision. We are in Chapter 5 and have just been introduced to Chief Inspector Heat of the Special Crime Department:

He had gone even so far as to utter words which true wisdom would have kept back. But Chief Inspector Heat was not very wise – at least not truly so. True wisdom, which is not certain of anything in this world of contradictions, would have prevented him from attaining his present position. It would have alarmed his superiors, and done away with his chances of promotion. His promotion had been very rapid.

“There isn’t one of them, sir, that we couldn’t lay our hands on at any time of night and day. We know what each of them is doing hour by hour,” he had declared. And the high official had deigned to smile. This was so obviously the right thing to say for an officer of Chief Inspector Heat’s reputation that it was perfectly delightful. The high official believed the declaration, which chimed in with his idea of the fitness of things. His wisdom was of an official kind or else he might have reflected upon a matter not of theory but of experience that in the close-woven stuff of the relations between conspirator and police there occur unexpected solutions of continuity, sudden holes in space and time. A given anarchist may be watched inch by inch and minute by minute, but a moment always comes when somehow all sight and touch of him are lost for a few hours, during which something (generally an explosion) more or less deplorable does happen. But the high official, carried away by his sense of the fitness of things, had smiled, and now the recollection of that smile was very annoying to Chief Inspector Heat, principal expert in anarchist procedure. (69)

The assured self-amused drollery of this makes the irony of “Typhoon” seem affectionate by comparison, but the earlier tale provides the model for this more stylized performance. While “perfectly delightful” (recalling “The Return” as quoted above) is a comically heightened expression of the high official’s thoughts, the idea of “sudden holes in space and time” is so far beyond them as to make him nothing but a servant of the inadequate complacencies of institutional wisdom. Heat, meanwhile, will be subject through the following pages to a more searching examination of his concept of what is “fit” in the relations between conspirator and police as he is brought face to face with Stevie’s remains, scraped up from the gravel into “what might have been an accumulation of raw material for a cannibal feast” (70). Heat’s concept of the fitness of things

is eventually articulated as that embodied in his memory of “the world of thieves – sane, without morbid ideals, working by routine, respectful of constituted authorities, free from all taint of hate and despair” (75). I would hazard that, in a world assailed by what is routinely denounced by the word “terrorism,” Conrad has caught the present prevailing English mood rather well here.

## IV

In Montpellier in 1906, after an unsatisfying year of small and unfinished projects, and, as he puts it in a letter to Galsworthy, “that feeling of loafing at my work, as if powerless in an exhaustion of thought and will” (CL3 327), Conrad began “Verloc.” His imaginative embodiment of Englishness now comprehended much more fully than in “Typhoon” the inertia that suppresses vital life in English family and institutional relations, the chilliness of the withheld embrace of what was, creatively, still a new country having been painfully explored in “Amy Foster” and “To-morrow” and, although transposed to a different continent, through the marriage of the Goulds.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, a wonderful manifestation of such a diminished moral sensibility can be found in the wearily impatient Mrs MacWhirr. Standing on the pavement outside Linom’s with her friend “armoured in jet and crowned with flowers blooming falsely above a bilious matronly countenance” engrossed in “a swift little babble of greetings and exclamations, both together, very hurried, as if the street were ready to yawn open and swallow all that pleasure before it could be expressed” (95), we are brought within reach of the expressionistic apprehension of the corner of Brett Street, beyond which “all was black, and the few people passing in that direction vanished at one stride beyond the glowing heaps of oranges and lemons. No footsteps echoed. They would never be heard of again” (116). The species of irony the reader is faced with here borders on the absurd as, in successive sentences, we are robbed of the security that attaches to mimetic representation and placed in a vision whose logic has no boundaries. Clearly the writing exceeds the stable limits of an irony that depends upon the recognition of discrepancies of tone, one that in Booth’s taxonomy might be placed in The Tragedy of Emptiness (where he places *Under the Volcano*) or The Tragedy of the

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<sup>8</sup> Voïtkovska (2004) has explored the psychology of the exilic condition as represented in *Nostromo*.



Abyss (where he places “Heart of Darkness”) and takes its measured pace towards a comic darkness that yields no answer or echo, to wait for us among the “infinite-unstable” ironies that people the later pages of Booth’s study. This furthest reach of Conradian irony lies beyond the scope of this enquiry into Conrad’s ear for English ironies, but, like “Heart of Darkness” itself, the journey begins in England.

I began with a question as to whether Conrad’s irony operates to expand our consciousness or whether it simply gives pleasure by making us exult in recognizing our littleness. Conrad’s entwining of sensationalist evocation and hallucinatory metaphor with an imperturbable narrative voice compels the reader to consider how fit man is for survival in the narrow zone the cosmos allows for human habitation, and how cramped an inhabitation our conceptions have made of it as we huddle under our necessary “shelter of words.” The fundamental irony of this vision is that “man is come where he is not wanted,” as Stein puts it in *Lord Jim* (159); there is no “fitness of things,” though there are more and less mendacious illusions necessary to sustain existence amid the vast indifference of a universe largely hostile to human life. Having first encountered the English through their adventurous maritime tradition, Conrad’s understanding and representation of the controlled, ordered, burying habit of mind he finds in England, with its self-protective codes of formality and understatement, gives him a peculiarly trenchant apprehension of the vastness that surrounds and threatens to disintegrate our humanity “on this isthmus of a middle state” which we (the English in particular) seek to exclude or belittle.

It is this sense of spaciousness that renders Conrad’s irony about England and Englishness so different in effect from that of Jane Austen or of Dickens – even of George Eliot, whose wider realms claim a spiritual sanction – a sense that radiates, for instance, from his first letter to Cunninghame Graham in 1897: “Most of my life has been spent between sky and water and now I live so alone that often I fancy myself clinging stupidly to a derelict planet abandoned by its precious crew. Your voice is not a voice in the wilderness – it seems to come through the clean emptiness of space” (CL1 370). An illuminating comparative reflection can be applied to this when we recall the manner in which Chesterton berates Kipling in *Heretics*:

He admires England, but he does not love her; for we admire things with reasons, but love them without reasons ... Mr Rudyard Kipling has asked in a celebrated epigram what they can know of

England who know England only. It is a far deeper and sharper question to ask, "What can they know of England who know only the world?" for the world does not include England any more than it includes the Church. The moment we care for anything deeply, the world – that is, all other miscellaneous interests – becomes our enemy ... Mr Kipling does certainly know the world; he is a man of the world, with all the narrowness that belongs to those imprisoned in that planet. He knows England as an intelligent English gentleman knows Venice ... Mr Kipling, with all his merits, is the globetrotter; he has not the patience to become part of anything. So great and genuine a man is not to be accused of a merely cynical cosmopolitanism; still, his cosmopolitanism is his weakness. (1905: 47-50)

There are some telling observations here and the assertion that "The globetrotter lives in a smaller world than the peasant" can be found inspiring. But one can also imagine the later T. S. Eliot writing with much the same outlook; there is a disdainful defensiveness betrayed in "our enemy" that leaves the reader with a residue of smallness ("splendid parochialism" Chesterton later calls it) rather than openness. As Patrick Wright says, Chesterton's vision allows "a freedom to snigger" at "the cringing Jew" and "bright dead alien eyes."<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the target of Conrad's irony is always a smallness of vision, even when, as in *MacWhirr*, the smallness is also a sturdiness, and the consequent release for the reader is not into comfortable self-congratulation but into a space of discomforting acknowledgement of where we are.

In his indispensable essay "The Politics of Irony in Reading Conrad" (1994), Paul B. Armstrong defines this spaciousness specifically as an outcome of Conrad's irony: "The indirectness of his ironic method does not identify the reader's perspective with the narrator's, and that gap leaves us free to formulate the text's implications on our own." And earlier, "Like many of Conrad's greatest works, *The Secret Agent* suggests that an ironic awareness of the ubiquity of contingency is knowledge one cannot necessarily do anything with, even if it is also knowledge one cannot do without" (99, 97). Readers will probably divide into those who

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<sup>9</sup> See Wright's "Last Orders," an essay on Chesterton and the English published in *The Guardian* Saturday Review, 9 April 2005. The two quotations come from Chesterton's influential poem "The Secret People" published in "The Neolith" in 1907. In 1905, the Conservative government brought in The Alien's Act, the first parliamentary restriction on immigration in British democratic history, but I have been unable to trace Conrad's reaction to the legislation.

find that “knowledge one cannot necessarily do anything with” backs them into a belittling feeling of uselessness, and those who find its very lack of utilitarian application confers liberation.

Interestingly for readers of the much-travelled Conrad, Chesterton approaches the issue thus: “The truth is that exploration and enlargement make the world smaller. The telegraph and the steamboat make the world smaller. The telescope makes the world smaller; it is only the microscope that makes it larger” (1905: 51). The ironies in the weave of each sentence of these two Conradian texts are microscopic and have the enlarging microscopic effect that Chesterton conceives; yet Conrad’s eyes and ears have seen and heard more than Chesterton’s, and the anatomy of Englishness his irony conducts is free from the taint of exultation in small local rootedness that Chesterton takes to be the guarantee of universality.

Bertrand Russell’s famous recollection of Conrad advances a memorable metaphor of precariousness and threat that is very different from Chesterton’s enclave to be defended, one that suggests that Conrad’s vision of man is too intense to result in a diminishing snigger or the self enclosure of disdain: “He thought of civilised and morally tolerable human life as a dangerous walk on a thin crust of barely cooled lava which at any moment might break and let the unwary sink into fiery depths” (1956: 82). That the ironic fictions born of such a view can be “tonic rather than depressing in [their] final effect,” as Ian Watt has put it, has been brilliantly explained by Thomas Mann in his Introduction to the German edition of *The Secret Agent* in 1926: “The gaze turned upon the horrible is clear, lively, dry-eyed, almost gratified ... [Modern art] sees life as a tragicomedy, with the result that the grotesque is its most genuine style – to the extent, indeed, that today that is the only guise in which the sublime may appear” (Watt, ed., 1973: 77, 106). What I have called Conrad’s English irony is exhilaratingly sublime in this sense: as Browning’s Bishop Blougram says so unforgettably, “Our interest’s on the dangerous edge of things,” and the tonic of Conrad’s prose is a gaiety in treading the edge whilst knowing the extent of the drop.

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## Conrad, Schopenhauer, and *le mot juste*

Martin Ray

THE FORMATIVE INFLUENCE of Arthur Schopenhauer on the writings of Joseph Conrad, especially in the 1890s, has been the subject of extensive debate for forty years, and it is quite clear that Conrad was highly familiar with the ideas and works of the German philosopher, both directly and indirectly.<sup>1</sup> It is undoubtedly true that, as John Galsworthy recalled in 1927, “Schopenhauer used to give him satisfaction twenty years and more ago” (91).

The purpose of this essay is to focus on one particular feature of their relationship: their philosophy of language. The two most pertinent essays by Schopenhauer in this regard are “On Authorship and Style” and “On Language and Words,” both published in the highly popular *Parerga and Paralipomena* in 1851.

Both Conrad and Schopenhauer repeatedly ask what the nature of language’s relation to thought is. What are the benefits deriving from the gift of multilingualism? Does *le mot juste* exist, and how does one attain it? Can one reconcile the need for a romantic fellowship in language with the individual author’s pursuit of a uniquely personal style? On all of these issues, Schopenhauer possesses a highly ambiguous attitude that corresponds in a number of remarkable instances to Conrad’s self-consciously paradoxical and protean view of language.

A brief summary of Conrad’s philosophy of language will illustrate the central tenets that Schopenhauer, as will appear later, is said to share. Conrad’s belief in the possibility of *le mot juste* is evident in his letter of October 1899 to Hugh Clifford:

Words, groups of words, words standing alone, are symbols of life, have the power in their sound or their aspect to present the very thing you wish to hold up before the mental vision of your readers. The things “as they are” exist in words; therefore words should be handled with care lest the picture, the image of truth abiding in facts should become distorted – or blurred. (CL2 200)

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<sup>1</sup> An excellent summary of Schopenhauer’s influence is given in Knowles and Moore (2000: 326-28).

Conrad's desire above all to "make you *see*" the external world through language presupposes the presence of the object within the word (*The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* xiv). Only by the incarnation of the thing within the word can the author present the very object itself before the reader, who otherwise would see only words. As Royal Roussel has suggested, Conrad's artistic manifesto is based upon the assumption that "words contain in some way the essential nature of the reality which they denote" (1971: 44-45).

"Give me the right word and the right accent and I will move the world. ... Yes! Let me only find the right word!" (*A Personal Record* xii). Conrad's commitment to the pursuit of *le mot juste* is evident as early as 1895 in the advice he gave to his fellow author, Edward Noble: "you must search the darkest corners of your heart, the most remote recesses of your brain; – you must search them for the image, for the glamour, for the right expression" (CL1 252), and he could proudly affirm to J. B. Pinker in October 1909 that in the previous twenty months he had written "nearly 160 thousand words – each one of which has some meaning" (CL4 277). However, Conrad's regard for *le mot juste* seems to be the primary cause of the consequent paralysis of expression that its elusiveness brought him, as is graphically seen in a letter of July 1896 to T. Fisher Unwin: "I writhe in doubt over every line. – I ask myself – is it right? – is it true? – do I feel it so? – do I express all my feeling? And I ask it at every sentence – I perspire in incertitude over every word!" (CL1 293). The pursuit of *le mot juste*, then, could leave Conrad only with the intense awareness of its absence. In September 1899, for instance, he gave Edward Garnett perhaps his most dramatic statement of creative despair: "All is illusion – the words written, the mind at which they are aimed, the truth they are intended to express, the hands that will hold the paper, the eyes that will glance at the lines. Every image floats vaguely in a sea of doubt – and the doubt itself is lost in an unexpected universe of incertitudes" (CL2 198).

Contrasting poignantly with Conrad's declaration to Pinker, quoted above, that every one of his 160,000 words has some meaning is his definition of the artist as one "from whose armoury of phrases one in a hundred thousand may perhaps hit the far-distant and elusive mark of art" (*Notes on Life and Letters* 9). If Conrad accepted Ford Madox Ford's belief that "the proof of prose is in the percentage of right words. Not the precious word: not even the startlingly real word" (1924: 105), it is not surprising that the literary medium, with its minimal success rate, should cause him much creative torment.

Conrad's own professions of fellowship have become critical commonplaces, and his Romantic view of language as an agency of community derives from this faith in solidarity. "My concern," he writes, for example, "is with a statement issuing from the average temperament and the average wisdom of a great and wealthy community" (*Notes on Life and Letters* 3). David Thorburn in his study of Conrad's Romantic heritage has defined this view of language as Wordsworthian in nature: Conrad possesses a "Romantic faith in language ... as a fragile but genuine counterforce to the secrecy and solitariness of the human circumstance. And this faith, however embattled, may distinguish the Romantic self-consciousness from the modern or the contemporary" (1974: 126).

Schopenhauer, like Conrad, is in no doubt of the central role that language enjoys in creative endeavour, and this conviction underlies his urgent inquiry into the precise nature of language's formative presence in literature. Language in itself, Schopenhauer suggests in "On Authorship and Style," is "a work of art and should be regarded as such and thus *objectively*" (1974: 2: 522). The consequent esteem in which the author must hold his medium is seen in Schopenhauer's edict that "we must aspire to *chastity* of style" (*Ibid.* 525), recalling that unrelenting and scrupulous attention to the exact nuances of language that Conrad displays. It is not only in literary activity, however, but also in all forms of rational and conscious endeavour that language, Schopenhauer believes, is of fundamental importance; as he suggests in *The World as Will and Idea* (1818), it is "by the help of language alone that reason accomplishes its most important achievements" (1883–86: 1: 48).

Schopenhauer does not always maintain, however, that language is indispensable to the intellect, and on occasions he is to be found promoting the tradition, which Conrad expressly echoes in *Under Western Eyes*, that language, far from revealing our thoughts, serves only to conceal them. "A man's words," Schopenhauer remarks in *Parerga and Paralipomena*, "say merely what he thinks, more often only what he has learnt, or even what he merely pretends to think" (2: 637). This finds a reflection in the comment by the narrator of *Under Western Eyes* that "speech has been given to us for the purpose of concealing our thoughts" (261).<sup>2</sup> Schopenhauer suggests that the language of literature, indeed, can

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. also Tadeusz Bobrowski's question in a letter to Conrad dated August 1891 whether "the Prince of Benevento of 'accursed memory' was right when he said that: 'Speech (in this case the written word) was given to us to conceal our thoughts'" (Najder, ed., 1964: 149).

be a convenient but inhibiting medium for the expression of thought: "The pen is to thinking what the stick is to walking; but the easiest walking is without a stick and the most perfect thinking occurs when there is no pen in the hand. Only when we begin to grow old do we like to make use of a stick and to take up a pen" ("On Authorship and Style," 1974: 2: 508). To articulate one's impressions, Schopenhauer notes, is to paralyze and ossify them within the static, rigid structure of language:

The actual life of a thought lasts only till it has reached the extreme point of words; it is then petrified and thereafter is dead; but it is indestructible, like the fossilized animals and plants of the primeval world. Its momentary life proper can also be compared to that of the crystal at the moment of crystallization.

Thus as soon as our thinking has found words, it is then no longer sincere or profoundly serious. When it begins to exist for others, it ceases to live in us. (*Ibid.*, 2: 508)

Schopenhauer's remedy for this petrification of language and thought is of particular relevance to Conrad's adoption of a foreign language. One should, Schopenhauer recommends, adopt a multilingual fluency. Any language thereby ceases to be absolute or sacrosanct and, on the contrary, can be seen as relative and fluid. The inadequacies of a particular language may be overcome by translating one's thoughts into another tongue, which may possess the nuances and shades of expression one is seeking. Not only does the writer gain a greater range of effect by this translation, but it also modifies the perspective in which he views his native language or, in Conrad's case, the medium of his art. All languages will appear incomplete and provisional, the deficiencies of one being compensated by the capacities of another. Thus it is Schopenhauer's plea for multilingualism that Conrad would have found most personally applicable in his reading of the philosopher:

Words and speech are thus the indispensable means of distinct thought. But as every means, every machine, at once burdens, and hinders, so also does language; for it forces the fluid and modifiable thoughts, with their infinitely fine distinctions of difference, into certain rigid, permanent forms, and thus in fixing also fetters them. This hindrance is to some extent got rid of by learning several languages. For in these the thought is poured from one mould into another, and somewhat alters its form in each, so that it becomes more and more freed from all form and clothing, and



thus its own proper nature comes more distinctly into consciousness, and it recovers again its original capacity for modification.  
*(The World as Will and Idea, 2: 238-39)*

The writer, Schopenhauer argues, must accept that his medium bears the taint of Babel. There is only one “true universal language” that is “everywhere understood” (1974: 2: 429) and that is music: all other languages, the literary artist should recognize, are fragmented and provisional. To learn as many of them as possible, however, can partly rectify the shortcomings of any one language, while at the same time revealing to the author the degree to which his thinking is determined and inhibited by his native tongue.

Schopenhauer’s notion of conceptual relativity, that any language permits one to think only in certain pre-determined modes, would have especially appealed to Conrad, whose multilingual perspective made the artificial limitations of his medium most apparent. The suspicion that one language will express certain dimensions of thought left unexpressed in another leads Schopenhauer to assert that language is a quite arbitrary structure, whose inadequacies are most evident to the polyglot: “For every word in a given language there is not the exact equivalent in every other; and so not all the concepts described by the words of one language are exactly the same as those expressed by the words of another” (“On Language and Words,” 1974: 2: 567).

This relationship between languages, Schopenhauer proceeds to explain, can be illustrated by a series of interlinking circles that “cover one another approximately, but yet are not quite concentric,” showing how “sometimes the word for a concept is wanting in one language, whereas it is to be found in most, if not all other languages” (“On Language and Words,” 1974: 2: 567). Schopenhauer actually proceeds to draw three overlapping circles in his text, and it is tempting to conjecture that such a diagram could have suggested that “coruscating whirl of circles” that Stevie draws in *The Secret Agent* while the anarchists hold their meeting:

Stevie, sitting very good and quiet at a deal table, drawing circles, circles, circles; innumerable circles, concentric, eccentric; a coruscating whirl of circles that by their tangles multitude of repeated curves, uniformity of form, and confusion of intersecting lines suggested a rendering of cosmic chaos, the symbolism of a mad art attempting the inconceivable.  
(45)

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Conrad told Hugh Walpole on 7 June 1918 that “When I wrote the first words of *A[mayer’s] F[olly]* I had been already for years and years *thinking* in English. I began to think in English long before I mastered . . . the mere uttered speech. Is it thinkable that anybody possessed of some effective inspiration should contemplate for a moment such a frantic thing as translating it into another tongue?” (*CL6* 227). Conrad, of course, always vigorously denied that he wrote or thought initially in Polish and then translated into English, and his defence, that it is impossible even to contemplate such a task as translating one’s work from another language, bears a striking resemblance to Schopenhauer’s definition of a successful polyglot:

Only after we have correctly grasped all the concepts which the language to be learnt expresses through separate individual words; only when we directly call to mind in the case of each word of the language exactly the concept that corresponds thereto and do not first translate the word into a word of our own language and then think of the concept expressed by *this* word – a concept that never corresponds exactly to the first one and likewise in respect of whole phrases – only then have we grasped the *spirit* of the language to be learnt and have made a great step forward in our knowledge of the nation that speaks it. But a man is a complete master of a language only when he is capable of translating into it not merely books but *himself*, so that, without suffering a loss of individuality, he is able to convey in it what he wants to say and is then just as agreeable and interesting to foreigners as he is to his own countrymen. (“On Language and Words,” 1974: 2: 569)

By denying that he writes first in Polish and then translates into English, Conrad fulfils precisely those criteria of linguistic mastery that Schopenhauer defined. Poor linguists, the latter notes, never manage to transcend their native tongue:

It is the *spirit* of the foreign language which they are unable to master; and this is really due to the fact that their thinking itself does not take place from their own resources, but is for the most part borrowed from their mother tongue, whose current idioms and phrases are for them equivalent to original ideas. (*Ibid.*, 2: 569)

Conrad’s repeated assertions that he was not merely “a sort of freak, an amazing bloody foreigner writing in English” (*CL3* 488) but had become

immersed in the language reveal, in this respect, a close affinity with Schopenhauer's criteria for linguistic assimilation.

If Conrad knew the conclusion to Schopenhauer's essay on multilingualism, he might well have felt a highly ambivalent response to it. Schopenhauer remarks that

In each language we think differently; that in consequence, through the study of each new language, our thinking undergoes a fresh modification, a new shading; and that polyglottism with its many *indirect* uses is, therefore, a *direct means of mental culture*, since it corrects and perfects our views through the striking number of the aspects and nuances of concepts. It also increases the skill and quickness of our thinking since through our learning many languages the concept becomes ever more separated from the word.

("On Language and Words," 1974: 2: 570)

Schopenhauer's insight that multilingualism encourages the separation of the word from the concept that it represents anticipates Conrad's attitude of detached suspicion towards his medium. However, although Conrad would have approved of Schopenhauer's notion that multilingualism is a "*direct means of mental culture*," he would not have been so confident that it was an invariably beneficial exercise. Consider, for instance, the introductory description of Julius Laspara in *Under Western Eyes*:

Polyglot, of unknown parentage, of indefinite nationality, anarchist, with a pedantic and ferocious temperament, and an amazingly inflammatory capacity for invective, he was a power in the background, this violent pamphleteer clamouring for revolutionary justice, this Julius Laspara, editor of the *Living Word*, confidant of conspirators, inditer of sanguinary menaces and manifestos, suspected of being in the secret of every plot. (*Ibid.*, 2: 285)

Laspara's multilingualism has simply given him the means to be as bloodthirsty as he can be in many languages. He is the negative example of Schopenhauer's belief in the benefits of polyglot culture.

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In his championing of *le mot juste*, Schopenhauer is characteristic of his period. Although the primary influences on Conrad's adoption of *le mot juste* are Flaubert and Maupassant, Schopenhauer's advocacy of it could

only have confirmed Conrad's æsthetic commitment to its pursuit. Schopenhauer believed that in literature there should be "a special purpose in every word," and a distinguishing feature of the finest writers was that they alone "quite consciously and intentionally choose and put together individual words" ("On Authorship and Style," 1974: 2: 521). From this notion of *le mot juste*, Schopenhauer draws a conclusion that is, however, quite the reverse of Conrad's practice, and it serves as a timely reminder that, in affairs of style, Conrad was very much his own mentor, influenced only to a degree by the advice of his favourite writers. Schopenhauer's recommendation, which anticipates F. R. Leavis's notorious criticism of Conrad's style, is that one must avoid any temptation to adjectival insistence, which, in that it is the negation of *le mot juste*, is the mark of impoverished and uncertain writing:

Every excess of an impression often produces the very opposite of what was intended; in the same way, words certainly help to make ideas intelligible, yet only up to a certain point. If they are piled up beyond this, they again render ever more obscure the ideas that are to be conveyed. To determine that point is the problem of style and the business of the faculty of judgement; for every superfluous word has an effect that is the very opposite of the one intended. In this sense, Voltaire says that *l'adjectif est l'ennemi du substantif*. But naturally many authors try to conceal beneath a flood of words their poverty of ideas. ("On Authorship and Style," 1974: 2: 524)

Leavis's later and similar objections to Conrad's style are too well known to require more than a cursory enumeration: "an adjectival and worse than supererogatory insistence," "a vaguely excited incomprehension," "excessively adjectival studies," "hadn't he, we find ourselves asking, overworked 'inscrutable', 'inconceivable', 'unspeakable' ...?" (1962: 179, 189, 190, 177). An obvious response to such criticism would be to ask why an adjective could not itself be *le mot juste*. More importantly, the charge of "adjectival insistence" ignores the extent to which Conrad is consciously dramatizing the very inadequacy of language of which he is accused: he seeks to achieve through non-verbal techniques, such as rhythm, a significance that the words by themselves fail to attain. The language of the early Conrad works, especially, often has a ritualistic, incantatory, peristaltic style, suggesting a fruitful counterpoint between the rhythmical compulsion of the language and the pursuit of *le mot juste*. Words strain to transcend themselves as Conrad seeks *le mot* that is more than merely *juste*.

The concept of *le mot juste* assumes an inherent relation between an object and the word that describes it, a kind of essential and necessary connection between the two: only one word can describe any one particular thing, as if by a pre-ordained allocation. Conrad for this very reason was unable to commit himself wholeheartedly to the notion of *le mot juste*, in that he was unwilling to accept that the relationship between the word and the thing it described could ever be anything more than arbitrary and artificial. A similar ambiguity towards *le mot juste* can occasionally be found in the writings of Schopenhauer, who, like Conrad, believed it to be an admirable notion, but not one to be adopted or promoted naïvely without a recognition of the questionable assumptions underlying it. Sometimes, therefore, Schopenhauer can be found suggesting that the relation between word and object is the result of an *inherent* compatibility between the two – this leads to *le mot juste*. Elsewhere, however, Schopenhauer argues that language is an imitation of reality only in the most conventional and arbitrary of ways. Such cautious indecision about *le mot juste* anticipates Conrad's own comparably ambiguous stance.

In *On the Will in Nature*, for instance, Schopenhauer appears to propose an essential connection between word and object. "The verbal expression," he suggests, "is determined by a deeply-rooted feeling of the inner nature of things" (1889: 325). He also quotes with approval Lichtenberg's notion that language is an animated organism that exists in its own right, independent of those who speak it. It has an essence and a life of its own, with its own uniquely characteristic attributes that are not simply reflections of man, its ostensible inventor, but that it itself has evolved: "if one thinks much oneself, one finds a good deal of wisdom deposited in language. It is hardly likely that we have laid it all there ourselves, but rather that a great deal of wisdom really lies there" (1889: 322).

In *Parerga and Paralipomena*, however, Schopenhauer argues that language cannot, by its nature, enjoy an essential connection with the "inner nature of things," since it is concerned solely with the outward communication of our knowledge. A chasm therefore separates the essence of an object from the word that describes it. Words, certainly, are a convenient form of shorthand by which to indicate a given object, but they are no more than a provisional approximation of it. The belief that words can do more than this, that they can in fact enjoy an inherent connection with the very essence of an object, must be, Schopenhauer says, fallacious.

In the following extract, he discusses what he calls illuminism, a type of mystical and transcendental philosophy that is the antithesis of rationalism:

Its fundamental defect is that its knowledge is *not communicable*. This is due partly to the fact that for *inner* perception there is no criterion of the identity of the object of different subjects, and partly to the fact that such knowledge would nevertheless have to be communicated by means of language. But this has arisen for the purpose of the intellect's *outwardly* directed knowledge by means of abstractions therefrom and is quite unsuited for expressing the inner states or conditions which are fundamentally different from it and are the material of illuminism. And so this would have to form a language of its own; but this again is not possible, on account of the first reason previously mentioned. Now as such knowledge is *not communicable*, it is also undemonstrable. (1974: 2: 10)

In *The World as Will and Idea*, Schopenhauer repeats his assertion that language is an artificial and objective presentation of subjective impressions: "speech, as an object of outer experience, is obviously nothing more than a very complete telegraph, which communicates arbitrary signs" (1: 51). Schopenhauer, therefore, alternatively regards language as essentially determined by the reality it depicts, and also, at other times, as a quite arbitrary presentation of the world. This is a paradoxical ambiguity whose poles correspond to the main outlines of Conrad's own contradictory attitude to language.

Conrad's commitment to fellowship and solidarity led him to adhere to a Romantic faith in communal language, in which the author speaks what Wordsworth termed the real language of men. This is but one more aspect of his attitude to language that he would have found reflected and endorsed in Schopenhauer's writings. "It would generally be a good thing for German authors," advises Schopenhauer in "On Authorship and Style", "if they were to see that, where possible, one should think like a great mind, but like everyone else should speak the same language. One should use common words to say uncommon things" (1974: 2: 522). Schopenhauer condemns subjectivity of style as antithetical to such communal language, and believed, like Conrad, that it would lead only to a paralyzing solipsism of expression. "Style should *not* be subjective but objective," Schopenhauer argues, while it is the defining trait of the poor author that, "unconcerned about the reader, he writes as though he were holding a monologue, whereas it should be a dialogue, and in fact one

wherein he has to express himself the more clearly, as he cannot hear the questions of the other partner" ("On Authorship and Style," 1974: 2: 544).

A number of other incidental echoes of Schopenhauer's attitude to words and language can be found throughout Conrad's work. For instance, Schopenhauer's remark in "On Language and Words" that "*bearing*" is "the essential sense of language and thus of our faculty of reason" (1974: 2: 575) has obvious relevance for *Under Western Eyes*, where the name of Razumov suggests "reason": in Schopenhaurian terms, his deafening by Nekator at the end of the novel means that he loses both his hearing and his "reason," and therefore his very name and identity.

It is not, however, in such minor resemblances that the significance of the relationship between Schopenhauer and Conrad resides. Rather, in the work of the German philosopher Conrad encountered a variety of ambiguities and conscious paradoxes that corresponded to the general outline of his own inquiring and hesitant philosophy of language. In this respect, Schopenhauer seems to have been highly congenial to a writer like Conrad who was already reaching similar conclusions about the nature of words and style, and he seems to have provided a sounding-board, a sympathetic reminder that Conrad was not alone in his radical anxiety about the function of language. It is as corroborator, rather than mentor, that Conrad appears to have read Schopenhauer.

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## Conrad and Exploratory Science

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IN HIS PREFACE to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1897), Conrad described something that for the moment will remain unnamed as

a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect. It is an attempt to find in its forms, in its colours, in its light, in its shadows, in the aspects of matter and in the facts of life what of each is fundamental, what is enduring and essential – their one illuminating and convincing quality – the very truth of their existence. (vii)

Those familiar with the Preface or even with the general tendency of artists to praise their profession may have guessed correctly that Conrad was speaking of art. But the terms he uses might be more closely associated with science: “the visible universe,” “matter,” “the facts of life,” “fundamental,” “essential.” Indeed, art and science are similar enterprises with the same ultimate aim: “The artist, then, like the thinker or the scientist, seeks the truth and makes his appeal. Impressed by the aspect of the world the thinker plunges into ideas, the scientist into facts” (vii). Artist, thinker, and scientist make up a trio of truth-seekers, each one tackling a particular aspect of the world – human sensations, ideas, facts – and “emerging” to present their findings.

Compare this picture of cooperative effort with Conrad’s reflections on art and science in a letter to Warrington Dawson, written sixteen years later:

[Art] is superior to science, in so far that it calls on us with authority to behold! to feel! whereas science at best can only tell us – it seems so! And that’s all it can do. It talks to us of the Laws of Nature. But that’s only one of its little jokes. It has never discovered anything of the sort. It has made out with much worry and blundering certain sequences of facts beginning in the dark and leading god only knows where. And it has built various theories to fit the form of activity it has perceived. But even the theory of

evolution has got a great big hole in it, right at the very root. And it is amusing to see the scientists walk round it with circumspection for the last sixty years, while pretending all the time that it isn't there.<sup>1</sup> (CL5 237-38)

No longer art's fellow truth-seeking comrade, science has become its inferior: a worrisome blunderer stumbling in the dark. The contrast between this strongly worded condemnation and the sympathetic attitude expressed a decade and a half earlier is sharp, and perhaps the most useful approach in examining this disparity would be to analyze the differences between Conrad's definitions of science in these respective passages.

In the Preface, Science is above all an active and exploratory process: the scientist "seeks the truth" and "plunges" into facts. In the letter to Dawson, it is described as complacent, wilfully ignorant, and lazy, with all its action in the past: "it *has* made out with much worry ... it *has* built various theories." Rather than venturing into the unknown, it rests on Laws it has established, and instead of adventurously assailing the mysterious void in the theory of evolution, scientists "walk round it ... pretending all the time that it isn't there."

Conrad, then, viewed the artist as an explorer of the universe – its forms, colours, lights, and shadows – and of the self: "the artist descends within." The artist also exhorts others to explore for themselves: "to behold! to feel!" Allan Hunter observes that in addition to such an examination of "the visible universe," Conrad also undertook exploring the various scientific theories of his day, "testing them, exploring them and eventually re-writing some of them" (1983: 6). "Exploratory in intent," each of his novels is "a reapplication of scientific theory to the 'real' world rendered in the novel. In this way, Conrad works towards a scientific understanding of the world" (Hunter 1983: 12, 6). Hunter's conviction regarding Conrad's total reliance upon scientific method and theory accurately to represent the truth of the world and the human condition may stem from Hunter's neglect of Conrad's 1913 letter and its contempt for science. Yet Hunter's effective demonstration of the immense role played by science in Conrad's work reveals that Conrad's assertion of Art as separate from and superior to Science, which he

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<sup>1</sup> Conrad's criticism of the "great big hole" in the theory of evolution should not be equated with disbelief in the theory. Later in this letter, he writes, "You don't suppose that I am fool enough to deny the *fact* of evolution. All I say is that the 'truth of life' is not in it wherever else it may lay" (CL5 238).

claims have been “implied in every line of my writings” (CL5 238), belies art as he actually practised it: that is, in a scientific manner.

We can infer that the letter to Dawson of 1913 does not condemn quite the same “science” that Conrad wrote of in 1897; that there existed for Conrad differing ways of practising science; and that he found the particular “science” he spoke of to Dawson distasteful. It had undergone a transformation that left it a far cry from the science practised in the earlier part of the nineteenth century by Alfred Russel Wallace, whom he admired, and the science he practised in his writing, science not as a means of explaining the universe through “Laws of Nature” but as an undertaking profoundly concerned with a sustained and on-going attempt to explore the great mystery of the universe. Hitherto, much critical work on Conrad and science has focussed on the manifestations of contemporary scientific thought in his work: for example, the Darwinian universe in which his works are set, composed of “the element of chance, and the fundamentally irrational and inhuman energies of nature” (Levine 1990: 244), or the gradual winding down of the world into a state of entropy, as predicted by the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Yet, Conrad’s work not only incorporates and manifests the scientific discoveries and notions of its era but also contains a critique of the scientific enterprise.

In *A History of Science in Society*, Ede and Cormack chart the development of Western science over the course of two millennia from its status as “natural philosophy ... an esoteric subject studied by a small, often very elite, group of people” to a discipline characterized by its usefulness: “We have come to expect science to produce things we can use, and, further, we need scientifically trained people to keep our complex systems working” (2004: 9–10). For England, this shift occurred in the nineteenth century with the increased effort of scientists to obtain government support for science in order to keep up with France and Germany. The British Association for the Advancement of Science was founded in 1831 with the intent of garnering national interest in and support for science. This growing professionalization of the sciences also marked the gradual extinction of “the great amateur gentleman scientists” such as the real-life Darwin and the fictional Sherlock Holmes and ushered in a generation of true and proper “scientists” (Ede and Cormack 2004: 244).

This evolution of science from independent philosophy into governmental and social institution corresponds with the evolution of science from an exploratory discipline into a complacent one as figured in

Conrad's Preface and letter, both written well after this historical moment in the early to mid-nineteenth century. This evolution also corresponds with the differing depictions of science in *Lord Jim* and *The Secret Agent*. The contrast between the primary scientist figures in each novel is marked. Moreover, the decline of the main scientist figure of *Lord Jim* from activity into passivity seems to foreshadow the metamorphosis of the scientist from reckless adventurer into the frail, pitifully deluded man of *The Secret Agent*, pursuing not discovery but destruction.

### Science and *Lord Jim*

*Lord Jim* has several would-be heroes, but its undisputed heroic figure is the aged entomologist-adventurer Stein. As he recounts one of his days in the Malay Archipelago, it becomes increasingly apparent that his past is the stuff of romance and adventure fiction, and his narrative concludes with the striking tableau of his standing over the bodies of his enemies, smoking pistol in the one hand and rare butterfly in the other. From Marlow's description of Stein and from Stein's own account, the scientist emerges as an adventurer whose life is intimately caught up with encountering and immersing himself in the unknown: venturing into the tropics and settling down in a foreign community and collecting new insect specimens. As is known, Conrad based Stein on Darwin's contemporary, the naturalist, geographer, and anthropologist Alfred Russel Wallace (Tagge 1996: 184), member of a dying breed of gentleman-scientists.

As has often been noted, Wallace's *The Malay Archipelago* (1869) was one of Conrad's favourite books, and given that much of *Lord Jim* is set in the Malay Archipelago, it is likely that Conrad may have been influenced greatly by the absence of division between the adventurous and the scientific in Wallace's engaging combination of travel narrative, geographical and biological survey, and anthropological study.<sup>2</sup> The style in which Wallace's account is written proclaims that science *is* adventure and romance, exploration and discovery, and the passionate pursuit of that which mystifies and eludes.

A recluse after the death of his friend, wife, and child, Stein when Marlow calls on him practices entomology by classification and observation, not pursuit and capture. Yet there remains a strong element of the strange and mysterious in his work. In the "shapeless gloom" of his

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<sup>2</sup> For a full discussion of Conrad's use of and interest in Wallace, see Houston (1997).

study, amid “Catacombs of beetles” (204), his activity possesses its own mystique:

I respected the intense, almost passionate, absorption with which he looked at a butterfly, as though on the bronze sheen of these frail wings, in the white tracings, in the gorgeous markings, he could see other things, an image of something as perishable and defying destruction as these delicate and lifeless tissues displaying a splendour unmarred by death. (207)

Unlike the intrusive and authoritarian scientific gaze Foucault speaks of in *The History of Sexuality* (1990), scrutiny does not rob the object of its mystery but increases it, propelling the scientist into a heightened awareness of the awe-inspiring and perplexing nature of the organism before him and urging him to uncover still more mysteries. This phenomenon occurs when Stein applies his taxonomic skills to Jim, the specimen Marlow wishes to identify, and Stein’s classification of Jim as a hopeless “romantic” stirs in both him and Marlow a sense of immense wonder at human complexity.

By and large, *Lord Jim* has been read as Conrad’s condemnation of rational inquiry and the assumption that any truth can be found in supposed “facts.” According to J. H. Stape, the novel educates the reader “into epistemological scepticism, a doubting of the adequacy of any means of apprehension and analysis” (1996: 77). Stape focuses on the insufficiency of Marlow’s persistent efforts to solve the puzzle of Jim, who at the end of the narrative “passes away under a cloud, inscrutable at heart” (416). I would question whether *Lord Jim* permits us to dismiss rigorous observation and inquiry as inadequate merely because they do not divest Jim of his inscrutability, for only through the process of rigorous inquiry is this thorough portrayal of Jim *as* an inscrutable enigma made possible.

The proliferation of details concerning Jim’s background, whereabouts, and ultimate fate is not delivered by an omniscient narrator, but by Marlow’s painstaking gathering of information about Jim. Although Marlow expresses contempt for the official inquiry into the *Patna* incident, he despises not the idea of inquiry, but the presumption that it will provide a conclusion to the shameful event. After it has finished, he undertakes his own inquiry in order to figure out this youth who “looked as genuine as a new sovereign” but with “some infernal alloy in his metal” (45). The metallurgical reference suggests that he regards Jim as an object of scientific curiosity, an unknown material to be scrutinized,

measured, and analyzed. Scientific scrutiny is also invoked elsewhere to describe Marlow's interest. At the Inquiry, Jim notices that Marlow's gaze is "not the fascinated stare of the others. It was an act of intelligent volition" (32–33); Marlow imagines him as a squirming beetle impaled on an entomologist's pin (42) and considers him "a specimen" (211) brought to Stein a conference that "resembled ... a medical consultation" (212).

The consequence of Marlow's and Stein's scientific inquiry is not Jim's demystification. Although less conspicuous than the vivid invocations of ghosts, shadows, and mists that haunt the novel, scientific investigation is present as well, describing and probing the depths of Jim and his circumstances, allowing one to fathom how unfathomable the unfathomable truly is. Even though Marlow and Stein cannot profess to have "figured Jim out" by their conversation's close, nor even after his death, they seem best to understand him by understanding how impossible it is to do so. In the inconclusive conclusion to their nocturnal discussion, they had "approached nearer to absolute Truth, which, like Beauty itself, floats elusive, obscure, half submerged, in the silent still waters of mystery" (216).

To be sure, classification and observation retain the ability to acknowledge and even intensify the enigmatic. Yet, the fact that such activity is sedentary, especially in comparison to Stein's earlier days, foreshadows the sudden shift to come in Marlow's depiction of Stein and his scientific activities. John G. Peters has read Stein's classification and preservation of insects as an attempt to ignore the frightening possibility of a chaotic universe: "If [Stein] can demonstrate natural order with his collections, then he implies a universal order and reinforces traditional cosmology" (1996: 51). The evaluation rings true when applied to the extreme orderliness of Stein's house and gardens towards the end of the novel (two years later in the chronology).

Not only has the cluttered and intriguing "cavern" of a study given way to cold and barren rooms, reminiscent of "a scrubbed cave" (347), but the untamed jungle of Stein's youth has also given way to a well-groomed, carefully categorized collection of flora and fauna. Every component of the garden has been labelled and understood, forming, in conjunction with the isolated and sterile interior of Stein's house, a laboratory. Established, wealthy, and content to stroll within the confines of his gardens, Stein, "aged greatly of late" (417), no longer inspires the same awe in Marlow that was so apparent in his initial reminiscences of his entomologist friend. Marlow's narrative concludes with a somewhat pitiable portrait of Stein as an elderly man no longer interested in

exploring the universe but instead, “preparing to leave all this; preparing to leave ...’ while he waves his hand sadly at his butterflies” (417).

From one perspective, Jim is a failed version of Stein. The similarity between the two is established in the scene in Stein’s study, where the terms “romantic” and “romance” apply to both of them. But unlike Stein, Jim is self-absorbed, immature, and ultimately unable to live up to the expectations of the Patusan community and of himself. However, at one point, Marlow briefly implies that Stein is a failed version of Jim. As Marlow contemplates Jim’s “transgression,” he asks, “And yet is not mankind itself, pushing on in its blind way, driven by a dream of its greatness and its power upon the dark paths of excessive cruelty and of excessive devotion? And what is the pursuit of truth, after all” (349–50)? The implication is that such was Jim’s crime: “pushing ... driven ... upon the dark paths.” This sinister exploration of “dark paths” is nothing less than “the pursuit of truth,” the aim of the artist, the thinker, and the scientist. While Jim dies in pursuit of his elusive and “shadowy ideal of conduct,” Stein has stopped to build an abode by the path already trodden.

### Science in *The Secret Agent*

Anne Tagge, who has written on Conrad’s belief in the human need for movement and activity, writes of Conrad’s admiration for Wallace that

Conrad glorified such a roving life for Europeans as contrasted to his dismal portraits of characters stuck in one place (like Almayer). His most romantic Malays are also based on the roving, fighting traders. ... Living in England, Conrad apparently missed, if not the dangers of the sea, its opportunities for constant new revelations. To lose momentum was to die. (1996: 187)

If science, as described in *Lord Jim*, has “lost momentum,” by the beginning of *The Secret Agent* its inertia is extreme.

Much has been written on the immense role played by the Second Law of Thermodynamics,<sup>3</sup> and its accompanying prediction of the eventual and universal “cessation of motion,” in shaping the novel’s structure and themes. In 1862 Lord Kelvin summarized the Second Law of Thermodynamics in popular form as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Clark (2004) and Houen (1998).

The second great law of Thermodynamics involves a certain principle of *irreversible action in nature*. It is thus shown that, although mechanical energy is indestructible, there is a universal tendency to its dissipation, which produces gradual augmentation and diffusion of heat, cessation of motion, and exhaustion of potential energy through the material universe. (cited in Whitworth 1998: 43)

Michael Whitworth observes that the world of *The Secret Agent* is in an advanced state of death and decay, a vision not uncommon in fiction of the period, due to the popular awareness of the Second Law and its implications: "It is a commonplace that the *fin de siècle* imagined itself apocalyptically as the *fin du globe*" (1998: 47). Whitworth remarks on the feebleness of the various suns, physical and metaphorical, in Conrad's novel, all advancing towards their cold, final end: the weakening sun in the sky, the metaphorical sun of financial capital dissipating under socialism's threat, and the sun shining on the British Empire, which "will not only go down, but go out altogether" (1998: 57).

The universal "cessation of motion" affects the novel's characters, most of whom are inactive, whether through indolence and complacency (Verloc), or through an inability to convert word and thought into action as with the anarchist-revolutionaries, or through physical shortcomings: the obesity of "fat pig" Verloc, "large, white, plump" Vladimir, and "round and obese" Michaelis (16, 22, 44); Winnie's mother, whose "swollen legs render her inactive" (11).

Science proves no exception, and in contrast to the passionate, exploratory undertaking of the unknown depicted in the first part of *Lord Jim*, in *The Secret Agent* it is the god of a dilapidating universe: "there is learning – science. Any imbecile that has got an income believes in that. He does not know why, but he believes it matters somehow. It is the sacro-sanct fetish. ... They believe that in some mysterious way science is at the source of their material prosperity" (30). Somewhat self-mockingly, Conrad describes a society (perhaps his own) in which art has become ineffectual and of "no account," and science has the ultimate power to lay down the law, so to speak.<sup>4</sup> By implementing the First Meridian and Greenwich Mean Time throughout the nation in 1880, astronomy controls time, hourly reminding all England of the authority

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<sup>4</sup> Such a reality was entirely conceivable. In 1910, Conrad reviewed a book titled *The Ascending Effort*, which argued that art should play its part in spreading "the doctrines of science" just as it once aided in "popularizing the Christian tenets" (61).



of science. The anarchists invoke science to give their arguments consequence: "I am speaking now to you scientifically – scientifically" says Ossipon to Verloc (44). Ossipon can only view the world through the crackpot "scientific" theories of Lombroso. As implied by Conrad's use of religious language and imagery, Ossipon's complete "submission to the rule of the science" has become a blind and unthinking faith. As we have seen, Ossipon is only one of a multitude who worships at the altar of an established and unshakeable "science." Instead of being an act (the pursuit and analysis of a butterfly) science in this novel is inert, and instead of stirring further curiosity and exploration, it produces mesmerized disciples.

Even the sinister and supposedly independently minded Professor seems to ascribe wholly and unthinkingly to science, converting from "the faith of conventicles" to "the science of colleges" at a young age (66). Possessing "a frenzied puritanism of ambition" that he has "nursed ... as something secularly holy" (66), he has developed a Eugenicist agenda proposing the extermination of the weak. Perhaps the supreme irony of The Professor's credo is that he himself seems a prime target for the extermination he has in mind. In contrast to the young Stein whose "intrepidity of spirit" and "physical courage" set him apart, The Professor is a weak and "dingy little man in spectacles" (52). And in contrast to Stein's inquisitive "student's face ... with the resolute, searching glance" (202), The Professor's "round black rimmed spectacles [with] their self-confident glitter" (53) are smug, non-inquisitive, unconcerned.

The scientist of *The Secret Agent* no longer seeks anything. Certain that he has already found the final solution, he is blind to his own weaknesses and absurdity. If, in *Lord Jim*, we see the step-by-step transformation of the scientist's milieu from the wilds of Southeast Asia to the cluttered cabinet of wonders, and from there to the controlled laboratory, in *The Secret Agent*, are the denizens of such laboratories. Once an assistant demonstrator in chemistry at a technical institute and an employee in a dye-factory laboratory and now the inhabitant of a single room in which he conducts his experiments in explosives, The Professor's life lacks the warmth and passion that characterized Stein's adventures. No humans, insects, or other specimens of life enter his laboratory of death. Rather, it is a room in which the prevailing question is, "How to end life most efficiently and quickly?"

The shift from the figure of Stein to The Professor is noted above as a metamorphosis from a reckless adventurer into a frail and powerless man. That metamorphosis is not seamless: after all, the elderly Stein,

while lacking his youthful vigour, is far from sinister or evil. Rather, The Professor may be regarded as the most terrifying embodiment of inactivity and contentment. If the young Stein draws his strength from his freedom to roam the wilderness and “in the destructive element immerse” (for that is what he tells Marlow is “the way. To follow the dream, and again to follow the dream” (214–15), The Professor draws his strength from a necessary immobility. He declares that he alone possesses the power to rouse this complacent, mediocre, and flabby society from its stupor. Yet, this power, to blow up himself and all those around him, can only remain in his possession as long as he *doesn’t* blow himself up. Not only does The Professor greatly overestimate the power he actually possesses, given the relatively short-lived impact a small, single explosion would have on the social order, but also once he is destroyed and rendered harmless, the threat he poses will cease to exist. He boasts, “What is effective is the belief those people have in my will to use the means. That’s their impression. It is absolute. Therefore I am deadly” (57). To remain so, he must remain in a state of self-imposed paralysis.

The authority of science and the practitioner of science in *The Secret Agent* is contingent on immobility – science as an institution rooted in established fact, and the scientist as a being with the *potential* to act, hoarding up a store of potential energy to be released at some future time. The utter absence in this deadened metropolis of space to roam free, to explore, stands in sharp contrast to the overseas colonies of *Lord Jim* with their uncharted wildernesses and inscrutable inhabitants.

We find this contrast to the colonies even in *The Secret Agent*: The Assistant Commissioner, a man with a desk-job who yearns for more exciting detective work, recalls fondly the days of his youth spent in a tropical colony: “He had liked his work there. It was police work. He had been very successful in tracking and breaking up certain nefarious secret societies amongst the natives” (79–80). His active and exciting life has now been reduced to a membership in the elite Explorers Club. Founded in 1904 in New York, the international society is dedicated to the promotion of scientific research and discovery and the preservation of “the instinct to explore” (<[www.explorers.org/join/join.php](http://www.explorers.org/join/join.php)>). In Conrad, however, the Club’s members engage chiefly in card-playing.

Even though the Assistant Commissioner seizes the opportunity afforded by the Greenwich bombing to do some sleuthing, his evening foray into the shifting and murky depths of London is brief, ending at half-past ten with an official report, followed by an encounter with

Vladimir in the wealthy Lady Patroness's glittering drawing-rooms. In short, his "exploration" serves to bolster society's established and conventional institutions, not to question or challenge them. Perhaps the only character who truly questions the society in which he lives is the over-compassionate Stevie, whose attitude of inquiry strongly resembles that of Conrad's "truth-seeking" scientist. His attempt to understand the world's pain and misery takes the form of a scientist painstakingly formulating a statement to express his observations and experience: "It was as though he had been trying to fit all the words he could remember to his sentiments in order to get some sort of corresponding idea" (132). Remarkably, once he has successfully delivered the gist of his discovery – "Bad world for poor people" – Stevie does not leave off but persists in his attempt, leading him to startling truths about the very foundations on which society is built.

During their meeting in Verloc's sitting-room, the anarchists discuss their plans for a new order, or at least the toppling of the established one. Yet as they sit comfortably by the fire and converse in the ready-made phrases of revolutionary discourse, Stevie in the next room laboriously sketches out the frighteningly chaotic reality to which they profess to aspire in that famous scene of his drawing circles. While the anarchists lounge about, Stevie's artistic endeavour to conceive "the inconceivable" pushes him to the limits of physical exertion, to a point where he is "ready to snap." The vague conceptions of anarchy uttered by the revolutionaries, all of whom (except Verloc) are financially supported by women, pale in comparison to Stevie's realization on paper of total and overwhelming "cosmic chaos."

Stevie is unafraid to strain ahead towards "the inconceivable," the questions (and answers) that others are content to leave alone. And perhaps we should not be surprised that his efforts are described as "a mad art." Yet, *The Secret Agent* is in no way a glorification of art over science, of art as a replacement for what science can no longer do. For the novel emphasizes that art has also been reified from an act into an institution: "directing your blows at something outside the ordinary passions of humanity is the answer," Vladimir tells Verloc. "Of course, there is art. ... But it would not be serious enough. Art has never been their fetish. It's like breaking a few back windows in a man's house" (30). Although lacking the undisputed authority of institutionalized science, in the world of *The Secret Agent*, art has also lost its active, exploratory nature, its willingness to "attempt the inconceivable."

Conrad's critique of science in *The Secret Agent* and in his letter to Dawson can be read as a critique of a certain type of science, not science itself. The target of ire is an enterprise, artistic or scientific, that is no longer concerned with the enigmas of existence. Nothing is stagnant, explored, explained, complete, and done with, whether the dynamic undertaking of science and art or the ever-baffling universe and its denizens, which science and art will never finish exploring, observing, describing, and understanding.

The sailor, subject to the whims and fancies of the vast and unpredictable universe by virtue of his trade, is also a kind of scientist, obtaining a deep awareness of all the nuances and shadings of humankind, himself included. Marlow speaks of how Jim became chief mate "without ever having been tested by those events of the sea that show in the light of day the inner worth of a man, the edge of his temper, and the fibre of his stuff" (10). The passage describes seafaring as a scientific experiment, testing the properties of an individual and revealing his impurities and falsities. In return for submitting to experimentation, the sea schools one in the great enigma of the capricious universe. Fondly recollecting the "bewildered little shaver[s]" (44) once under his care, Marlow announces: "By-and-by, when he has learned all the little mysteries and the one great secret of the craft, he shall be fit to live or die as the sea may decree" (45). The esoteric knowledge the sea imparts is not a knowledge eradicating mysteries or secrets but *consisting* of them and thus generating further questions and opening up new depths to probe.

The resulting definition of the scientist, primarily conceived of by Conrad in these terms of active exploration and discovery, suggests an inherent and unsettling partnership between science (as ideally practised) and imperialism. In order to remain in constant motion and avoid stagnation, science must have perpetual access to unexplored and untrammelled regions, the "blank spaces on the earth" ("Heart of Darkness," 52). Andrea White addresses this issue in part in her examination of the influence of exploration adventure narratives on Conrad's writings. Focusing on Conrad's earlier work, she highlights the important distinction between Conrad and the adventure writers who came before him:

Like many Victorians before him, Conrad admired man's capacity to dream, to reach, but he had the modernist's double vision which demanded that he applaud the desire but condemn its disastrous consequences, both at once. And as the maps filled up, the dreams gave way to facts, often unpalatable ones, and the adventure turned inward. (1993: 6-7)

White points out that Conrad poses a challenge to the degrading constructions of the uncivilized imperial subject conventionally enacted by the adventure tradition, resulting in a “double vision”: admiration of the desire “to dream, to reach” via expedition and conquest but also censure of the colonial enterprise’s “disastrous consequences.” Conrad’s glorification of active and exploratory science, which necessitates the foray into unknown territories and societies (especially in the context of Conrad’s time), is similarly tempered by a recognition of this dark side to the exploratory process as carried out by Europe: that is, too often hand-in-hand with exploitation and domination.

Conrad’s exaltation of noble, exploratory science and his condemnation of stagnant, complacent science in *Lord Jim* and *The Secret Agent* also functions as an admission of the impossibility of the first and the inevitability of the second. *Lord Jim* can be read as a eulogy for the death of the notion of benevolent colonial rule. To one more seasoned and more travelled, such benevolent rule belongs to the bygone era of childhood and boys’ adventure stories. In the same way, the novel is also a eulogy for the ideal of the noble and Quixotic scientific exploration. Stein *cannot* remain the energetic scientist of his youth, for the possibility of such romantic, exploratory science belongs to an earlier, more innocent time, one ignorant of the destructiveness an inquisitive and adventurous white man such as Gentleman Brown can wreak in the course of his exploration and determination to “trample all the earth under his feet” (384).

An innocent, exploratory science has ceased to exist because it has become a thing of legend. To flourish in the inert and corpulent world of *The Secret Agent*, science must adapt, evolving into the sinister and egoistic science of The Professor. Stevie, the guileless and “truth-seeking” scientist of Conrad’s idealism in the Preface to *The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus,’* cannot survive in such a milieu where all insist upon self-delusion and preserving complacent delusion. Having failed to shake the foundations of the institution of a powerful and established Science, Stevie lies in fragments near the roots of a tree. Conrad rails against the scientific enterprise of his day in his letter to Dawson. And yet *Lord Jim* and *The Secret Agent* seem regretfully to inform the reader of the absence of an alternative: the wide-eyed purity of scientific inquiry is an illusion, a fanciful and childish ideal now dead, and yet, imperishable and tantalizing, hovering like a preserved butterfly, “defying destruction ... displaying a splendour unmarred by death” (*Lord Jim*, 207).

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## Conrad's *Arrow of Gold*

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TWO OF CONRAD'S late works began life in the 1890s, being abandoned for two decades before their resuscitation. *The Rescue* famously caused its author much heartache, painfully reported in missives to Garnett and Cunninghame Graham, and was finally completed as a "clearing the decks" operation after the First World War. *The Arrow of Gold* is not a completion but a reworking of *The Sisters*, a much shorter fragment than the tortuous pages of *The Rescuer*, whose final 78 pages of nineteenth-century manuscript became just a page and half of a twentieth-century novel.

*The Rescue*, a prequel to Conrad's first two novels, receives some, if mainly passing, attention because of this. Apart from the *Tremolino* incident in *The Mirror of the Sea*, *The Arrow of Gold* stands or, as many readers feel, falls alone. Neither has received much critical acclaim, suggesting that no great harm would be done to the world of letters should these sleeping dogs be left to lie. The editors of Volume 6 of *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad* opine that "few people now write about or even read *The Rescue* or *The Arrow of Gold*, and fewer still would turn to them again" (CL6 xxvi), whilst Martin Seymour-Smith, to the contrary, states that "all Conrad's books ... even *The Arrow of Gold* are of the greatest interest and merit" (1995: 95). This latter comment appears in *Student Guide to Joseph Conrad*, indicating to the uninitiated where priorities should not lie.

Not everyone agrees that *The Arrow of Gold* is a reworking of *The Sisters*. In his introduction to the 1928 edition of the abandoned fragment, Ford Madox Ford reported being asked to complete it and summarized his understanding of what Conrad had planned:

Stephen was to have met, fallen in love with and married the elder sister. The younger sister, failing in the religious vocation that her uncle the priest desired her to have was to come to Paris and to stay with the young couple in Stephen's pavilion, the tyrannous character of her aunt being such that she could not live with the orange merchant and his wife. The elder sister proving almost equally domineering Stephen was to fall before the gentler charm of the younger. And the story was to end with the slaying of both the resulting child and the mother by the fanatic priest.

(1928: 8)

This sounds very dramatic and is, indeed, different from what happens in *The Arrow of Gold*, although the change of affection from domineering elder sister to gentler younger one does echo the final part of *Nostramo*.

Ford does not mention *The Arrow* at all in his introductory essay, although there are surely too many links between the stories to be ignored. Each novel relates how two sisters (Rita and Theresa in *The Sisters*; Rita and Therese in *The Arrow of Gold*) are brought up by an uncle, a Basque priest of Royalist sympathies. In both stories, Rita is sent to stay with another uncle, an orange merchant. In *The Sisters*, this other uncle's name is Ortega, while in *The Arrow of Gold*, Ortega is the name of the cousin hopelessly besotted with Rita both as boy and man and who hounds her desperately. After his unsuccessful attempt at suicide, this Ortega abruptly transfers his affections to the other sister and runs off with her. At one stage, Conrad even thought of calling the later book "Two Sisters," but rejected the notion because, although it "would be a title much more closely related to the facts," it was "too precise and also too commonplace" (CL6 185). When it seemed that *The Arrow of Gold* and *The Rescue* were ready to be published at about the same time, Conrad felt that *The Rescue* should take precedence because it was "really an earlier book than the Arrow" (CL6 319), which suggests that in his mind it was not intimately connected with *The Sisters*, since that preceded the first attempt at *The Rescue*.

There is enough evidence there, then, to make the link and with variations on the proposed *dénouement* used in other novels, one wonders what scope there was for *The Sisters* to be satisfactorily finished. Ford may well have been wise to turn down the commission.

Conrad's remarks about *The Arrow* encourage poor opinions of it. To his friend Ted Sanderson, he wrote:

You can imagine what sort of stuff that is. No colour, no relief, no tonality; the thinnest possible squeaky babble.<sup>1</sup> And when I've finished with it, I shall go out and sell it in the market place for 20 times the money I had for the Nigger, 30 times the money I had for the Mirror of the Sea —

It is a horrible prospect. And because I have not enough Satanism in my nature I can't enjoy it. (CL6 164)

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<sup>1</sup> *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters* (1927: 2: 198) reads "bubble" for "babble" (and thus possibly plays on "bubble and squeak"). It is unclear which reading is correct, although the meaning remains effectively unchanged.



This was written while he was in the throes of writing. Once the novel had been published, he would claim, "I have never been able to read *these* proofs in cold blood. ... there are some of these 42 year old episodes of which I cannot think now without a slight tightness of the chest – un petit serrement de cœur" (CL6 451).

In the early stages of the story's gestation Conrad seems to have considered its possible treatment as a play. To Pinker early in 1917 he wrote, "To put a femme galante (not exactly in that character but as an ardent Royalist) and her peasant sister, very hard headed, very religious, and very mercenary on the stage will not be an easy matter" (CL6 31), and, indeed, Katherine Mansfield complained that the plot culminates in "a crisis so fantastical that we cannot but fancy Mr Conrad of to-day smiling at its stage horrors."<sup>2</sup> Certainly one thinks of the book as an indoor novel, working itself out in a series of scenes with many outdoor events (the old priest in the mountains, for instance) being related by characters to the narrator, not directly by him.

In his "Author's Note," Conrad speaks of "the quality of initiation ... into the life of passion ... in the whole volume of 'The Arrow of Gold,' *that* and no other is the subject offered to the public" (ix). This public, Susan Jones has suggested, increasingly included women readers with whom Conrad was seeking to engage and for whom "the novel's interest lies not so much with the rites of passage narrative of the young hero, but with Rita's equivocation and resistance of the romance role" (1999: 173). Conrad commented: "What it deals with is her private life: her sense of her own position, her sentiments and her fears. It is really an episode, related dramatically and in the detailed manner of a study, in that particular life. That it is also an episode in the general experience of the young narrator ... serves only to round it up and give it completeness as a novel" (CL6 186).

Effectively the narrative charts the beginning and the end of passion and covers an emotional experience not unique to M. George. Many of us have been through the stage when the world revolved through the lips of the loved one and seemed to be at an end if those lips were withheld or turned away. Second time round there is a touch of cynicism about the feeling that this is "the only girl in the world – again," and that's what the situation would be for M. George beyond the narrative if he should ever find someone else.

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<sup>2</sup> *Athenaeum*, 8 August 1919: 720 (cited in CL6 463 n.4).

That this is an unrealistic passion is shown from the start. Just as, in “Heart of Darkness,” Marlow becomes increasingly intrigued by what he hears of Kurtz, so in *The Arrow of Gold*, M. George is fascinated by Rita even before he has met her – romanced by hearsay, so to speak. In his evening with Mills and Blunt she appears through their eyes as a woman with enormous influence in high places; as a work of art (and thus a possession); as a figure to evoke legends (the Elysian Fields) and historical comparisons (Cleopatra for Mills, La Vallière for Blunt – both women noted for sensuality, although the latter apparently needed much royal persuasion at first); as a peasant girl, who became a model because of her beautiful body; and a lady, who is both alone and has a secret fear. M. George reacts like one ready to fall in love:

And all these things were dominated by a feminine figure which to my imagination had only a floating outline, now invested with the grace of girlhood, now with the prestige of a woman; and indistinct in both these characters. For these two men had *seen* her, while to me she was only being “presented,” elusively, in vanishing words, in the shifting tones of an unfamiliar voice. (31)

I was delighted. I had never heard before a woman spoken about in that way, a real live woman that is, not a woman in a book. For this was no poetry and yet it seemed to put her in the category of visions. (34)

Already, then, M. George is fantasizing and in so doing joins a large club of fantasists. When he and Rita finally meet, he experiences “a vivid sense of her physical perfection of limb and balance of nerves, and not so much of grace, as of absolute harmony” and considers her voice to be “low pitched, penetrating, and of the most seductive gentleness” (67). Soon after, he describes an impulse to kiss her forearm, explaining this as “So familiar had I become already with her in my thoughts” (74). Thoughts, however, are not reality, and Rita’s regard for Mills as one “who didn’t approach me as if I had been a precious object in a collection” (84) should give him a hint as to how to proceed.

The whole Carlist cause is a fantasy, of course, and it is significant that Blunt is a Confederate, on the losing side in the American Civil War and with no hope of winning this one. His refusal to face facts is shown by his shunning the American Consulate on the grounds that “They are all Yankees there” (20), which, of course, has no effect on its existence.

His infatuation for Rita is similarly doomed to failure. “*Je suis Américain, catholique et gentilhomme*,” he proclaims after previously boasting “I live by my sword” (18, 14). The first of these assertions echoes Conrad’s sense of identity in childhood as a “Pole, Catholic, nobleman” (in Najder, ed., 1964: 8), the second, Blunt’s own unrealistic pose as knight errant.

Obsession is a common theme in Conrad, and young lovers suffer from this more than most. There are many signs of reality for M. George to take note of. “You men never grow up” (90), says Mme Leonore to him and Dominic, and, as far as the men in this novel are concerned, she is right. Rita herself tries to bring some reality into the proceedings when faced with M. George’s hyperbole:

“And you have never uttered a word yet that didn’t change into a pearl as it dropped from your lips. At least not before me.”

She glanced down deliberately and said, “This is better. But I don’t see any of them on the floor.”

... “Haven’t I caught them up and treasured them all in my heart?” (124)

He notes, soon after, that the door to her dwelling is “frightfully like any other commonplace door” (142) but fails to let that moment of reality influence him. Instead, he goes through emotions common to those who fear that the object of their desire will be unobtainable, one of which is that the emotions are somehow uniquely intense in him. He elevates Rita to the realms of divinity (88), thus joining Blunt and Mills who also elevated her to legendary status, but this, of course, inflates his own sense of importance – no ordinary woman for him! In his dreams Rita appears as a huntress nymph, throwing her arrow “like a dart” at his heart, though it never quite reaches it. Rita again tries to demythologize his fantasy, claiming that “The huntress was wild but she was not evil. And she was no nymph, but only a goatherd girl. Dream of her no more, my dear” (332). There is a similar exchange earlier:

“But has it never occurred to your sagacity that I just, simply, loved you?”

“Just – simply,” she repeated in a wistful tone. (217)

There are grounds for her hesitation, since George suffers bouts of self-pity and jealousy, which signal the possessive nature of romantic attach-

ment and means that, alone with Rita, he is too concerned with his feelings to consider hers.

This is particularly true after Blunt has unsuccessfully argued his case before Rita whilst his mother is trying to deter M. George, in a scene that echoes Lady Catherine De Bourgh's similar efforts with Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*. Rita is beset by men who want to possess her in one form or another. What she needs is a friend, and in his current state of acute self-perception, George cannot be that. Rose speaks truly when she claims, "No! Madame has no friends. Not one!" (228).

Amidst all these fantasists the one worldly character is, paradoxically, Therese, despite her nun-like appearance and protestations. Ironically, whilst the supposedly sensual Rita turns away from a permanent relationship with George and starts thinking of convents, Therese eagerly embraces it with Ortega. Moving back from this point we can see how the reality of Therese's nature has been present all along. When Blunt first mentions her during his long story of Rita, the Captain refers to her as "just a peasant woman of thirty-four or so. A rustic nun," but George (looking ahead in his narrative) qualifies this assessment immediately: "Yes, nun-like enough. And yet not altogether" (40).

From Rita we learn that Therese is in contact with Ortega, the fanatically besotted cousin who kept forcing Rita to agree to marry him when they were children. Again, with the book's end in mind, some of Rita's remarks about her sister acquire a deeper and more sexual significance: "But I believe she really knows how to make men more comfortable. Upon my word I think she likes to look after men. ... She will no doubt develop a saintly sort of affection for you, too" (119).

Not so saintly perhaps. Soon afterwards Rita confirms, "She likes young men, the younger the better" (121). It is tempting to feel that Therese's disapproval of George's admiration for Rita is rooted in jealousy as she sees all these men infatuated with her sister with not a second glance for her. Her defence of the young Ortega is again significant:

Did she tell you about a boy, the son of pious and rich parents, whom she tried to lead astray into the wildness of thoughts like her own, till the poor dear child drove her off because she outraged his modesty? I saw him often with his parents at Sunday mass. The grace of God preserved him and made him quite a gentleman in Paris.  
(158-59)

Therese may be simply adopting the family opinion of this relationship, as Robert Hampson suggests (1992: 268), but it may also be that she sides with Ortega because she likes him and wishes he would cast his eyes in her direction instead of Rita's.

This may also explain why, once George is completely ruled by the image of Rita, he feels, with regard to Therese, "It seemed to me that I was no longer such a favourite with her as I used to be. ... It was as if some idea, some fruitful notion had killed in her all the softer and more humane emotions" (239). Schopenhauer felt that the will only really revealed itself in action (1960: 17); if one applies this to Therese's conduct, then it seems likely that eloping with Ortega is not a sudden aberration but a long-cherished desire. Since Therese's other love is money and she has informed us that Ortega's parents are rich, that provides another motivation for the move.

M. George's shipwreck and the necessity of reporting this fact to Rita brings the various relationships to a head, for Jose Ortega, the trusted agent who is to act as messenger, is the very same Ortega who tormented Rita with his fervent affections as a child. George has been planning to entrust him with a private letter of his own to Rita, which "would be such a letter of farewell as no lover had ever written, no woman in the world had ever read, since the beginning of love on earth" (264). Once again George is inflating the importance and uniqueness of his relationship, unaware that every thwarted lover since the beginning of love has planned to do the self-same thing. It has echoes, indeed, of the courtly love tradition. He has yet to discover that what he is being initiated into is a common not a unique experience, but his discovery of Ortega's identity ends all thoughts of such an enterprise.

At this stage, George is subject to "acute hallucinations of a woman with an arrow of gold in her hair" (267) and feels that "The Rita that haunted me had no history; she was but the principle of life charged with fatality. Her form was only a mirage of desire decoying one step by step into despair" (268). Ortega is clearly further along that path, since he gazes at George "in a way in which the damned gaze out of their cauldrons of boiling pitch at some soul walking scot free in the place of torment" (271).

Ironically, George, thinking Rita is in Tolosa and determined to keep Ortega away from her, takes him to the exact place where she is: Rita's house in the street of the Consuls. When George discovers Rita in the drawing-room, he once more lets his self-pity take control, determining that "I would not let my natural anger, my just fury be disarmed by any

assumption of pathos or dignity.” He does admit, though, “I suppose I was really out of my mind and what in the middle ages would have been called ‘possessed’ by an evil spirit” (293). He claims to have had “as clear a flame as ever burnt on earth from the most remote ages before that eternal thing which is in you, which is your heirloom. And is it my fault that what I had to give was real flame, and not a mystic’s incense” (299). He would do better to forget his feelings and concentrate on Rita’s, but his ignorance of this is shown by a subsequent exchange:

“I have got to be what I am, and that, *amigo*, is not so easy; because I may be simple, but like those on whom there is no peace I am not One. No I am not One!”

“You are all the women in the world,” I whispered bending over her. She didn’t seem to be aware of anything and only spoke – always to the glow.

“If I were that I would say: God help them then.” (300)

George’s comment is thus of no help, and, significantly, Rita laments soon after that “It would have hurt me. But nobody ever paid much attention to my feelings” (301). The difference between a true lover, who would have that concern, and one who simply seeks to possess the object of his adoration is immense, and George is far closer to the latter than the former.

He is, at least, not so fanatical in this respect as the desperate Ortega, who, alerted by Therese, besieges the pair. At length the Spaniard stabs himself with a knife, and Rita announces “He has killed me ... The little joy that was in me” (330). She and George spend the night in George’s room, but only the spectre of the outraged Therese, waiting outside, prevents her from leaving. Again, it is possible to detect a hint of jealousy in Therese’s condemnation.

George’s narrative ends with a kiss, and it seems that all may yet be well with this love affair, but the second note, returning the tale to a more impersonal outlook, records the duel with Blunt, which ends any chance of that romantic happy ending. Once Rita has assured herself that George will recover, she leaves. Having seen one man attempt suicide and two others duel because of her, causing the one she is most fond of to come close to death, she evidently decides that her presence is baleful. She may be willing to die for George, but she does not want men dying for her. Mills reports, “as she asked me despairingly, could she go through life veiled from head to foot or go out of it altogether into a convent?” (348). Madame Leonore is right when she proclaims “She is for no man!”

(135). (The very same words are said with less accuracy by Catherine about Arlette in *The Rover*.)

Since she left the mountains her life has been engulfed in illusions, the illusions of the world of art being followed by the illusions of the Carlist cause and, with such deceptions all round her, she can no longer trust herself to any one person. Love has become just another unreality, and the unrealistic way in which she is regarded by her lovers, when she knows she is really just a woman, and a vulnerable one at that, seems to confirm this. Mills considers her as “a young virgin intelligence, steeped for nearly five years in the talk of Allegre’s studio, where every hard truth had been cracked and every belief had been worried into shreds. They were like a lot of intellectual dogs, you know,” prompting Blunt to comment that Rita is “the intellectual personality altogether adrift, a soul without a home” (56). Rita herself admits this pervasive influence with regret:

“I have too much reverence in me to invoke the name of God of whom clever men have robbed me a long time ago. How could I help it? For the talk was clever and – and I had a mind. And I am also, as Therese says, naturally sinful. Yes, my dear, I may be naturally wicked but I am not evil and I could die for you.” (300)

It is not just religious faith of which she has been robbed, it seems. Belief in meaningful relationships has also been vanquished: she will die for George but not live with him.

In a sense, violence cures the contending men of their passion. Ortega recovers to run off with Therese; George goes to his other love – the sea. The arrow of gold he carries with him is lost overboard, and the illusion of romantic passion it represents may be said to go with it.

The novel may be much condemned, but it charts in detail the anguish of the forlorn lover destined not to attain his love. Is this what Conrad felt in Marseilles in the 1870s? If so, has he transferred the suicide attempt he made to Ortega (via a different instrument) and reserved his legend of the duel for M. George?

There is a clue to Conrad’s outlook in his first novel, *Almayer’s Folly*. Here is Dain Maroola, realizing that Nina has come to him in his hut in the forest:

Neither of them spoke. He was regaining his senses in a slight tremor that ran upwards along his rigid body and hung

about his trembling lips; she drew back her head and fastened her eyes on his, in one of those long looks that are a woman's most terrible weapon; a look that is more stirring than the closest touch, and more dangerous than the thrust of a dagger because it also whips the soul out of the body but leaves the body alive and helpless, to be swayed here and there by the capricious tempests of passion and desire. — A look that enwraps the whole body, and that penetrates into the innermost recesses of a being bringing terrible defeat in the delirious uplifting of accomplished conquest. It has the same meaning for the man of the forests and the sea as for the man threading the paths of the more dangerous wilderness of houses and streets. Men that had felt in their breasts the awful exultation such a look awakens become mere things of to-day — which is paradise; forget yesterday — which was suffering; care not for to-morrow — which may be perdition. They wish to live under that look for ever. It is the look of woman's surrender. — (128-29)

The key word here is “surrender” because it implies a battle to win the lady's affections. The imagery is used throughout literature — one thinks of Jane Austen's heroines and their “conquests” — but it none the less seems strange here. Dain has had to wage no such battle; Nina was literally falling over her mother for a view of him when he first came, and it was love at first sight for both. Far more appropriate would be the word had Rita bestowed such a glance upon M. George. But for a confident lover, assured of the mutuality of affection, the concepts of “battle” and “surrender” are out of place. Only a lover, uncertain of his response, would view his wooing in this way.

To what extent does this word reflect Conrad's early and unsuccessful amorous adventures? The word is one most likely to be applied by an author who has battled in vain to win his lady's affections. The apparently casual way in which Conrad asked Jessie George to marry him does not suggest that these feelings were his at that time, although they may indicate his nervousness. Jessie Conrad comments on his “strange proposal of marriage” in *Joseph Conrad as I Knew Him*, revealing that “He had begun by announcing that he had not very long to live and no intention of having children; but such as his life was (his shrug was very characteristic), he thought we might spend a few happy years together” (1926: 105). In her follow-up volume, she refers to “the expression of gloomy determination” on his face and recalls his words: “Look here my dear, we had better get married and out of this. Look at the weather. We



will get married at once and get over to France. How soon can you be ready? In a week – a fortnight?” (1935: 12).

Jessie’ Conrad’s memory is not always consistent (she meets Conrad in late 1893 in the latter book and November 1894 in the former), but what is clear is that she was exceedingly fond of Conrad and Conrad was aware of this. He was confident of her response. With the illusion of romantic passion (his arrow of gold) behind him, it seems, Conrad prepared for a practical marriage, an older M. George ready to wed a Miss George in a curious symmetry of name. Since Conrad insisted that his wife burn all his letters to her – “Not one escaped,” she reports (1926: 106) – it is hard to comment further. Were they burnt because they were too passionate – or not passionate enough?

*The Arrow of Gold*, then, frustrates our desires for successful love affairs and successful lovers. Whether the story is more satisfactory to the female eye I am not equipped to say, but there is clearly more chance of empathy with Rita’s situation and decision. A happy ending would not be realistic, given the psychological problems that have beset Rita in all her dealings with men and the apparent inability of George to bring his notions of her down to earth. Men should be able to empathize with the desperate feelings of M. George and even, perhaps, with the extremities shown by Ortega, but not all may care to admit that, in such a situation, these are male feelings accurately expressed, especially when young. Our older more cynical selves may not care to recall the days when romance had reality, but then there is a case for arguing that a cynic is simply a disillusioned romantic. Conrad’s distaste for “looking round the corner” (CL1 370), something he accused Kipling of doing, may reflect something of that. Daniel R. Schwarz feels that one of Conrad’s motives for writing *The Arrow of Gold* was “to affirm his belief in passionate love” (1982: 125). The novel, however, seems to chronicle not just M. George’s initiation into romantic passion but also his departure from it.

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## Joseph Conrad at the London Sailors' Home

**Alston Kennerley**

*University of Plymouth*

I am not likely to forget my early days in Well Street and the good will shown to a stranger by all there – and especially by your late Father, who so kindly assisted me in becoming (I hope not an altogether unworthy) British subject; and your own uniform kindness. Kindly give my best regards to Mr. Newton, my only teacher, and to Mr. Bastard, my first watch officer ...

To Vernon Weston, 26 May 1896 (*CL1* 283)

I have been in touch with the Sailors' Home for sixteen years of my life, off and on ... between the years 1878 and 1894. I have listened to the talks on the decks of ships in all latitudes, when its name would turn up frequently.... I would say that, for seamen, the Well Street Home was a friendly place ... quietly unobtrusively, with a regard for the independence of the men who sought its shelter ashore, and with no ulterior aims behind that effective friendliness.

“A Friendly Place” (1912; *Notes on Life and Letters* 203)

WITH THESE generous words Joseph Conrad acknowledges his indebtedness to one of the most important of London's seafarers' institutions and, by extension, his familiarity with the worldwide network of charitable welfare provision in ports, which was largely British in origin. In his time such facilities for mariners ashore were also likely to be provided by or associated with the Protestant religion. From the time he first frequented ports as a prospective seafarer in Marseilles in 1874 he could not have avoided becoming aware of the seedy side of port districts, dubbed “Sailortown” by writers describing social conditions in ports, nor of the seamen's missions, sailors' rests, seamen's institutes, sailors' homes, and seamen's hospitals opened by such charities amidst the businesses that lived off shipping and seafarers close to where ships berthed (Hugill 1967; Smith 1924; Smith 1925). With the notable exception of the Singapore Sailors' Home (established 1849), these institutions do not feature significantly in his writing and are, apparently, under-represented in the extensive contextual writing about his life and works (Sherry 1976: 20,

176, 182-83; Young 1992: 70-71).<sup>1</sup> This is despite the long periods, unusual for a seafarer, that Conrad spent in ports between voyages during his sea career.

Although his biographers have attempted to locate Conrad in lodgings ashore when he was between ships, they appear not to have considered the seafaring charitable accommodation found in larger ports (Singapore excepted) or the ever-present commercial seamen's lodgings (van Marle 1976b; 1979; 1985). Yet the areas in which these were located were inevitably the first Conrad encountered when setting foot ashore and the last when outward bound. That of London, especially the older area immediately east of the Tower, was at the heart of his seafaring experience ashore in Britain. In the 1880s, it had not yet lost the exotic and international mix of individuals, social facilities, degradation, smells, noise, shipping-related businesses, and industrial and commercial activities that writers on the area have attempted to portray. Even in the early twenty-first century some vestiges of the area of Conrad's time remains, not least the part of the original building in Well Street and the 1950s replacement in Dock Street, of this first of all sailors' homes.

Conrad certainly walked the streets east of the Tower, in connection with his ships and with his involvement in the British merchant seafaring regulatory regime (see Fig. 1; Hampson 1992). At the beginning and at the end of voyages in London he signed on and off his ships at the Mercantile Marine Office in Hammet Street, Tower Hill. From 1851 to 1873 it had been in the Sailors' Home, and from 1895 it was in an adjacent building erected by and rented from the Home in Well Street. He was examined for his Certificates of Competency as Second and First Mate and Master – all “ordinary” (that is, sail and steam) and foreign-going (that is, international) in the London Local Marine Board's examination rooms in the same area, and he studied for these qualifications in the Home's own Navigation School (van Marle 1976a; Mörzer Bruyns forthcoming).

Including the times when he stayed at the Home he must have passed through the doors of that building on hundreds of occasions, making it a maritime structure second only to his ships of significance and familiarity in his maritime life. Despite Conrad's numerous topographical references to parts of London and the River Thames one must wonder why this

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<sup>1</sup> See also Singapore Sailors' Home, Annual Report, 1898, MT 9/623 (National Archives; hereafter cited as NA). Other abbreviations for documents cited here are SH for the Sailors' Home and NMM for the National Maritime Museum.

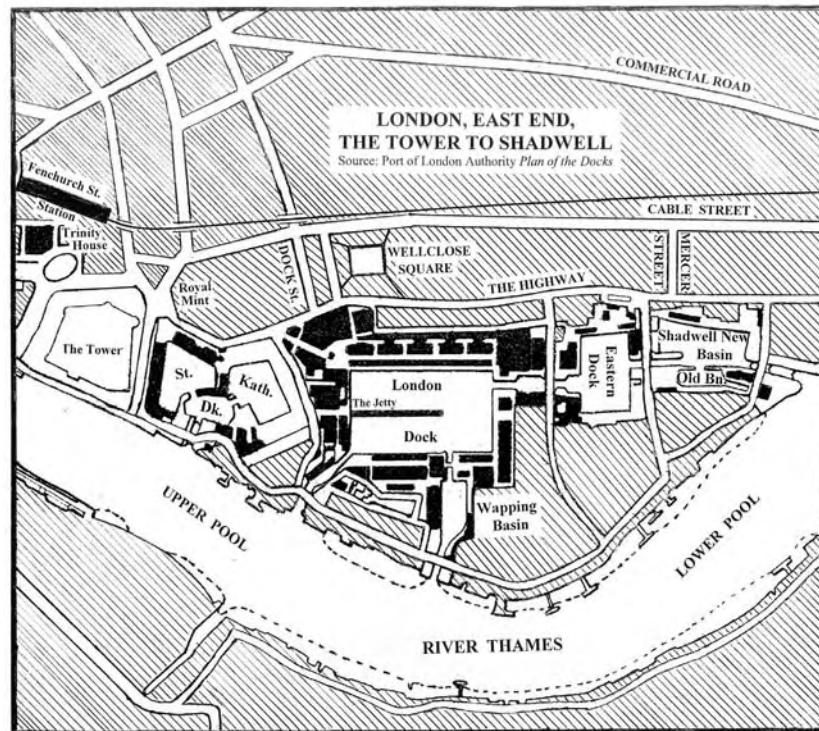


Fig. 1. London East End, the Tower to Shadwell (derived from Port of London Authority, *Plan of the Docks*, London: PLA, nd.).

immediate area of so much colour and personal experience should not feature more fully in his writings, given the institutions and characters he must have encountered (Hampson 1992). That his biographers appear so far to have failed to address this dimension of his life, including his residence in the Sailors' Home and his in-patient treatment in the *Dreadnought* Seamen's Hospital at Greenwich, may perhaps be put down to a reliance on his writings and surviving correspondence with his relatives and associates. Exploring this topic also requires familiarity with the history of British merchant seafaring welfare and, to a lesser extent, the country's maritime institutions and nautical training arrangements of the period.

London's maritime institutional context with which Conrad interacted also included The Shipmaster's Society (London), of which he became a member in about 1886. He frequented its rooms in Fenchurch Street later in his sea career, and would have attended its lectures on

professional topics (CL1 26-28, 28 November 1889; *A Personal Record*, 6-8). Conrad also had a connection with the stationary officer cadet training-ship *HMS Worcester*, moored off Greenhithe, to which he sent his son Borys in 1911. Except that the hull was on loan from the Admiralty, she was not a naval training-ship (Najder 1983: 371) but a fee-paying secondary nautical training-college (Kennerley 2007).<sup>2</sup> Conrad had sailed past the *Worcester* more than a dozen times commencing with his first passage down the Thames in 1878. He featured such a training-ship in the opening of *Lord Jim*, an episode identified with the equivalent ship on the River Mersey, the *HMS Conway* (Smith and Wolstenholme 2004). Conrad never sailed the Mersey, and probably had not yet been to Liverpool at the time he was writing the early chapters of *Lord Jim* in 1899. The *Conway* and the *Worcester* were similar establishments, but the *Worcester* surely colours the episode.<sup>3</sup>

The focus of this discussion is Conrad's use of the Sailors' Home and his time in the *Dreadnought*, and, arising from these, the impact that has on earlier interpretations of his London accommodation and of events during the summer of 1881. But the scene must be set through a discussion of the development of seafarers' welfare facilities ashore and of their presence in many of the ports visited by Conrad during his sea life. Following this will be an examination of the Sailors' Home and the life therein in Conrad's time, of the area in which it was situated (east of the Tower), and what the seafarer ashore might have come across.

Until 1912, the establishment's formal title was simply "Sailors' Home," the styling of its name used here. Homes elsewhere incorporated the port name in their titles as, for example Liverpool Sailors' Home (established 1845). Colloquially, for much of the nineteenth century the Sailors' Home was referred to as the "Well Street Sailors' Home," not acquiring a façade on Dock Street until 1865. In the twentieth century it became more identified with Dock Street having changed its name in

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<sup>2</sup> The full title from 1893 was "The Incorporated Thames Nautical Training College, *HMS Worcester*." The use of HMS was a concession, and thus forms part of the ship's name; it is not a prefix as with naval vessels.

<sup>3</sup> One of the models for "Jim" has been identified as Augustine Podmore Williams (1852-1916) (see Sherry 1966). He was apprenticed, aged 16, on 16 September 1867 to the British Shipowners' Association, Liverpool, for five years, in the ship *British India* (Register of Apprentices, BT 150/35, NA). His name does not appear in the registers of cadets of either the *Conway* or *Worcester* (Merseyside Maritime Museum Archive and Library; Personal communication: Secretary, Association of Old Worcesters).

1912 to the “Sailors’ Home & Red Ensign Club.”<sup>4</sup> (Well Street was subsequently renamed Ensign Street.) Also in this study Board of Trade will be used as a general reference to any topic ultimately having its authority in the British legal regime regulating shipping and seafaring. The agencies created in 1851 for that purpose were, centrally, the Marine Department of the Board of Trade and, in ports, the Local Marine Boards.<sup>5</sup>

### **Charitable Welfare Provision for Seafarers<sup>6</sup>**

Small-scale local provision for needy seafarers ashore may be traced back to mediaeval times mostly in the form of almshouses for aged mariners and their widows, provision for seamen’s orphans, and mutual aid funds. These were likely to be restricted to mariners belonging to particular ports and inadequate in the context developing in the eighteenth century. The opening of the oceans, the rise of Europe in world trading, and particularly the rise of Britain to global dominance in trade and shipping, the latter at its peak when Conrad was at sea, led to multi-national manning and the potential for many more displaced and needy sailors without employment especially in larger ports.

Imbalances in demand for seafaring manpower between different ports and periods of depression in demand for shipping exacerbated an ever-present need. The practice of dismissing crews immediately upon arrival, particularly at terminal ports such as London or Liverpool, and of delaying the payment of accumulated wages pending the discharge of cargo, produced succeeding waves of temporarily penniless seamen on the loose but tied to port districts. Only those with nearby relatives might find a roof and succour while awaiting payment. Mostly young and single, men who had been paid and wanting to make up for the long periods without normal social interaction, often took a holiday on the town, becoming penniless again when their funds had expired.

Of course, local commercial initiative saw an opportunity to provide for the basic needs of seafarers: accommodation, clothing, food, drink and entertainment, all available “on account.” Newly arrived seamen from long overseas voyages potentially had full pockets, and the trades-

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<sup>4</sup> SAH 1/9, SH Committee Minutes, 11 July 1912 (NMM).

<sup>5</sup> Mercantile Marine Act, 1850, 13 & 14 Vict. c. 93, in force from 1 January 1851.

<sup>6</sup> This section is based on Kennerley (1989) and Kennerley (1998); see also Kverndal (1986).

men, publicans, seamen's boarding-house keepers, and outfitters who supplied their needs were sure of payment. Providing for men who had run through their money also offered a kind of surety owing to the practice of paying an advance on wages at the time of signing on an outward-bound ship. Charging large discounts for cashing advances and excessive rates for the services and facilities they offered made handling seamen a lucrative business, and competition was fierce. Collectively, these dealers in seafarers were referred to as "crimps." The practices noted here have been classified as homeward- and outward-bound crimping (Dixon 1980). Conrad was a potential crimps' target, especially before he became a ship's mate, although he apparently eluded their clutches.

Charitable concern for seafarers addressed two forms of ill as seen from their supporters' perspective. Seamen's missions with their roots in eighteenth-century Protestant revivalism were originally concerned with the religious welfare of seafarers. It was evangelical and ecumenical, seeking the salvation of seafarers and bringing services and other forms of religious support to seafarers aboard ship and ashore, including tracts, Bibles, prayer books, and small libraries. It was soon recognized that social support went hand-in-hand with religious support, early demonstrated by the estimated 100,000 seamen made redundant from the Royal Navy at the end of the wars with France after 1815. Although the Poor Law offered a general form of minimal social support, it was parish based, a form into which displaced seamen did not easily fit.

The religious concern produced the earliest seamen's missions from 1818, and the movement spread rapidly throughout Britain and overseas, becoming global before the end of the 1820s in the characteristic form of "seamen's friend society and Bethel union." This was a kind of franchise movement although typically each port society was independent. These societies soon began make various forms of social provision, but the widest vision of such activity was set out by the Revd George Charles Smith (1782–1863) during his seamen's ministry in the same area of London that Conrad would frequent several decades later (Kverndal 1998). This was for cradle-to-grave provision for seafarers and their families: schools and orphanages for their children, accommodation, employment registry, banking facilities, hospitals, retirement homes, and a cemetery. Amongst London-based seafarers' charities founded in this early period were the British & Foreign Seamen's Friend Society and Bethel Union (1819), the Seamen's Hospital Society (1821), the Destitute Sailors' Asylum (1828), and the Sailors' Home [Society] (1829). The last two soon came under the same management. It was Smith who pressed for



the opening of the Destitute Sailors' Asylum (January 1828) in Dock Street (later moved to Well Street) as a refuge for "down and out" seamen, and who had recognized the opportunity presented by the collapse of the Brunswick Theatre in Well (now Ensign) Street a month later, close to his base in Wellclose Square. Although he led the agitation for acquiring the site, which would lead to the erection of the Sailors' Home building as a model lodging-house for seafarers able to pay their own way, he was not associated with the project's development.<sup>7</sup>

Although a few other sailor's homes emulating the first in London, were founded in the 1830s and 1840s, it was a drive in the early 1850s that truly established the network in Britain so that a Parliamentary report of 1860 could list sixty such establishments.<sup>8</sup> In the latter decades of the nineteenth century additional provision of seafarers' accommodation came largely through the efforts of the leading seamen's missions, the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, a successor to the original Bethel society noted above and the Missions to Seamen (1856) (Kennerley 2007).<sup>9</sup> The former was non-denominational, although drawing much of its support from the free churches; the latter was a Church of England society. Both established a worldwide branch network but generally avoided the title "sailors' home" for their accommodation. The Sailors' Home was also an independent Church of England mission, having built the adjacent St Paul's Church for Seamen in 1847, and in this period provided the Anglican seamen's mission outreach to the Upper and Lower Pools of the River Thames and adjacent docks.

In the early twentieth century the Roman Catholic seafarers' organization the Apostleship of the Sea (established 1920) would become the third global seamen's mission (Miller 1985). A few piecemeal initiatives did occur during the last decade of the nineteenth century including the first Roman Catholic institute for seamen, opened in 1893 in Wellclose Square, close by the Sailors' Home and earlier the base for Smith's societies. Although Conrad was nominally Roman Catholic, and in later life may not have rejected its tenets, he did not practise and may never have been aware of this initiative that occurred at the end of his sea career (Najder 1983: 460). But surely he must have encountered the

<sup>7</sup> *New Sailors' Magazine* 1 (July 1828), Supplement. Smith was its editor.

<sup>8</sup> *British Parliamentary Papers* (1861), LX, "Return of all Sailors' Homes Erected or in the Course of Erection"; (1861), XXXVIII, "Return of the Expenditure of the Parliamentary Grant ... Sailors' Homes."

<sup>9</sup> The former is now the British and International Sailors' Society and the latter now the Mission to Seafarers.

seamen's chaplains or lay missionaries from the various Protestant missions who were assiduous in visiting ships, holding *ad hoc* religious services on deck and distributing literature. Ashore they did the rounds of sailors' haunts and held regular services at establishments like the seamen's institutes and sailors' homes. In 1861, the Home's chaplaincy team made 13,541 ship visits, gave 26,784 seamen personal attention, held 415 meetings, and distributed 78,426 tracts.<sup>10</sup> Activity was less intense in Conrad's time, but the religious dimension was still present.

Table 1 sets out the charities for seafarers operating globally in the 1880s and 1890s and present in many of the ports Conrad visited. The arrangement is by year of his first visit. In many of the larger ports more than one charity was operating. The table gives preference to sailors' homes and only lists missions where space allows. Every port had seafarers' haunts, and many of these Sailortown districts are described in colourful terms in the study by Stan Hugill for which the page references have been added to the table.

Conrad may have lived in port aboard ships to which he was formally attached (an extreme case was his eight months in the *Palestine* in Falmouth in 1882), but once he had signed the "release" (signed off) he would have had to have found local accommodation (Najder 1983: 74-75; Allen 1967: 155).<sup>11</sup> Sailors' homes offered some sanctuary from the pressure of the crimps and the riotous living with which they were associated. Apart from the Singapore Sailors' Home and the Scandinavian Sailors' Temperance Home in London (established 1887) the only other mention by Conrad of seamen's accommodation was of the Dundee Sailors' Home (*The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* 124). Writing in 1886 aboard the *Tilkehurst* in Calcutta he asked for replies to his letter to be sent to him care of Home to await his arrival (CL1 13-15, 21; 25 November 1885, 6 January 1886).

### Sailortown East of the Tower and the London Sailors' Home

By the 1880s the Port of London had long been moving downstream from the City in response to increasing trade and ever larger vessels

<sup>10</sup> SAH 1/1, SH Committee Minutes, 9 January 1862 (NMM).

<sup>11</sup> Fox Register of ship arrivals (National Maritime Museum Cornwall, Bartlett Library) records the *Palestine's* arrival at Falmouth on 24 December 1881, not 10 January 1882 as Allen indicates.

Table 1. Seafarers' Charities &amp; Sailortowns at Ports Visited by Joseph Conrad

Year of 1st Visit	Port	Names & Foundation Dates of Charities	Pp in <i>Sailortown</i>
1874	Marseilles	Sailors' Home (1881); Seamen's Rest (1880)	150-53
1875	Le Havre	Seamen's Chapel (1842)	149-50
1878	Constantinople	Sailors' Rest (1885); Seamen's Hospital	
1878	Lowestoft	Sailors' Home and Seamen's Bethel (1850)	
1878	London	Sailors' Home (1829); many missions (1818 on)	114-27
1879	Sydney	Sydney Sailors' Home	277-82
1879	Genoa	Floating Bethel Chapel (1870)	153-54
1879	Leghorn	Sailors' Rest (1845)	
1879	Naples	Floating Bethel Chapel (1878)	154
1881	North Shields	Tyne Sailors' Home (by 1853)	136
1881	Falmouth	Royal Cornwall Sailors' Home/Hospital (1851)	319-20
1883	Singapore	Singapore Sailors' Home (1849)	292-93
1884	Madras	Madras Sailors' Home (1838)	
1884	Bombay	Bombay Sailors' Home (1838)	316-17
1884	Dunkirk	Dunkirk Sailors' Home (1878)	148-49
1885	Hull	Hull Sailors' Home (by 1860)	134-35
1885	Cardiff	Cardiff Sailors' Home (by 1860)	128-32
1885	Calcutta	Calcutta Sailors' Home (1837)	312-16
1886	Dundee	Dundee Sailors' Home (by 1860)	
1887	Amsterdam	Br. & American Seamen's Friend Society (1842)	145-48
1888	Melbourne	Melbourne Sailors' Home (1866)	282-86
1888	Mauritius	Mauritius Sailors' Home (1856)	
1889	Adelaide	Seamen's Mission (1878)	286-88
1892	Cape Town	Cape Town Sailors' Home (by 1853)	317-18

*Sources:* Kverndal, 1986; Kennerley, 1989; Hugill, 1967. Port names as in 1880s.

(Barker 1986; Jackson 1983: 115-25).<sup>12</sup> The Thames was lined with numerous riverside wharves, and many ships were still of a size to use those near the Tower and the older enclosed docks, surrounded by associated warehouses and enclosing security walls. Just below the Tower the St Katherine's complex had been squeezed in in 1828, although the next downstream on the north bank, London Dock, had opened in 1805. This acquired extensions eastward, Eastern Dock (1858) and Shadwell New Basin (1858). In the loop of the Thames known as the Isle of Dogs, the pair of West India Docks had opened in 1802, and the cut called the

<sup>12</sup> For a historical overview of the whole docks system and port areas, including maps and illustrations, see Carr (1986).

City Canal (1805) was enlarged in to become the South West India Dock, although for a time it was referred to as New South Dock. South of these were the connected Millwall Docks (1868). Further east again were the East India Docks (1806) and the very much larger Royal Victoria (1855) and Royal Albert (1880) Docks. Tilbury Docks, some 50 miles down river, opened in 1886.

London's very mixed maritime quarter was stretched further and further along the banks of the river and with it the commercial businesses, seamen's charities, and state agencies concerned with seafarers. Public transportation was improving, but most port workers walked to work while the movement of goods in and out of the docks was still by hand truck or horse and cart. During the day the streets were crowded, dirty, and smelly. Tucked away in back alleys were urban farmyards and the stables that housed some of the vast numbers of horses.

A closer examination of the area just north of the London Dock in which the Sailors' Home was to be found is on the map (Fig. 2; see also Table 2). When he returned to London in October 1879 aboard the *Duke of Sutherland*, which berthed in London Dock, Conrad and his shipmates were a few minutes walk from the Home; other social facilities were within easy reach. Cheek by jowl with the Home, the Destitute Sailors' Asylum, St Paul's Church, the chapel of the Seamen's Christian Friend Society (1846), the Almshouses, the magistrate's court, various maritime businesses and private residences were over twenty beer (not spirits) and public houses, a music hall, boarding-houses and, no doubt, brothels. Only half a mile along The Highway in Mercer Street, just north of Shadwell New Basin was the Seamen's Institute of the British and Foreign Sailor's Society.<sup>13</sup>

For examples of individuals trading in the area, those in the upper half of Dock Street more or less opposite the entrance to the Sailors' Home are representative. In 1882, at No. 2 was Abraham Cohen, clothier; at No. 4, Thomas Robinson, marine store dealer; at No. 6, Joel Davis, outfitter; at No. 12, S. Froomberg & Co., shipping agents; at No. 14, Solomon Seigenberg, outfitter; at No. 20, Drysdale, Wallis & Dennison, spice merchants; at No. 22, Charles Bigg, Sir Sidney Smith PH.<sup>14</sup> Surely

<sup>13</sup> The section of road eastwards from East Smithfield has had a number of different names: Ratcliffe Highway, Parson's Street, St George's Street, The Highway. Conrad calls it The Highway in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (81) and George Street in *The Mirror of the Sea* (122).

<sup>14</sup> For source, see Table 2.

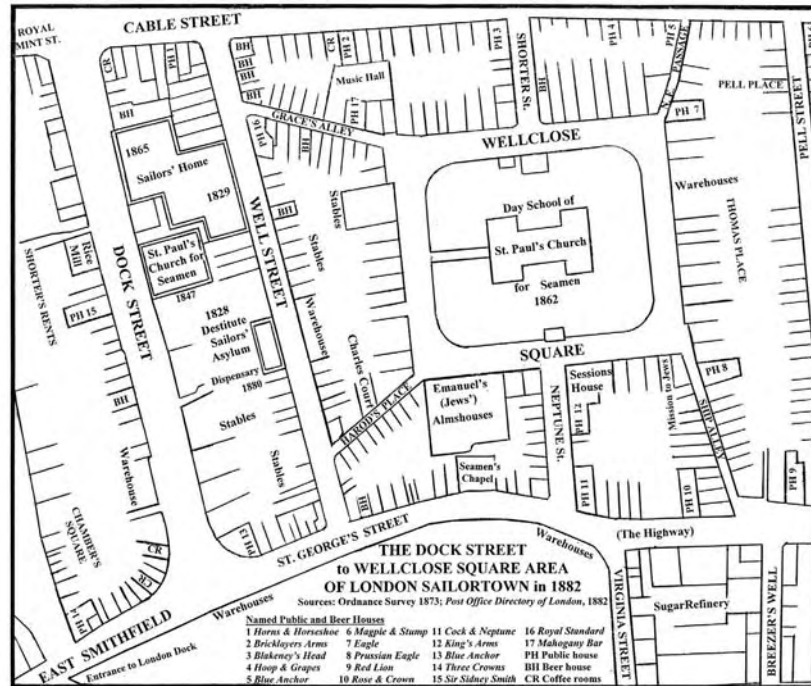


Fig. 2. The Dock Street to Wellclose Square Area of London Sailortown in 1882. Derived from Ordnance Survey, 1873, VII.77; *Post Office Directory of London*, 1882.

during his searches for ships Conrad would have looked in at the Froomberg agency.

Conrad has left us word-pictures of London's dock scene, notably in "The Faithful River," "In Captivity," and "Initiation" in *The Mirror of the Sea*.<sup>15</sup> There is the usual uncertainty about the exact location of some of his impressions. We learn of the proximity of the warehouses to the edge of the quay "in one of the London docks" but not which one (109). However St Katherine's Dock is "cosy," and London Dock is "venerable and sympathetic" although lacking completely "a single line of rails," presumably meaning there was no railway track laid (112). Its warehouses smelled of spices. A dock mentioned on several occasions is named by him as "New South Dock," which he asserts is its official name and part

<sup>15</sup> For additional London port area references from *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* and *Tales of Unrest*, see Hampson (1992).

**Table 2: Businesses/Occupations in the Dock Street/Wellclose Square Area, 1882**

Baker	5	Cork Merchant	2	Outfitter/Clothier	14
Beer & Wine Retailer	10	Corn Chandler	1	Packing Case maker	1
Bonded Tea Warehouse	1	Custom House Agent	1	Pawnbroker	1
Boot & Shoe Maker	5	Cutler	1	Porkman	2
Brewer	1	Dairyman	2	Public House	17
Builder	1	Greengrocer	1	Ship Furnisher	1
Butcher	2	Grocer	4	Shipping agent	1
Cabinet Maker	2	Hatter	1	Spice Merchant	1
Carbon Enamel Manuf.	1	Hemp & Coir Merchant	1	Stevedore	1
Carman	2	Ivory Merchant	1	Surgeon	2
Carpenter	1	Lamp Merchant	2	Tinplate Worker	1
Cheesemonger	3	Liner Draper	1	Tobacconist	2
Cigar Manufacturer	1	Marine Stores Dealer	2	Wheelwright	3
Clothing Manufacturer	14	Merchant	1	Wire Worker	2
Coffee Rooms	4	News Vendor	1	Wood Turner	1
Confectioner	1	Oilman	2		.

*Source: Post Office Directory for London (1882)*

*Note:* Data is from the “Streets” section of the *Directory* for Dock Street, Well Street, Wellclose Square, Grace’s Alley, Shorter, North East Alley, Ship Alley, Neptune Street, Harod’s Place, Cable Street (south side only), Upper East Smithfield, and St George’s Street (north sides only). The “Streets” section of the *Directory* does not list the many private residences interspersed with the businesses listed, and in courts, back to backs, and tenements in the areas between the principal streets.

of the West India Dock group. Now references to the *Duke of Sutherland* creep in. When Conrad joined her in 1878, she was loading, as a (presumably chartered) Devitt & Moore Australian packet in South West India Dock.<sup>16</sup> On her return in 1879 she berthed in London Dock (see Tables 3a-b). The former would appear to be Conrad’s “New South Dock.” Indeed, it was named South West India Dock in *Crutchley’s New Plan of London to 1839*.<sup>17</sup> Obviously it was “new” at some time, but the only dock to have “new” in its name was Shadwall New Basin, part of the London Dock group and close to the Sailors’ Home.

<sup>16</sup> *The Times*, 10 September 1878: 2 advertisement. The shipowners Devitt & Moore would soon become famous for operating cargo-carrying officer cadet training-ships to Australia, carrying large numbers of midshipmen.

<sup>17</sup> From a reprint published by London Borough of Tower Hamlets Libraries (1983).

London Dock also features at the beginning of “The Black Mate” (85). To increase the Dock’s linear quayage a structure that Conrad calls the “Jetty” had been built from the west quay into the middle of the Dock in 1839. It added 12% to its capacity for ships. It was a wooden structure resting on piles driven into the bed of the Dock, and “Jetty,” the correct term, was commonly used as a name.

Conrad conveys something of the lives and activities of the lone mates acting as ship-keepers. He names a few of the ships in the story. *Sapphire*, *Elsinore*, *Bellonna*, *Samaria* are realistic enough, although the last, “lost in the Indian Ocean,” carries, along with its suggestive name, overtones of his experience in the *Palestine* (the *Judea* in “Youth”). The *Bellona* is drawn in as needing a second officer and lying “South Dock.” “The Black Mate” ends with the *Sapphire* berthing in Dunkirk, as Conrad had in 1884 in the *Narvissus*. Although there is some debate about when this story was written, its origins may be traced to about 1884.<sup>18</sup> Certainly the London Dock element fits Conrad’s experience of the area in the early 1880s. Indeed, as Table 4 shows, he joined or left ships berthed at locations in the London Docks group on eight occasions out of the fifteen in the Port of London. Conrad’s atmospheric, though sketchy, word-pictures of the London Dock, are not that much removed from the more detailed descriptions recorded some thirty years earlier by the respected observer Henry Mayhew (1851).

For a seaman’s recollections of the district we may turn to J(oseph) Havelock Wilson (1858?–1929), the famous seamen’s union founder and leader, who stayed at the Home, aged 16, only a few years before Conrad, and later established his union office in Wellclose Square.<sup>19</sup> Although written many years later his descriptions ring true for the 1870s before the concerted efforts of the seamen’s charities and the Board of Trade began to constrain the excesses of the crimps.<sup>20</sup> Wilson writes in *The Seaman*:<sup>21</sup>

At this time Well Street was one of the strangest places in the world; you could be accommodated with a fight at any hour of the day or night, and you could lose your watch and chain in the

<sup>18</sup> For a summary of discussions of its writing, see Knowles and Moore (2000: 37–38).

<sup>19</sup> For a description of the Sailors’ Home thirty years earlier, see “Labour and the Poor ... Letter XLVII,” *Morning Chronicle*, 11 April 1850: 5–6.

<sup>20</sup> See also “Labour and the Poor ... Letter L,” *Morning Chronicle*, 2 May 1850: 5–6.

<sup>21</sup> The newspaper of the National Sailors’ and Firemen’s Union (renamed the National Union of Seamen in 1925). Lacking exact dates and ship’s names, searches for Wilson in SH Entry Books have failed.

twinkling of an eye, and as for entertainment you need not go to the theatre or music hall, but could find it outside the door in Well Street. There were barrel organs galore with a variety of tunes, some good some terrible; there was the one legged dancer ... [who] could do an excellent clog dance ... with the aid of his crutch. Then there was the coloured gentleman who used to fill his mouth with some kind of spirit and blow out flames, and a stout lady with an accordion who had been singing the "Moon behind the Hill" for about 20 years, and she was not a bad singer either ... not the least of the attractions was a gentleman who would swallow watches, swords, pieces of glass... There were a great many public houses in Well Street, probably eight or nine in a few hundred yards, and outside these bands of nigger troupes and minstrels used to stand regaling the jolly tars... A notorious place was the old Mahogany Bar Music Hall [that is, Wilton's]. (1925: 320)

Staying at the nearby Sailors' Home, Conrad could well have attended performances in Wilton's Music Hall in Grace's Alley.<sup>22</sup> He certainly refers to taking in such entertainment on his visit to London during his long sojourn in Falmouth aboard the *Palestine* in 1882 (Baines 1960; rpt. 1977: 71).

Wilson also describes the crimping pressures that he and Conrad faced when landing from a newly arrived ship:

As soon as we reached the dock gates we found the usual crowd of boarding masters, boarding house runners, tailors' runners, and many others who were interested in the so-called trade of looking after Mercantile Jack. The Board of Trade officials were there to prevent prohibited persons from boarding the ships, but they could not prevent those parasites from getting in touch with the men by means of all kinds of leaflets and business cards which described how well the establishments they represented looked after "Jack's" interests. These boarding houses were known by such names as "The Welcome Home," "The Home from Home," etc. Among the motley crowd was the runner from the Sailors' Home. The Sailor's Home runners had the privilege of boarding

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<sup>22</sup> The derelict listed building still survives although long-standing agitation to restore it has yet to bear fruit. The ephemera collection of Tower Hamlet's Local History Library contains notes (1971) and press-cuttings (1964) collected by George Fife Paton and an article by Merion (late 1970s?), which contains an 1866 programme advertisement and pictures of the hall (1970s). See also <[www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/Wiltons.htm](http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/Wiltons.htm)>.



ships under the supervision of the Board of Trade officials... [We] decided to give our patronage to the Well Street Home ... [and] were driven in a [horse-drawn] van from the ship's side with our baggage to the Home much to the disgust of the boarding house masters who ... warned us of the evils likely to beset us there. We were told there were no home comforts, moreover that we would have to pay two weeks in advance... The tailors' runners had a cut in and told us that if we bought from the Sailors' Home Clothing Store we should have to pay 25 per cent more for our goods ... [than] elsewhere, and ... were most shoddy.

At that time the crimps were doing their best to discredit the Home, then at the height of its success. In 1879, the year Conrad first stayed there, 11,735 seafarers spent at least one night there, an average of 32 admittances a day (Kennerley 1989: Appendix 11a). Of these a third were returning boarders, and a quarter were, like Conrad, born overseas. Altogether they deposited £95,083 (about £8 each) in the Home's savings bank of which £13,225 was remitted by the Home to their dependents. Seamen were advanced money upon arrival pending pay off, and once that was banked could withdraw small amounts daily.<sup>23</sup> Advance notes were also cashed for men about to sail.

The Home was a hive of activity with over forty employees. Wilson enjoyed hot baths and was well pleased with the clothing he bought in the tailor's shop, as he was with the food served. There were four meals a day, ale being served at midday and in the evening, although there was no bar. Full board was 15s. a week. There were over 500 beds in individual small cabins furnished with bed, table, chair, and mirror, offering unheard of comfort and privacy (see Fig. 3). Officers were allocated slightly larger cabins. Wilson asserts that the Home was spotlessly clean. A barber's services were available, and a surgeon called daily. Recreation was found in the reading-room and smoking-room, provided with table-games and skittles and a good library. Lectures were given in the evening, and for those so inclined religious meetings were held. The Home's Navigation School was conducted by John Newton, who tutored Conrad before each of his examinations.

With such a complete range of services and known the world over for its reasonable treatment of the seafarer who paid the same rates as in commercial boarding-houses, it is hardly surprising that the Home was the model for many others. Just as significant, it is considered the

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<sup>23</sup> The Home's services were regularly detailed in its Annual Reports.

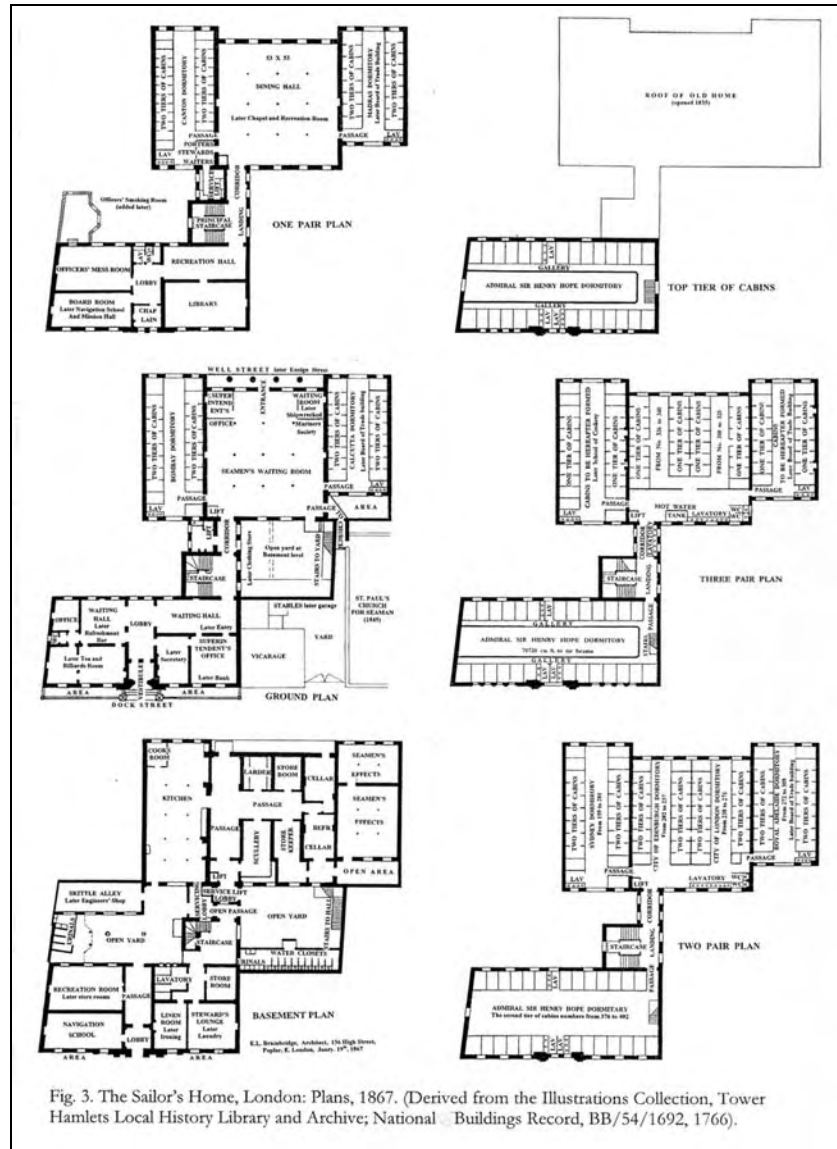


Fig. 3. The Sailor's Local History Home, London; 1867. (Derived from the Illustrations Collection, Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archive; National Buildings Record, BB/54/1692, 1766).

original model for the charitable provision of model lodging-houses in London.<sup>24</sup>

### Conrad at the London Sailors' Home

The evidence for Conrad's boarding at the Home is found in its admission registers called Entry Books. (The entries relevant to him are transcribed in Table 3.) As these data have not been considered elsewhere, they may have implications for previous interpretations of where he was accommodated in London and the use of his periods spent between ships. Table 5 thus sets out all his sea service including a column assessing his "shore time" in the manner in which the Board of Trade examiners would have assessed his sea time, had they had the full picture. Searches of all relevant Entry Books have not detected any further entries for him as a boarder. His entries during 1881, however, spanning the period of the dubious *Annie Frost* episode and his supposed injury prompted an examination of the registers of the *Dreadnought* Seamen's Hospital at Greenwich and led to the discovery that he had been an in-patient there, a topic discussed below.

Because the Sailors' Home was prepared to lend money to boarders ahead of their being paid off and it was closely concerned with the engagement and discharge process, it recorded much more about its guests than was usual at an ordinary hotel or lodging-house. In particular, it kept track of ships, their masters, and berths so that financial problems could be traced to men's employers. In earlier periods there had been as many as thirty heads; Tables 3a and 3b show the large number recorded in Conrad's time. Registration must have been time-consuming, even though parallel ledgers with odd and even Ledger Numbers were maintained. As it was verbal rather than written, some answers might have been inaccurate or misheard. There is missing data, and leaving dates may not be recorded correctly. There is evidence, for example, of foreign seamen adopting British names, and men probably did not normally sign in, although Conrad may have, because his difficult surname is spelled correctly on each occasion.

Although Conrad ought to have come across charitable facilities for seafarers in the Mediterranean ports of his time in French ships, he may

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<sup>24</sup> <<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~peter/refuges/refuges.shtml>>. Accessed: April 2007. (On being accessed, the URL changes to [www.workhouses.org.uk/index.html?refuges/refuges.shtml](http://www.workhouses.org.uk/index.html?refuges/refuges.shtml).)

not have known much about the network when he landed in Lowestoft in June 1878. His status in the *Mavis* is uncertain and remains a matter of speculation (Najder 1983: 54-55). Presumably he arrived with only what was left of his allowance in his pocket. Did he immediately take the train to London, as Najder indicates, or did he spend a night or two in Lowestoft? A seamen's Bethel there offered accommodation, and, of course, there were ordinary lodgings ranging in price in a town whose economy was based on maritime activities.

During his first visit to London he was unlikely to have been aware of the Sailors' Home, and most likely did not find the cheapest accommodation. Why return to Lowestoft when money ran out unless he already knew that he could get a berth in a local ship there? That knowledge might have come from the crew of the *Mavis* or from walking about the port before setting out for London. Likely he would have had to find lodgings on returning to Lowestoft before he signed on the *Skimmer of the Sea* as an ordinary seaman at 1s. per month.<sup>25</sup> Board of Trade Home-Trade crew agreements, being six monthly running agreements and less closely supervised, contain fewer data than foreign-going agreements. But the rating and wage paid are there. As discharge slips could be stolen or forged, the Board of Trade always referred back to the crew agreement as the final arbiter.

The entry of 1s. per month in the wages column was an established euphemism, still in use in the present author's time at sea, to register a person as a member of the crew who was there under some other arrangement and not a passenger. Carrying a passenger meant complying with more stringent regulations. It was commonly used for men working their passage with intent to emigrate, for example, to Australia; for crew travelling as supernumeraries to join ships overseas; for distressed British seamen being repatriated; and for officer trainees (non-indentured apprentices), called "midshipmen," whose parents had paid large annual premiums for superior training. The *Skimmer of the Sea*, incidentally, was unusual in being a monthly paid ship that included subsistence. Most coastal ships in the Home Trade were weekly paid with the crew finding their own food. Conrad signed off her on 23 September.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> BT 100/5 (NA). Najder (1983: 58) has AB, perhaps a misunderstanding in the translation as the word "Ordinary" is clear in the agreement.

<sup>26</sup> BT 100/5 (NA). Najder gives 23 August 1881 (1983: 58).

Table 3. Joseph Conrad as a Boarder at the Sailors' Home, London

Date of Entry	Cabin No.	Ledger No.	Name	Cash advanced	Notes	Ship's name	Berth	Where from	Age	Rat-ing	Where born	Time in ship	Leaving date	Destination
20/10/1879		5149	C. de Korzeniowski			<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	21	AB	Poland		27/11/1879	Paris
23/11/1879pm		6004	Conrad de Korzeniowski	£2 14s 6d	18s 6d	<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>		Foreign	21	AB	Poland		11/11/1879	<i>Europa</i> Mediterranean
30/01/1880pm		7540	C. Korzeniowski			<i>SS Europa</i>	Fresh Wharf Medit.		21	AB	Poland	7 wks	31/01/1880	Lowestoffe [sic]
24/04/1881pm		9160	C. de Korzeniowski			<i>Loch Elvie</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	23	2M	Poland	8 mo	[blank]	
13/07/1881pm	519	1814	Conrad de Korzeniowski		8s 0d	<i>Loch Elvie</i>		Foreign	24	2M	Poland		16/08/1881	19/9 Palestine, B'kok
19/10/1884		3592	C. Korzeniowski	£1 0s 0d		<i>Narcissus</i>		Bombay	26	1M	Poland		23/10/1884	Friends

Source: National Maritime Museum (NMM), SAH 19/5, 19/6, 19/8, 19/16, Sailors' Home, London, Entry Books [admission registers]. Notes: The first two entries are in black signifying a boarder new to the home; the rest, in red, indicate a man returning. Ledger numbers recommenced at annual intervals. There is an unresolved inconsistency respecting the dates of the first stays (see text). AB: able seaman; 2M: second mate; 1M: first mate. Earlier versions of these tables were first presented by *Alison Kemerley to family historians at a Conference to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Public Record Office, Ken, in 1996, to illustrate a lecture on the records of the Sailors' Home, London.*

Other members of the Crew of the Duke of Sutherland who stayed at the Sailors' Home, London, at the end of the voyage from Sydney, Australia

Date of Entry	Cabin No.	Ledger No.	Name	Cash advanced	Eff-ects	Ship's name	Berth	Where from	Age	Rat-ing	Where born	Time in Ship	Leaving date	Destination
19/10/1879		613	5095 James Brookles	£0 10s 0d	Bag	<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	35	Bos'n	L'pool	4 mo	21/10/1879	Liverpool
19/10/1879		92	5097 Peter Fletcher	£0 10s 0d	Bag	<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	26	AB			15/11/1879	<i>Kept[?]</i> Sydney, Mel."
19/10/1879		54	5099 And Hedberg	£0 10s 0d	Chest	<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	25	AB	Sweden	3 mo	11/11/1879	<i>Sydenham</i>
19/10/1879		92	5101 James Johnston	£0 10s 0d	C & B	<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	30	AB	Scotland	3.5 mo	22/10/1879	Tynemouth
19/10/1879		90	5103 John Watson	£0 10s 0d	Chest	<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	19	AB	L'pool	3.5 mo	04/11/1879	<i>Mosfield</i> , Japan
19/10/1879		52	5105 John Green	£0 10s 0d	Chest	<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	24	AB	London	3.5 mo	24/11/1879	<i>Wooldark</i> , Adelaide
19/10/1879		505	5113 Hy Bastard	£0 10s 0d	C & B	<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	45	1M	Halifax	12 mo	28/10/1879	Devonshire
19/10/1879		108	5115 Hugh Davies	£0 5s 0d		<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	21	AB	Newport	12 mo	22/10/1879	Newport
19/10/1879		96	5117 William Lewis	£0 5s 0d	Bag	<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	17	OS	Altona	4 mo	22/10/1879	Hamburg
20/10/1879		5141	Henry Horning	£0 5s 0d		<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	17	Appr	Sydney		22/10/1879	Friends
20/10/1879		38	5143 Jno Carrick	£0 10s 0d	C & B	<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	23	AB	L'pool	3.5 mo	24/11/1879	<i>Wooldark</i> , Adelaide
20/10/1879		14	5147 Henry Masey		C & B	<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	18	OS	Madland	3 mo	26/11/1879	<i>StHW Wooldark</i> , Rock'n
20/10/1879		5149	C. de Korzeniowski			<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Ldn:Dk	Sydney	21	AB	Poland		27/11/1879	Paris

Source: NMM, SAH 19/5. Notes: Homeward bound crews stayed in port at least a day or two awaiting pay off. This is not the whole crew of the *Duke of Sutherland* as some would go to sailors' boarding houses, and others might have local contacts. After pay off, some went home, others stayed until they found another ship, perhaps by which time funds were running short. The entries for Watson, Bastard, and Davies are in red for returning boarders, suggesting that their example might have influenced the others in choosing to stay at the Home. OS: ordinary seaman; Appr: apprentice.

Table 4: Joseph Conrad's London Ships: Their Berths before Departure and after Arrival, 1878-94

<i>SMG</i> Date	Berth before departure	Ship's name	Berth After Arrival	<i>SMG</i> Date
09/10/1879	WI Dock: South Dock, 3 Jetty	<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	London Dock: 1-2 North Quay	22/10/1879
09/12/1879	London Dock: Wapping Basin	<i>SS Europa</i>	R.Thames,N.bank: FreshWharf	See Table 3a
11/08/1880	EI Dock: Expor Dock North side	<i>Loch Etive</i>	London Dock: West Quay	30/04/1881
19/09/1881	London Dk: Shadwell Old Basin	<i>Palestine</i>	[ exploded & wrecked in Java Sea ]	
10/09/1883	London Dock: South Quay	<i>Riversdale</i>	[ Conrad discharged in Madras ]	
24/12/1886	Tilbury Dock: Main Dk 10 Qy	<i>Falconhurst</i>	[ Conrad discharged in Penarth ]	
16/11/1891	London Dock: [berth not listed]	<i>Torrens</i>	London Dock: West Quay	05/09/1892
20/10/1892	WI Dock: South Dock, 6 Jetty	<i>Torrens</i>	London Dock: 1-2 North Quay	29/07/1893
27/11/1893	Royal Albert Dock: 28 Shed	<i>SS Adowa</i>	Royal Victoria Dk: S.Shore Whf.	16/01/1894

Sources: *Shipping & Mercantile Gazette* [*& Lloyd's List* (from 1884)](*SMG*), "London Dock Directory"

Notes: The *SMG* date us a sample date before a ship's departure or after a ship's arrival. The "Directory" was printed two or three times each week in *SMG*, and the entry for each ship might appear over a period of weeks. Tilbury Dock (R. Thames north bank) is opposite Gravesend. Both entries for Adowa are labeled "to lay up." WI = Wets India docks group; EI = East India Docks group; London Dock = London docks group.

The advertisement in *The Times* of 25 September 1878 that brought Conrad to London that month was also the first step in his engagement with London's East End (Allen 1967: 100). He would have needed accommodation for upwards of a fortnight as ship's crews were not accommodated on board in any number before ships sailed. In contrast, once an apprentice had signed his indentures, he became the responsibility of the ship's master or shipowner for, typically, four years, ashore as well as afloat. Having contracted with the agent James Sutherland, advice on accommodation in London and Conrad's seagoing outfit ought to have been forthcoming. In an earlier advertisement Sutherland had offered "An authentic guide to the merchant service one stamp" (*The Times*, 18 January 1866). Indeed, in taking responsibility for him Sutherland ought to have recommended the Sailor's Home, which made special provision for apprentices, including reduced rates.

Sutherland appears to have operated at the edge of legality (Baines 1960; rpt. 1967: 62). Only the owner, master, or mate of a ship could engage or supply a seaman or apprentice without a Board of Trade licence, and as part of the drive to control crimping, licences were restricted to Local Marine Board employees working as superintendents of Mercantile Marine Offices and to the agents employed by stationary training-ships. The offence carried a £20 fine, and accepting money from a person

Table 5: Joseph Conrad's Experience in Merchant Ships, 1874-1894

Ship's Name	Port of Registry	Off- cial No.	Tonnage GR	Rig/ NR	Type	Rk	b. yr/ Age	Boarded/Engaged Date	Place	Discharged/Left Date	Place	Pay M'ty	Pay Off	FG HT	Sea Time	Shore Time	Sources
<i>Mont-Blanc</i>	Marseilles		394	Bk	Pass	[17]		11/12/74	Arrived	~10/74	Marseilles	$\pounds$ s d			2m00d		ZN, 3c JA321-2
<i>Mont-Blanc</i>	Marseilles		394	Bk	Pil.	[17]		23/06/75	Marseilles	23/05/75	Marseilles				5m13d	1m01d	JA 314, ZN 40
<i>Saint-Antoine</i>	Nantes		432	Bk	St	[18]		08/07/76	Marseilles	23/12/75	Le Havre				6m00d	6m08d	JA 315, ZN 40
<i>Maris</i>	London	65548	763	490	SS	Pass	[20]	24/04/78	Marseilles	15/02/77	Marseilles	‡			7m08d	14m07d	JA 315, ZN 43-44
<i>Skinner of the Sea</i>	Lowestoft	14747	225	215	Sch	OS	20	11/07/78	Lowestoft	10/06/78	Lowestoft				2m01d		BT 100/35, ZN 54
<i>Duke of Sutherland</i>	Wick	45690	1047	Sh	OS	20		12/10/78	London	23/08/78	Lowestoft	0.1.0	Nil	HT	1m14d	3m03d	BT 100/5, ZN 58
<i>Europa</i>	London	44848	676	424	SS	AB	21[22]	11/12/79	London	30/01/80	London	0.1.0	Nil	FG	12m08d	1m25d	BT 100/21
<i>Loch Eilve</i>	Glasgow	78565	1287	1234	Sh	3M	1858	21/08/80	London	24/04/81	London	3.10.0	18.9.4	FG	9m05d	5m26d	BT 100/42
<i>Palatine</i>	Liverpool	12684	427	Bk	2M	4[23]		19/09/81	London	02/04/83	Singapore	4.0.0	31.0.4	FG	18m14d	5m09d	BT 100/42
<i>Riversdale</i>	Liverpool	29953	1490	Sh	2M	26[25]		10/09/83	London	17/04/84	Madras	5.5.0	†	FG	7m08d	0m11d	BT 100/16
<i>Narcissus</i>	Greenock	76149	1336	1270	Sh	2M	[26]	28/04/84	Bombay	17/10/84	Dunkirk	5.0.0		FG	5m19d	6m08d	JA 320, ZN 82-83
<i>Tilkhurst</i>	London	76974	1569	1527	Sh	2M	1848	24/04/85	Hull	31/05/85	Cardiff	5.0.0		HT	1m08d	0m06d	BT 100/41
<i>Tilkhurst</i>	London	76974	1569	1527	Sh	2M	27	05/06/85	Penarth	17/06/86	Dundee	5.0.0	29.15.8	FG	12m13d	6m15d	BT 100/41
<i>Fulnaburn</i>	London	87108	1883	1997	Sh	2M	29	28/12/86	London	02/01/87	Penarth	5.0.0		HT	0m06d	1m16d	BT 100/49
<i>Highland Forest</i>	Glasgow	89909	1040	994	Bk	1M	1857	16/02/87	Amsterdam	01/07/87	Samarang	7.0.0	16.5.11	FG	4m14d	1m22d	BT 100/51
<i>Vidar</i>	Singapore	65654	304	206	SS	1M	[29]	22/08/87	Singapore	05/01/88	Singapore			FG	3m14d	0m19d	ZN 97JA 321-322
<i>Orago</i>	Adelaide	60463	367	345	Bk	C	[30]	24/01/88	Bangkok	26/03/89	Adelaide			FG	14m03d	32m24d	ZN103-22JA322-3
<i>Torrens</i>	London	73575	1334	1275	Sh	1M	33	19/11/91	London	03/09/92	London	8.0.0	39.16.8	FG	9m16d	1m20d	BT 100/39
<i>Torrens</i>	London	73575	1334	1275	Sh	1M	35[34]	22/10/92	London	27/07/93	London	8.0.0	22.3.3	FG	9m07d	4m01d	BT 100/39
<i>Adams</i>	London	85192	2097	1347	SS	2M	36[35]	27/11/93	London	17/01/94	London	9.0.0	12.0.3	FG	1m21d	Retired	BT 100/46
Totals															134m3d	104m5d	

Sources: ZN = (Najder, 1983) JA = (Allen, 1967) NMM = National Maritime Museum BT = The National Archive, Board of Trade "Agreement & Account of Crew"

Note: Tonnages (tons of 100 cu.ft.): GR = gross registered; NR = net registered = Bk: barque; S = steam ship; Sch = schooner; Sh = ship; Pass = passenger; Pil = *pilain*; St = steward OS = ordinary seaman; AB = able seaman; 3M = Third Mate; 2M = Second Mate; 1M = First Mate; C = master; FG = foreign-going HT = home trade. Sea & Shore time are calculated by counting whole months then adding days in parts of months, 30 days of which makes a further month. Age/birth year as stated in agreements. [ ] actual age at start of voyage. That Conrad was a *pilain* during his second voyage in Mont-Blanc is suggested and explained in Villiers & Picard (1972, 35). River service in the Congo, which would not be counted by the BoT, is omitted. BoT counted HT seaman at half value. Pay off is money received at end of voyage (pay minus advance, money abroad, slop chest purchases). Conrad took advances of a month's or half a month's pay. ‡ 35 francs. † 234 rupees. 1 anna. 7pi. Official Numbers uniquely identify the hull of a ship regardless of changes in name.

seeking employment as a seaman carried a further fine of £5.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, Conrad shipped in the *Duke of Sutherland*, signing on on 12 October 1878, in all probability at the nearest Mercantile Marine Office to the West India Docks, in the former Green's Sailors' Home building in East India Dock Road.<sup>28</sup>

On the *Duke of Sutherland's* return to London in October 1879 several crew members took advantage of the newly introduced measure aimed at counteracting crimping, the Transmission of Wages scheme. Under this, teams of Mercantile Marine Office officials boarded homeward-bound ships at Gravesend, or in the docks on berthing, to complete the discharge process before men left the ship. The scheme made provision for balances of wages to be paid at a Mercantile Marine Office near a seaman's home. Immediate travel home was thus made possible by means of travel warrants for local and rail transport and the payment in cash of a small sum as pocket money (Kennerley 1989: 113). Seamen had to agree to the value of deductions for advances, allotments, and slop-chest purchases as well as the travel expenses. At least four of the *Duke of Sutherland's* crew, travelling to Greenock and Swansea, did so, and walked out of the London Dock gates more or less worthless to the waiting crimps.

Having been engaged at 1s. per month (incidentally never in practice paid), Conrad was worthless anyhow, but he was one of thirteen of the *Duke of Sutherland's* crew who sought the protection of the facilities afforded by the Sailors' Home (Table 3b). Watson, Bastard, and Davies were returning boarders, and may have extolled the Home's merits to their shipmates. Of the thirteen seafarers, six remained at the Home until shipping out about a month later. Five stayed only two or three days before heading home, long enough for pay off. The ship's second mate, Henry J. Bastard (noted as first mate in the Sailors' Home Entry Book) stayed eight nights before leaving for Devon. He is almost certainly the "J. Bastard" listed in the Home's Wages Book in 1884 apparently as a doorkeeper (but in the 1881 Census as a bookkeeper) at £1 6s. 0d. per

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<sup>27</sup> Merchant Shipping Act, 1894, 57 & 58 Vict., Ch. 60, sect. 110-12. The 1894 Act, a consolidating one, incorporated provisions from the Merchant Shipping Act 1854, the operative act in 1878. Conrad recalls his dealings with Sutherland in "Poland Revisited" (1915), rpt. *Notes on Life and Letters*.

<sup>28</sup> Opened in 1841, the Home, built and operated by the ship-owner Richard Green for his crews, was acquired by the Board of Trade in 1874. The building still stands. For a description of this sailors' home, see "Labour and the Poor ... of Sailors' Homes and Boarding Houses. Letter XLVIII," *Morning Chronicle*, 19 April 1850: 5.



week, and greeted in the 1896 letter to Vernon Weston cited at the opening of this essay.<sup>29</sup> This mix of seafarers using the Home as a short-term staging-post with those for some reason apparently detached from their families and effectively making the Home their temporary home is typical of all periods. There were always a few for whom the Home tended to become a retirement home.

The entries for Conrad, despite being muddled and incomplete, are an important record of his movements and activities in London and elsewhere, particularly as this period of his life is much less documented than his literary career. His arrival date at the Home ties in with his discharge date from the *Duke of Sutherland*. But there is no cabin number, no note of cash advanced, no entry for time in ship, and his rating is down as AB, not OS. (Wont to enhancing his status, Conrad may well have indicated that he was AB.) The departure date as noted, 27 November 1879, does not fit with the arrival date of 23 November 1879 given subsequently. Trying to make sense of this, one might speculate that Conrad left on 27 October. Did he go to Paris as is shown in the destination column? Or was that said simply to satisfy the entry clerk? There was time for him to have taken receipt of his allowance, and he may simply have preferred other accommodation. But, if so, why did he return to the Home on 23 November 1879? To be advanced the apparently larger than normal sum of £2 14s. 6d. suggests that he must have had credit with the Home by then, and it is not impossible that his allowance was actually received and paid to him there. The notes column in the Entry Book (Table 3a) indicates a further advance of 18s 6d. Both sums, curiously precise, possibly refer to the value of payments in kind, for example, for clothing. The entered leaving date of 11 November 1879 is also clearly wrong; 11 December would fit with his engagement as AB in the SS *Europa*.

In 1880, the *Europa* was one of a "Regular Line of steamers loading in the London Docks. The splendid fast steamers of this line will be dispatched three times each month for Genoa, Leghorn, Naples, Messina and Palermo" (*The Times*, 29 September 1880: 2). But when the *Europa* returned to London after Conrad's seven-week Mediterranean voyage, she berthed at Fresh Wharf on the Thames, north bank, just downstream of London Bridge although upstream of the Tower (Table 3a). Conrad came to the Sailors' Home in the afternoon of the day he was discharged, but stayed only one night. Again no cabin is named, and no cash advance

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<sup>29</sup> SAH 54/1, SH Wages Book 1879–85 (NMM).

is noted. His destination on departure is noted as Lowestoft. Did he actually go there? Or could this be an off-the-cuff euphemism to conceal the fact that he was renting lodgings elsewhere, possibly those at 6 Dynevor Road in Stoke Newington, the address he gave on his applications to be examined for certificates from 1880 to 1886.<sup>30</sup>

The home was that of William and Dolores Ward and their eight children. William Ward was an Entry Officer on the Home's staff from at least 1876 to 1882, and in 1881 his son William held a junior post at the Home.<sup>31</sup> Entry Officers were required to sleep at the home on alternate nights, which must have offered ample opportunity for conversation with its boarders.<sup>32</sup> As noted above, Conrad asserts that his only teacher was Mr Newton, who operated the Navigation School at the Sailors' Home, and Conrad would be going to the Home daily until he passed the examination. Plans of the Home indicate the possibility of a separate entrance at basement level (Fig. 3). Further, Conrad might well have taken his mid-day meals at the Home, which provided a separate dining-room for officers.

There was no prescribed course of study for Board of Trade Certificates of Competency, nor was there any restriction on the number of attempts at the examination (Kennerley 1978: 53-61). Those who had studied at sea and had the confidence did sit the examination without taking formal instruction from a navigation teacher. The majority, however, took tuition because of lack of preparation; because the written paper in navigation called for fluency in mathematics and navigation calculations that were difficult for apprentices, seamen, and even junior mates to develop at sea; and because of local idiosyncrasies in the oral seamanship examination.

Four weeks' attendance might be reasonable for someone with a secondary education. Conrad had the equivalent, although mainly literary and not in English, and his education was irrelevant to passing Board of Trade examinations (Najder 1983: 38). He was disadvantaged by not

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<sup>30</sup> "Office copies" of certificates of competency to which are attached application forms, and some times other related documents, such as sea time checks. SAH 54/1, SH (NMM) Wages Books 1873-85 has entries for W. Ward, Entry Officer from 1876 to 1882, when his employment by the Home appears to have ceased. For 6 Dynevor Road, Stoke Newington, see Registrar General: 1881 Census RG 11/0282 (101), p. 52. The Census lists Ward as an employee at the Chelsea Pensioners.

<sup>31</sup> For details of the Ward family, see Stape (forthcoming 2008).

<sup>32</sup> SAH 1/6, SH Committee Minutes, 6 May 1875 (NMM)

being a native speaker and by weakness in mathematics. After leaving the *Europa*, four months passed before he passed his second mate's examination in 1880; following his discharge from the *Narcissus* two and half months elapsed before he passed his first mate's examination in 1884; it was four and a half months after leaving the *Tilkeburst* that he passed his master's examination in 1886. These periods included the complications of obtaining evidence for his time in French ships, his naturalization as a British subject, and his failure in his examinations (van Marle 1976a). We have no idea how much time he devoted to recreation ashore, and whether, when in London between certificates, he took tuition with Mr Newton. It is not difficult to see him spending in all well over a hundred days with his "only teacher" at the Home's Navigation schoolroom.

Conrad was not staying at the Home when he joined the *Loch Etive* in August 1880; when she returned, berthing in London Dock, he was discharged on 24 April 1881 and entered the Home the same afternoon. Once again no cabin number or advance are entered, and, further, no date of leaving or destination. He was paid off with over £18 and, in addition, his allowance was waiting for him (Najder 1983: 69), possibly at the Home. The Board of Trade was already using telegraphic transfers in connection with its Transmission of Wages scheme, and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that his pay off was telegraphed to the Home from the Mercantile Marine Office at Tower Hill.<sup>33</sup>

It is impossible to say how long Conrad stayed at the Home on this occasion. Following this entry, there is no suggestion that he left London, and he might well have waited only long enough for a vacancy at Dynevor Road. On Census night that year (3 April) the Wards had a different boarder, also a foreigner. But on 13 July 1881, Conrad reappears in the Sailors' Home Entry Books, arriving in the afternoon and allocated Cabin 519. The notes refer to a sum of 8s. being advanced. His last ship is still the *Loch Etive*, and apparently he is resident until mid-August, later joining the *Palestine* in September. Cabin 519 was probably on the top flat of the Admiral Sir Henry Hope Dormitory, the Dock Street extension built in 1865 (Fig. 3). In 1879, Henry Bastard as second mate of the *Duke of Sutherland* was allocated nearby Cabin 505, which seems to indicate a section of the Home reserved for officers.

The summer of 1881 is also the period of the discredited *Annie Frost* episode (Baines 1960; rpt. 1967: 68-69; Allen 1967: 151-53; Najder 1983:

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<sup>33</sup> SAH 1/6, SH Committee Minutes, 11 November 1876, refer to a trial (NMM).

70-71). Baines is puzzled by the tale; Allen bends over backwards to reconstruct the story; and Najder gives it short shrift. There is no evidence for a passage in this ship in Conrad's personal papers or directly in his writings, or in the *Annie Frost's* crew agreement, although he apparently referred to the ship in correspondence with his guardian, the source of his allowance and rescuer when in financial straits. Teodor Bobrowski mentions the ship in his surviving letters from the period. Whatever the truth, Conrad turned up at the Sailors' Home on 13 July 1881, a month after the *Annie Frost* ended her voyage in London on 13 June. It was illogical for a ship destined for Le Havre from Ceylon to have run further up the Channel to anchor in the Downs off the Kent coast unless stress of weather forced the situation. It was also unlikely that a homeward-bound ship would bother to try to engage a third mate in such circumstances. The date in the Sailors' Home Entry Book does not close the window on that unlikely possibility, but the ship did have an accident on leaving Le Havre, and Conrad, moreover, found himself in hospital that summer.

While apparently staying at the Sailors' Home, Conrad became unwell and was admitted in August to the *Dreadnought* Seamen's Hospital at Greenwich (see Table 6 for his hospital register entries).<sup>34</sup> The ME attached to the ward number indicates the "Middle East Floor" of the building, that is, the first floor on its eastern side (Matthews 1992: 137). The same page of the register records two other cases of measles being admitted. The page also shows a mix of afflictions for which seafarers were admitted, which, in addition to a variety of injuries, included ague, debility, cardiac disease, venereal conditions, nephritis, and bronchial catarrh. For medical attention Conrad was certainly better off at the Sailors' Home than in lodgings. He would have been unwell some days before being admitted and could have been referred to hospital by the Home's doctor on his daily visit. He could also have attended the Seamen's Dispensary opened by the Seamen's Hospital Society in the Destitute Sailors' Asylum in 1880, a few doors along Well Street from the Home. Either could have recommended his admission to the *Dreadnought* where treatment was free, and he would have been taken down to Greenwich (Matthews 1992: 72, 74).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> DSH/22 and DSH/122: Index to the Registers and *Dreadnought* Seamen's Hospital Register for 1879-83 (NMM).

<sup>35</sup> SAH 1/7, SH Committee Minutes, 8 April 1880 (NMM).

**Table 6: Conrad's Entry in the Register of the  
*Dreadnought* Seamen's Hospital**

Admission number	125129
Date of admission	2 August 1881
Name	Conrad Korzenwin [ <i>sic</i> ]
Age	24
Creed	RC [Roman Catholic]
Ward	Floor 17 Ward ME
Place of Birth	Poland
Ship	<i>Loch Etive</i>
Port vessel belonging to	Glasgow
Name of owner	Glasgow Shipping Co.
Nature of complaint	Measles
Date of discharge	11 August 1881
No. of days in hospital	10 days

*Source:* DSH 22, DSH 122 (NMM)

The Seamen's Hospital Society had been allocated the hulk *Grampus* by the Admiralty in 1821 which they had fitted up as a floating hospital, moored off Greenwich.<sup>36</sup> She was replaced with the larger *Dreadnought* in 1831, and when the Society relinquished that vessel in 1870, the Seamen's Hospital moved into the vacant infirmary building of the redundant Royal Hospital at Greenwich for naval pensioners. It carried the established name *Dreadnought* into the new name of the infirmary, which survived until 1986 when the hospital closed. Two *Dreadnought* wards in St Thomas's Hospital are reserved for seafarers. (The old infirmary is now the Dreadnought Library of the University of Greenwich.) The London School of Tropical Medicine grew out of the initiative of the Seamen's Hospital Society.

Sufferers from measles can be quite ill for up to a fortnight before the rash appears (Personal communication: Dr Ian Johnston). This can last a further fortnight. In people run down by malnutrition and living conditions or subject to periods of illness, as Conrad had been, various complications can occur and in severe cases, death. *The Times* indicates the prevalence of the disease for the months of July and August 1881 and notes mortality rates (14 July 1881: 1; 16 August 1881: 10). In the 1880s, diagnosis was by observation and description, a much less precise matter

<sup>36</sup> "Seamen's Hospital Society," *Sailor's Magazine* 2 (November 1822): 413–18. Extracts from the First Report.

than now where analyzing samples offers a much better guide. Conrad left the Sailors' Home on 16 August and joined the *Palestine* on 19 September 1881, almost six weeks after leaving hospital and a reasonable time to recover. But if he dreamt up the *Annie Frost* episode and was writing to his uncle about it on 10 August, he was keeping close track of the shipping press and possibly writing from hospital (Najder 1983: 70). There was a reference to "a nearby hospital" in *The Secret Agent* episode of the "bomb outrage," which in the real event was the *Dreadnought* (Sherry 1971: 235).

Conrad's last recorded admission to the London Sailors' Home was on 19 October 1884, two days after his discharge in Dunkirk from the *Narcissus*. The French port was so busy with British ships that the Board of Trade maintained a Mercantile Marine Office there, and repatriation by ferry was a well-established formality. At the Home, he took a typical £1 advance, and left to join unspecified "friends" on 23 October. He must have begun attending the Home's Navigation School fairly soon. Prior to his shipping in the *Riversdale* in October 1883 Conrad did not use the Home, nor did he do so on any other occasion during the remainder of his sea service when in London, although, as noted above, he studied there in 1886.

In that year, the Home's staff rendered him another important service. His application for naturalization required four referees.<sup>37</sup> Two appear to have come from his connections elsewhere, but two were staff at the Home. One was Mr Weston senior, an Entry Officer at the Home, and the other was John Newton, Conrad's navigation teacher. Both were resident in 1881 at the addresses given on their Declarations of Reference.<sup>38</sup> John Weston, who had joined the Home's staff on 1 January 1853, died in 1890 after 38 years' service.<sup>39</sup> John Newton had also been a member of the team for many years, not always as an employee.<sup>40</sup> From 1874 he

<sup>37</sup> Conrad's naturalization documentation (NA: HO 144/177/A44314).

<sup>38</sup> Registrar General: 1881 Census RG 11/716 (87), p. 3; RG 11/417 (67), p. 24 for 19 Lausanne Rd and 328 Old Ford Rd, respectively. Mr Weston, senior (born c. 1819), must not be confused with his son (born 1849), both apparently having the same forenames; John Edward Vernon Weston, the younger, eventually succeeded his father at the head of the Sailors' Home administration (Ray 2008 forthcoming).

<sup>39</sup> SAH 1/7, SH Committee Minutes, 11 September 1890 (NMM).

<sup>40</sup> In the early 1850s, he had been a Pupil Teacher at the Royal Hospital School (also known as the Royal Naval School), Greenwich, in part of the buildings now occupied by the National Maritime Museum. There an advanced course in

received tuition fees paid by students, paying a rent of £25 per annum to the Home.<sup>41</sup>

### Conclusion

The examination of the workings of the Sailors' Home hardly does justice to its scope and importance, and neither does the study of that part of London's Sailortown adequately treat the complex range of influences and images that Conrad was absorbing during his visits to the area. Nevertheless, there is surely sufficient evidence to support the assertion that the dimension was significant in time and an unrecognized important part of his life. The discussion of his comings and goings has been related to his voyages with particular reference to the "leave" periods between voyages and his needs for money, accommodation, subsistence, medical care, education, recreation, and even nationality.

It is easy to account for the apparent concealment of Conrad's time in the *Dreadnought*. Initially, he would not want to reveal his illness to the master of the ship he was joining, as it might have lost him a job. It is possible that his personal social perspective may also have prevented him from admitting that he had been treated in what might be construed a pauper's hospital. Later in life he might not want a misconception placed on his illness. If the Sailor's Home was as significant as suggested here, why it does not feature in his fiction is a difficult question. Other writers have shown that many other London elements occur in Conrad's work. Although seafarers paid their way at the Home in full, the commonly held perspective that it was a charitable institution might have offended Conrad's sensibilities. Or it may simply be that no story presented itself, and that other stories did not develop in such a way as to require reference to the London Sailors' Home. Although absent from his fiction, Conrad did pronounce on it publicly, coming to its assistance

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navigation and nautical astronomy was offered to selected students with teaching practice at the Sailors' Home Navigation School, before being sent to take charge of navigation schools in the provinces. He became headmaster of the Leith Navigation School in 1855, soon moving on to rescue the Glasgow Navigation School, and probably returning to London in 1861, following the decision by the Department of Science and Art to impose "payment by results" on the navigation school sector from 1862. He may have come directly to the Navigation School in the Sailors' Home, or he may first have set up as a private teacher (Ray 2008 forthcoming; Kennerley 1978: 75, 82).

<sup>41</sup> SAH 1/6, SH Committee Minutes, 11 November 1874 (NMM).

in 1912 when it was threatened with closure. His warm tribute to its vital work, and his recollection of it as “a friendly place” makes clear that he valued, and fondly remembered, his contact with the Home during his early life in England.

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## Appendix: Supplementary Notes

### On West India Docks Jetties

In addition to London Dock (referred to above) several of London's docks were equipped with jetties of various kinds as a means of increasing the linear quayside and of facilitating loading from or discharge into dumb barges, which were an important means of cargo distribution within the port. Both the West India Export Dock and the South Dock were so provided in Conrad's time, the former with eleven, the latter with fourteen short jetties. Those in the South Dock projected at right angles from the north quay of the dock southwards for about a third of the breadth of the dock, occupying most of that side of the dock. Conrad joined the *Duke of Sutherland* at No. 3 and the *Torrens* at No. 6 (Table 4).

### On H(enry) J. Bastard

From the Sailor's Home wages book (SAH 54/1, NMM), on separate occasions I noted the staff names for 1879, 1884, and 1885, and cited the 1884 entry. All three are down as "J. Bastard," and each time I interpreted the manuscript job label as "doorkeeper." The wage for 1884 and 1885, £1 6s. 0d., seemed high for

that role: in fact, only about five or six other employees were paid more. (John Weston as Entry Officer was paid £2 17s. 9d.). The job title “bookkeeper” from Ray (2008 forthcoming), seems a more probable job description.

In the *Duke of Sutherland* crew agreement he signs H J Bastard; his age is noted as 44 (in 1878) and his birthplace as Halifax. His census entry for 1871, however, gives his place of birth as Halifax, Nova Scotia and his age as 36, which gives an approximate year of birth in 1835 (Ray 2008 forthcoming; 1871 Census RG 10/2009 (71), p.1).

### **On the *Loch Etive***

Other crew who stayed at the Sailors’ Home after the voyage were: Ledger No. 9156 Henry Buse, aged 27, AB (b. Kent), Cabin 329, 8 mo in ship, advance 10/- left 28 April 1881; and the following apprentices: 9166 John Wright, 9168 John Robertson, 9170 David Pinkerton, 9172 Thomas Moxon. Conrad’s Entry No. was 9160 (SAH 19/8, NMM). All are on the crew agreement (BT 100/42, NA). Buse is among those listed by Allen, but she appears to have missed the four apprentices named in a different section of the agreement, as apprentices did not sign on (1967: 317-18).

### **On the *Narcissus***

In October 1884, Conrad was not the only former *Narcissus* crew member to turn up at the Sailors’ Home (SAH 19/16, NMM). His entry number was 3592. At 3578 (ar. 18 October AM) was John Williams, aged 39, AB (b. Guernsey), Cabin 91, left for Glasgow 20 October, and at 3604 was Leonard Nelson (Nillson), aged 23, AB (b. Sweden), who left on leave 25 October. These are both in Allen’s list (1967: 319-20). However, relevant to Table 3a (*Narcissus* line) is that the manuscript word “Mate” is clear in the entry book, which might interpreted as “1M” (First Mate), but there was an indecipherable blotch above. As Allen has Conrad down as “2M” (Second Mate), this blotch could be a “2.”

When, in the mid-1960s the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen’s archive of merchant ship crew agreements (“Agreement and Account of Crew”) was being dispersed to public archives, all those relating to Conrad’s British ships were selected for preservation in the “celebrated ships” class at the National Archives (BT 100), even though the vessels themselves, apart from Conrad’s connection with them, merited no such claim. There was no guarantee that all would have survived. In particular, agreements opened and closed overseas are often missing, including those of the *Vidar* and the *Otago*.

The National Archive has boxes of agreements for all his other named ships including the *Annie Frost*, (now recognized as a ship he did not serve in). Unfortunately, Conrad’s *Narcissus* agreement is not in the *Narcissus* box (BT 100/40). A penciled annotation on the *Tilkehurst* agreement (BT 100/41), naming the *Narcissus* as Conrad’s last ship and a note on the National Archive’s

electronic catalogue entry for BT 100/40 indicates that the *Narcissus* agreement pertinent to Conrad is at the National Maritime Museum; however, when sought there, the agreement was not found with the others held.

That Conrad's *Narcissus* agreement was at there in the 1960s is supported by Allen who in the English documents section of her bibliography gives its location as "O.L.B National Maritime Museum" (1967: 349); however, in note 13 to Chapter XIV she gives the reference "Agreement and Account of Crew of *Narcissus*. General Register and Record Office of Shipping and Seamen, Cardiff" (332). The amount of detail she gives about the *Narcissus*'s crew, including crew changes, in her "Appendix: Conrad's Voyages" (320), makes it certain that she must have seen the *Narcissus* agreement, and as her book was published in 1967, that her research was likely to have been undertaken a few years before the agreements were dispersed to archives.

The National Maritime Museum elected to receive all the agreements concluded in years ending in five, the nearest such year to Conrad's voyage being 1885 (where the search was recently made); however, that criterion means that the *Narcissus* agreement would probably be excluded (even if it had not been selected for the National Archive) as the agreement appears to have been terminated on crew discharge at Dunkirk probably on or about 17 October 1884. If the agreement was lent to National Maritime Museum and not returned before the agreements left Cardiff, it must have been held in some other now lost location. Allen cites the agreements for the *Skimmer of the Sea*, *Duke of Sutherland*, *Loch Etive*, *Annie Frost*, *Palestine*, *Riversdale*, *Tilkehurst*, *Highland Forest*, and *Torrens* as at Cardiff. She presumably did not see the agreements for the *Mavis*, *Europa*, *Falconhurst*, and *Adona*, which are not cited. Allen does not give the official number for the *Narcissus*, but does so for other agreements she lists.

## Alice Kinkead and the Conrads

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AMONG THE NEW FRIENDS of Conrad's last years was Alice Sarah Kinkead, a little known Irish artist who painted the writer's last portrait. She was born in 1871 in Tuam, County Galway, the daughter of Dr Richard John Kinkead, a general practitioner, by his first wife, Alice Langley (d. 1882). The Kinkead family moved to Forster House, Galway, when Dr Kinkead was appointed Professor of Gynæcology at Queen's College in 1876, a position he held until his death in March 1928 (Murray 1994: 237). Alice was brought up and educated in Galway, living with her father, sisters, stepmother, and stepsister before moving to London to pursue a career as an artist.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout her adulthood she was associated with Edith Somerville's circle, having trained with her as an artist in Paris in the mid-1890s. She maintained the link, corresponding with the writer extensively throughout her life. After 1898, Kinkead lived principally in London, but she continued to associate with Irish painters and writers, a group that, in addition to Somerville (1858–1949) and her cousin, life-partner, and literary collaborator Violet Martin ("Martin Ross," 1862–1915), included Lady Augusta Gregory and W. B. and Jack Yeats. In early 1921, Kinkead broke into English literary circles when she met Conrad during a painting trip in Corsica. The friendship proved fruitful for her: not only did Conrad write an introduction to an exhibition catalogue of her paintings (November 1921), but she also painted a portrait of his wife, Jessie (1923), and the last portrait of him (1924).

We know about Alice Kinkead's friendship with Somerville from their unpublished correspondence and from Otto Rauchbauer's evaluative essay accompanying the catalogue of the Drishane Archive at Castle Townshend, West Cork. Kinkead appears only peripherally in biographies of Somerville, and as a footnote in those of Conrad. Apart from a few references in the Somerville/Kinkead correspondence in the Drishane Archive, we have

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<sup>1</sup> Following his first wife's death, Kinkead married Emily Moore (d. 1919), the widow of Colonel Poulett Somerset, in August 1882. She had had a daughter by her previous marriage (<[www.thepeerage.com](http://www.thepeerage.com)> and *Times*, 20 March 1928: 21c).



Fig. 1 Photograph of portrait of Joseph Conrad by A. S. Kinkead, signed "With love | from A. S. Kinkead." Stamped on verso: "By appointment | To H. M. the King | William E. Gray | 92, Queen's Rd. Bayswater, W. | Fine Art Photographer" (Collection: The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, The University of Texas at Austin)



Fig. 2 Photograph by Amy Zavatsky of portrait of Jessie Conrad by A. S. Kinkead (Collection: the late Philip J. Conrad)

minimal evidence of Alice Kinkead's relationship with the Conrads – six letters from Conrad to Kinkead,<sup>2</sup> all of 1921, a postcard from Jessie Conrad to her of 23 October 1922 (University of Texas), a paragraph in the latter's memoirs, and the above-mentioned foreword. This unlikely conjunction shows the way in which the smallest reference in Conrad's letters or non-fictional prose so often exposes a network of surprising and unimagined relations that may urge us to rethink the contextual boundaries within which we read Conrad's work.

Conrad may well have derived more from the friendship than has been assumed, and, contrary to expectations, his encounter with Kinkead late in life may tell us something more about his work in a wider European frame. However brief, his remarks about her landscape painting also suggest something of his individualized engagement with the visual arts in his writing and something of the methodological relationships between literary and visual impressionism in the period.

Alice Kinkead's background deserves attention, for the light it throws on this relationship. Her family probably immigrated from Scotland via the North of Ireland. According to the Kinkead Papers (Trinity College, Dublin, MS 3207), Moses Kinkead, her great-grandfather, lived in Blares, County Down between 1756 and 1774. His son, Francis, went into the church and moved to Ballina, County Mayo. As Curate of Kilmoremy he possessed a copy of a document outlining the purposes of the *Connemara Mission and Asylum* (1836). Under the approval and sanction of His Grace the Archbishop of Tuam, this mission undertook to "diffuse the light of the Gospel throughout a very remote, isolated, and ignorant district of 'the Irish Highlands' on the western coast of Ireland; and affording Instruction and Protection to persecuted Converts from Popery, and other poor Protestants, from all parts of Ireland" (Revd Francis Kinkead Papers MS 3207/17). In fact, Francis Kinkead's experiences in Ballina seemed to have tempered the sectarian tone of his "mission," as his later remarks show. As Clerk to the Secretary of the Ballina and Ardnee Relief Committee in 1846, his words reached all branches of the community, regardless of religious affiliation, as he describes the extreme pressures on the Poor House following upon the failure of the potato crop that year: "Our trade – exportation of corn – is at an end. Rents remain unpaid. ... We are now making another effort to

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<sup>2</sup> Of 30 June 1921, 7 July 1921, 10 October 1921 (CL7 306, 313, 350), two letters dated "Thursday" [February–April 1921?], and 7 May 1921 (CL9 235, 237).



stay the famine moving through our streets; but it will be in vain, if the affluent and the benevolent of other places do not come to our assistance" (*Ibid.*). On 28 January 1847, an obituary in *The Mayo and Sligo Intelligencer* states that Francis himself died "of fever, excessive fatigue helping famine victims," a result of his efforts to alleviate these appalling conditions.

Francis Kinkead's son, Richard John Kinkead, born on 25 August 1844 in Ballina, like his father joined the professional classes but chose medicine, studying at Trinity College, Dublin, where he specialized in gynæcology. On finishing, he moved to Tuam to take up general practice. Richard Kinkead seems to have followed his father's reformist ideology, speaking out on the temperance question (reported in *The Tuam Herald* throughout the 1860s). Soon after Alice Sarah's birth in 1871 the family moved to Galway. With her father's new appointment to Queen's College, she thus spent most of her childhood in Galway and was educated there before further studies in Paris, to become a professional portrait and landscape painter, a jewellery-maker, and woodcutter associated with the Irish literary renaissance.

Her career flourished between 1897 and 1925, during which her work was exhibited in Dublin at the Royal Hibernian Academy, at the Belfast Art Society, in Paris, and at various London galleries, including the Goupil and the United Arts.<sup>3</sup> During this time she kept in close touch with Edith Somerville, and their correspondence reveals considerable intimacy between the two families. In 1895, for example, Edith Somerville mentions an occasion on which Alice's father treated her sister Hildegard when she was ill: "I *will* say how *very* kind it was of him to insist on treating H. as the sister of a confrere" (May 1895, MS

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<sup>3</sup> See Rauchbauer (1945: 174-232), National Gallery of Ireland (1987: 171), and Stewart, comp. (1986: 160). Snoddy (2002: 324-25) confirms the extent and range of her activities. She exhibited paintings at the Salon Nationale, Paris, 1897; paintings, a miniature in ivory in 1898 and 1889, and bookplates in 1901 at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; bookplates, a greeting card, and craftware at the Society of Women Artists, London in 1901; oils and a watercolour at the Cork International Exhibition, 1902; at the Guildhall Exhibition of Irish Art in London in 1904, where she showed her portrait of W. B. Yeats; a painting at the International Exhibition, Dublin, 1907; jewellery and watercolours at the Walker between 1904-08; painting at the Royal Academy in 1915; again at the Salon Nationale, 1922. She also exhibited jewellery at The Women's International at the Grafton Gallery in 1920 (*Times*, 11 March 1920: 18b).

Drishane Archive). In April 1898, Somerville expressed the hope, not to be fulfilled, that Alice's father would be appointed President of Queen's College following Thomas Moffett. (In due course, he did become President of the Irish Medical Association.)

From about 1898 onwards Alice lived in London. In 1901, she lived at Egerton Place Studios, in a quiet crescent of substantial red brick buildings south of Brompton Road. One of several artists in this locale, the Census lists her as an "artist sculptor" (1901 Census RG13/34 (85), p. 59). Perhaps her decision to remain in London stemmed in part from the tragic loss of her brother Francis. *The Galway Vindicator and Connaught Advertiser* recorded the "melancholy drowning accident" in which he had died (along with the son of Professor D'Arcy Thompson of Queen's College and the son of the Revd Roberts of Oughterard) after taking a sailing boat out on Lough Corrib on 20 August 1887.<sup>4</sup>

Alice Kinkead's great nephew and closest surviving relative Christopher Allen has outlined the circumstances that subsequently prolonged the "air of tragedy hanging over Forster House." Mr Allen's grandfather, an outstanding student of Professor Kinkead who had married Alice's sister, Fridzwieda ("Eda"), died suddenly, aged 41, leaving "Eda" with four children aged approximately three to nine (including Mr Allen's father, Robert, then about seven years old), whom she brought up at Forster House with the children of Professor Kinkead's second marriage. A "strict and wholehearted form of Christianity" was practised by the Protestant Kinkeads, and "The atmosphere in the house was devout. My father told me that he dreaded Sundays, when the only permitted activities were reading the Bible and church attendance. One may well surmise that she [Alice] did not 'fit in'" (Private communication: 14 August 2007).<sup>5</sup>

In Galway, the Kinkead family moved in the highest circles of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, but, for all that, Alice chose to leave Ireland to pursue her career as an artist. Known to her friends and relatives as "Kinkie," she shared an art student's adventures in Paris with Edith

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<sup>4</sup> Alice's remaining brother, Captain Richard Kinkead, a surgeon in the South of Ireland Yeomanry, was later killed in the First Battle of Ypres on 30 October 1914 (<[www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)>).

<sup>5</sup> The case was not, however, clear cut. Christopher Allen observes: "Just in case this gives an impression of Protestant sectarianism I should add that Professor Kinkead's obituary in *The Lancet* (31 April 1928) stated 'he was . . . for many years medical officer of H. M. prisons at Galway . . . many of the political prisoners who were under his care at one time or another expressed their deep respect for his humanity and independence.'"

Somerville, who also painted while making her reputation as a writer.<sup>6</sup> Although Kinkead moved between London and Ireland during the rest of her life, she never went back to live in Ireland permanently. In London, she lived with a musician, Frances Perkins (*c.* 1867–1959), who later became Major Sir Maurice Cameron’s second wife,<sup>7</sup> and she appears to have resided with the Camerons, their address appearing as hers in the announcement of their return from Corsica (*Times*, 25 April 1921: 13b).<sup>8</sup>

Kinkead was part of a group of friends and correspondents of Sapphic inclination, which, besides Somerville and Ross included the composer Ethel Smyth, an intimate of Virginia Woolf. The Kinkead Papers, housed in Trinity College, Dublin show the kind of life she was leading there: for example, her nephew Richard, back from service in the Indian army in April 1922, wrote that “we dined with Kinkie and PF [Frances] at their club and then went on and saw a review called the Co-optimists – poor show. Also saw Gladys Cooper in ‘The Sign on the Door.’ Didn’t like the subject – the divorce courts” (MS 3207). She also appears to have been friendly with the photographer Lena Connell (1875–1949, later Mrs Beatrice Cundy), who had a studio in Hampstead and is remembered for documenting the Women’s Suffrage Movement.<sup>9</sup>

Along with the evidence of Edith Somerville letters, we know about Kinkead’s activities from Augusta Gregory’s diaries and W. B. Yeats’s letters. She remained an intimate member of the West of Ireland artistic set before and after she left Ireland. In the summer of 1901, she painted W. B. Yeats’s portrait (he thought she made him look like “the manager of a creamery”),<sup>10</sup> and in London she taught the art of wood-cutting to

<sup>6</sup> Somerville’s paintings include an 1886 portrait of Violet Martin (National Portrait Gallery).

<sup>7</sup> The Camerons married on 1 January 1920 (*Times*, 2 January 1920: 13b). Frances Mary Perkins is listed as aged 14 in the 1881 (Census RG11/633 (99), p. 29), and her will (as Lady Cameron) is noted in *The Times*, 23 September 1959: 12e. Her name often appears with the spelling of Francis. She was also known as “P. F.” (Drishane Archive), short for “Por’ Francis” (Lewis: 7).

<sup>8</sup> At her death, however, she was visiting the Camerons at Vickers Hill, High Street, Fareham, Hampshire (Copy of an Entry of Death; Robert Allen 1926).

<sup>9</sup> Some of her work is in the National Portrait Gallery, London. Her photograph portrait of Yeats is at the British Library (Add. MS 50585 f. 93), that of Shaw at Boston College, and that of Carpenter is the frontispiece to A. H. Moncur Sime’s *Edward Carpenter: His Life and Ideas* (1916).

<sup>10</sup> Yeats to Elizabeth Corbet Yeats, 25 July 1901, in Kelly and Schuchard, ed., (2003): 3: 95, 95 n. 3; see also 74, n.1: “The Irish artist Alice Kinkead had taught

Jack Yeats and Augusta Gregory to enhance the illustration of *Sambain*, a publication associated with the Gælic League.<sup>11</sup> In 1902, she stayed with Lady Gregory at Coole Park in 1902 (Gregory 1996: 308); in 1916, she made the setting for a moonstone that Somerville had given to Violet Martin before her death (Somerville to Kinkead, 6 November 1916, Drishane Archive).

We may also locate her in the *fin-de-siècle* milieu that anticipated Yeats's *A Vision*. Kinkead attended séances with Somerville and Ross before – and reputedly *after* – her premature death in 1926. Her companion, Frances wrote touchingly to Edith Somerville in November 1926, begging her to contact “Martin” on “the other side” to ask her whether Kinkie was “really happy and peaceful” (Drishane Archive). The unpublished Somerville-Kinkead correspondence also reveals the degree to which Alice's association with Conrad was regarded as a great “coup” among Irish artists, and hints at his reputation in Ireland. Somerville attempted on a number of occasions to coerce her friend into putting in a good word with Conrad about her *Irish RM* stories. She had heard from Kinkie of Conrad's discussions with B. Macdonald Hastings about the dramatization of *Victory* (Somerville to Kinkead, 4 October 1921, Drishane Archive), and in 1921 hoped to entice Hastings into dramatizing her work. Conrad's response was acerbic: he more or less encouraged Edith to do her own touting for business (10 October 1921; *CL7* 350–51). But it is hard to imagine that Conrad was impervious to Alice Kinkead's stories of her connection with a wider artistic field and of her considerable role as mediator and facilitator of the group's artistic endeavours.

The two may, in fact, have had more to talk about than we might expect, given the path of their respective careers. Born in the Ukraine in 1857, Conrad, who had lived in Marseilles when young, visited Paris in the early 1890s before launching his literary career. Settled in England, he wrote stories that rarely drew upon the actual location and landscape of his place of birth. Alice Kinkead learned the techniques of Impressionist painting in Paris's *ateliers* of the 1890s before settling in London. Given the loosening of their original ties and their familiarity with French culture, we might imagine that a meeting between them would generate a certain empathy.

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AG [Augusta Gregory] how to do woodcuts during her visit to London in February [1901].”

<sup>11</sup> Entries of 11 and 16 February and 1 April 1901 (Gregory 1996: 301–02).

In the spring of 1921, Conrad took a trip to Corsica with his wife ostensibly to work on *Suspense*. According to Frederick R. Karl, the journey proved unproductive, since the author wrote nothing at this time. During this stay the Conrads met Kinkead though an old acquaintance, Major Sir Maurice Cameron, whom Conrad had met through Hugh Clifford. Another mutual acquaintance was Hugh Walpole, and it is worth noting that J. B. Pinker, in Corsica with the Conrads, acted as the literary agent of “Somerville and Ross,” the signature under which Edith Somerville and Violet Martin’s joint work appeared. Working on landscapes for a forthcoming London show, Alice Kinkead was travelling with the Camerons, who happened to be staying at the Conrads’ hotel, the Grand Hôtel d’Ajaccio.

The brief references to Kinkead in Karl’s biography insinuate that she was something of a nuisance, forcing a connection with the Conrads on their return from Corsica: “he was now the old lion receiving requests for prefaces, contributions, letters, his autograph” (1979: 851). There is a veiled accusation that Kinkead pestered the busy man of letters with demands to write a preamble to the catalogue of her artistic work. (Karl wrongly mentions a catalogue of photographs, not paintings.) Yet his picture is certainly skewed, diverging widely from that of Jessie Conrad, who wrote in her memoir that after their meeting abroad “the acquaintance was renewed with keen pleasure by both sides” (Jessie Conrad, 1935: 227). Moreover, as a letter from Edith Somerville makes clear, the Conrads had, whilst still on Corsica, settled on Kinkead’s doing a portrait of Jessie Conrad: “I am very sorry not to meet your friend Mr. Conrad, and hope you will tell him so. ... I hope you will have luck with the portrait of Madame, and that Joseph will ultimately fall a victim to you too” (6 April 1921; Drishane Archive).

Jessie Conrad recalled with fondness her enduring bond with the Camerons and with Kinkead, and recorded with regret the latter’s premature death in 1926: “these dear people still remain very close friends, more than fourteen years afterwards. Except the Irish artist, Miss Alice Kinkead, who leaves a big gap in the little circle. But before this sad happening she spent many a week under our roof, and I grew exceedingly attached to her” (1935: 227).

Jessie Conrad’s affection is clear. But what of Conrad’s response to a lesser known Irish woman artist? When inviting her to Oswalds in early May 1921, his tone could not be warmer: “We do hope you will give yourself plenty of time for your visit – if only to have a good look at your sitter and at the surroundings; and you must remember that if this is

work for you, for us it will be *all* pleasure” (CL9 237). Her stay with the Conrads may be glimpsed again through a letter to her from Somerville:

Your letter about yr pursuit of Joseph interested us very much, and we are delighted to hear that you were successful with Mrs J: I could hardly imagine a more nerve-shattering task, and think you are deeply to be congratulated on coming out of it satisfactorily. You seem to have been in high literary society. Conrad, Walpole, & Pinker!<sup>12</sup> A constellation of stars! I hope they all twinkled nicely. Apparently all went well, & as Eleanor Hodson is devoted to Joseph’s books, you were able to do her a good turn in introducing her to him.

(17 June 1921; Drishane Archive)

And later he bowed to her request to introduce her exhibition *Landscapes of Corsica and Ireland*, on show at the United Arts Gallery at 23a Old Bond Street during November–December 1921, an exhibition that also included the portrait of his wife. Conrad’s short introduction is not the thoughtless hack-work that might have been expected from the busy “lion,” conscious of his failing health. Conrad begins by praising Kinkead’s treatment of the rugged Corsican coastline, and then moves on to discuss her Irish landscapes. He says of Kinkead that “an artist who had perceived the inner truth of a foreign landscape by the power of imaginative sympathy could not fail to render still more finely the spirit of her native land.” Subsequently, he strikes a more personal and familiar note: “to respond more intimately still to the tie of an old association, an association going back into the soil, an association that, like all manifestations of inherited personality, is really unanalysable in its profounder appeal” (Conrad 1921).

In 1921, Conrad, struggling with the subject of his Napoleonic novel, was reflecting on *his* “old association” with *his* former homeland. During the last years of his life Conrad had been anxious to revisit Poland, but writing *about* Poland had always been a painful, delicate and ambivalent topic, by his own admission: Polishness was something pro-

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<sup>12</sup> Walpole’s diary notes a visit to Oswalds during Saturday and Sunday of 4–5 June but makes no mention of the presence of Pinker or Kinkead on the occasion (The Diaries of Hugh Walpole, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin).

found and “unanalysable” that resonated throughout *his* work.<sup>13</sup> Zdzisław Najder, Andrzej Busza, and Ian Watt have confirmed that the dissemination of this Polishness was nevertheless achieved through a predominantly impressionist mode of writing. Conrad acquired the methodology for his early experimentation with literary “impressionism,” through his reading of Flaubert and Maupassant and through his relationship with Marguerite Poradowska, a Franco-Belgian writer living in Paris, who had married a distant cousin of his.

In “Prince Roman” (1911), Conrad writes of his Polish protagonist’s return home from the Napoleonic wars as follows: “this familiar landscape associated with the days without thought and without sorrow, this land the charm of which he felt without even looking at it soothed his pain” (38). This nostalgic tone is heard again in the foreword to Kinkead’s catalogue, when he describes an Impressionist landscape imbued with “a low dense cloud of dark dust” and “slender gleams of steel here and there in the cloud” that “contained moving forms which revealed themselves at last as a long line of peasant carts full of soldiers” (Conrad 1921).

How might Conrad, an artist with such a keen eye for landscapes, respond to Kinkead’s style of painting? He may well have recognized a corresponding interest in the revelation of forms through the medium of light, which can be seen in Kinkead’s portrait of Jessie Conrad (Fig. 2). The image emerges, as it were, as if through the “slender gleams” of light containing “moving forms.” Her stately head and shoulders emerge from a swirl of Impressionist blue and white.

Consider the scene in Corsica in 1921: Conrad meets an artist also willingly displaced from her homeland, but who had drawn on the subject matter of her native Ireland as the subject for her art. But more than that, this was an artist influenced, as was he, by France and the French artistic milieu.<sup>14</sup> While Kinkead was amongst those painters who brought French Impressionism to modern Irish art, Conrad introduced the influence of French realism and literary impressionist techniques to the treatment of vision and epistemological issues in the English novel.

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<sup>13</sup> In 1917, Conrad had spoken of the way in which the tone and texture of the Polish Romantic poets Mickiewicz and Slowacki had pervaded his writing: “*That is Polishness*,” he declared (Dąbrowski in Najder, ed., 1983: 199).

<sup>14</sup> They may have passed through Paris at the same time. Conrad occasionally visited Marguerite Poradowska in Passy and Brussels between 1890 and 1895, when Kinkead was working in Paris ateliers.

Kinhead's landscapes may have reminded Conrad of his own attachment to his native land, but the association of these two *émigrés* also suggests wider implications. It draws attention to, and confirms the status of, the dislocated, transient artist as a fundamental figure of early twentieth-century Modernism, as well as the degree to which the idea of a Modernist identity was often predicated on a highly Romantic concept of the self and its relationship to nationhood. One is reminded of Conrad's Stephen, the artist of *The Sisters* (1896), who leaves his Ukrainian homeland to follow his art in Paris. Conrad's meeting with the practitioner of Irish Impressionism late in his life calls to mind the importance of Paris as one of the great urban centres of inspiration for European Modernism – a centre that also attracted artists from Scotland (for example, the Glasgow Boys, Rennie Mackintosh, Margaret Cameron, Bessie Nicholls) as well as Ireland.

Thus, if we think again of Conrad's foreword, perhaps, after all, those remarks were not so casually made – to have admired the intimacy and the inexpressible attachment of an artist to her representations of her homeland, a place she now rarely visited and in which she no longer resided but that she had recorded using the style and techniques learned in *fin-de-siècle* Paris. Conrad did not dismiss "Kinkie" out of hand. Jessie Conrad writes of a fondness for her, and pays homage to her memory, and the artist, as we have seen, visited at Oswalds. We might speculate about what Conrad knew of *her* radical lifestyle, *her* dislocation from her homeland, her association with the Irish Impressionist movement, her moving in Sapphic circles and with Irish literary ones in London and Dublin as he wrote his last works (with their various allusions to nationalism and republicanism).

What is perhaps most intriguing is the fact that, despite Conrad's sense of "time running out" he found time to sit for Kinhead in April 1924,<sup>15</sup> just after he sat to Jacob Epstein.<sup>16</sup> In addition to Epstein's bust,

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<sup>15</sup> See L. M. Hallowes to Jean-Aubry, 1 April 1924 (Yale). Somerville to Kinhead, 27 June 1924 (Drishane Archive) mentions work on the Conrad portrait, but Conrad's health at the time, as well as the fact that his wife was in a nursing home in Canterbury, suggests that rather than actual sittings, the portrait, begun earlier in the spring, was being given its final touches.

<sup>16</sup> As reported by *The Studio*, which published the portrait, it was of interest because "it is but a few weeks since the world of English letters was saddened by the news of the death of one of its most distinguished sons. The painting succeeds admirably in showing not only the subtle psychologist we landmen know, but also the clear-eyed resolute ship-master" (September 1924: 158).





Fig. 3 Photograph of Alice Kinhead by Lena Connell taken at her studio at 6 Baker Street, Portman Square, W. 1, where she worked from 1919–22. (Collection: Christopher Allen)

that year also saw the completion of a portrait by Walter Tittle in January (both now in the National Portrait Gallery, London). Clearly he admired Kinkead's work, having commissioned a portrait of his wife from her. On 27 June 1924, Edith Somerville received from Alice a photograph of her friend's current work in progress: a "picture of Conrad" himself. On 5 August, she wrote to Kinkie from Drishane, West Cork: "I was most grieved to see in this morning's paper the death of your friend, Mr. Conrad," adding a perspicacious comment, "How wonderfully fortunate that you should have been able to do his portrait last month" (MS Drishane Archive). The Edith Somerville letters confirm that Kinkead painted the last portrait of Conrad, completed not long before he died,<sup>17</sup> and only a couple of years before her own premature death on 1 November 1926 at age 55, of a cerebral haemorrhage (Oct–Dec 1926 Fareham 2b/718; Copy of an Entry of Death).

In the year of her death, Kinkead continued to lead a busy social life. Among others, she received several visits at her London studio from her nephew, Colonel Robert Allen, then a lieutenant in the Norfolk Regiment stationed at Aldershot. On 6 April, Allen reported that Kinkie "has been in bed all Easter with a cold." She seems to have recovered from it, as on the 7th they were joined for dinner by Edith Somerville. Allen recorded Kinkead's passing later that year and attended her funeral on 5 November with his mother (Kinkead's sister "Eda"). He remarked on the occasion's sadness, the arrival of the hearse with Sir Maurice and Lady Francis Cameron from Fareham, the full attendance at the church, details of the flowers, the service, and the burial at Kensington Cemetery, Ealing. He subsequently discussed with Sir Maurice and Lady Cameron the execution of Kinkead's letter "written in place of a Will" (2 December), and he assisted Lady Cameron on several occasions to clear her friend's studio (Robert Allen 1926). An unsigned obituary of Kinkead appeared in the *Connacht Tribune* on 13 November 1926, describing her as "a very clever artist. As a colourist her talent was remarkable. An originality of treatment is observable in all her work" (8; cited in Lewis).

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<sup>17</sup> The portrait was in family hands until recently. It was sold on 7 December 2006 (Lot 145) by Sotheby's, London, for £12,000. It had previously been exhibited in Kinkead's exhibition at Bedford Gardens in September 1924. Its provenance, according to Christopher Allen, is as follows: the painting passed from Kinkie's half-sister "Deedles" (Beatrice Frances m. Jim Waller, a civil engineer) to her daughter Beatrice Waller (m. Col. Carfrae) and thence to Beatrice's son Jim Carfrae.

This story offers slightly more than the marginal event of a meeting between a major author and a largely forgotten woman painter. If we shift the terms in which we think about Modernism in the arts emerging in the early twentieth century we might imagine Modernist experimentation developing in borderlands and “contact zones,” to adopt a phrase from Mary Louise Pratt, where a variety of agencies collide, allowing for a wider intertextual and interdisciplinary field and the confluence of some unexpected characters. We would do well to redeploy these terms in a different context, to offer an alternative perspective on developments in literary and visual aesthetics occurring in early twentieth-century Ireland, England, and France.

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## Marguerite Poradowska as a Translator of Conrad

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THE FIRST REFERENCE to a possible “translation” of Conrad’s work by Marguerite Poradowska occurs in a letter of [30 July 1894] (CL1 164) related to *Almayer’s Folly*, which Conrad was then desperate to see published. In the throes of doubt at this critical stage of his life, he wrote to Poradowska, agonizing over the outcome of his long struggle to become a writer. Having sent the novel to T. Fisher Unwin, Conrad was on tenterhooks, apparently believing that the longer the publisher remained silent, the less the chance of the book’s acceptance. As a fallback plan, Poradowska was to use her connections with Paris’s *Revue des Deux Mondes* to publish the novel in translation.

Why Conrad thought of her in this respect remains a mystery, although Poradowska’s role as a translator of Polish literature may have paved the way. Significantly, she occasionally wrote in English to Conrad, as his compliments testify: “You write English very gracefully,” and “Thank you for your letter in English. You write very well, very well indeed” ([7 January 1894], 8 September 1894; CL1 143, 173).<sup>1</sup> Poradowska may have been attempting to show off her knowledge of the language and thus suggest her translating skills.

However this may be, the balance in the master-pupil relationship shifted as soon as Conrad asserted himself professionally. In a letter of [23 February 1895], he enquired: “My publisher speaks of a French translation. What should I do?” (CL1 201), apparently feeling that he owed Poradowska first refusal on a French translation of *Almayer’s Folly*. In the end, nothing came of this, and more than five years later, on 16 May 1900, Conrad told her of his “burning desire” to read her translation of “An Outpost of Progress,” acknowledging receipt of it a fortnight later but begging off an immediate response because of the press of business. In 1902, in a letter to H.-D. Davray, Conrad mentions Poradowska’s translation somewhat unflatteringly and his reluctance to use it for publication given that Davray, who was well placed in Paris literary circles, was in effect becoming his “official translator”:

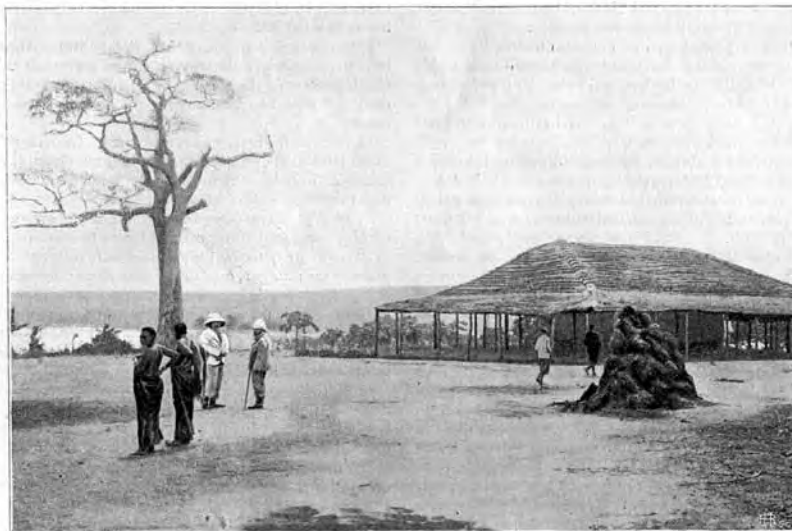
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<sup>1</sup> The page references here and in similar instances refer to the original French; the quotations, however, are from Karl and Davies’s English translations.

22 Janvier 1908

LES NOUVELLES ILLUSTREES

N° 35 - 89



Juste au milieu de la station s'élevait un grand bâtiment tout à fait isolé...

## Un Avant-poste de la Civilisation

DRAME SUR LES RIVES DU CONGO

Par JOSEPH CONRAD, adapté de l'anglais par MARGUERITE PORADOWSKA

Il y avait deux blancs pour gérer la factorerie : Kayerts, le chef, était gros et court. Carlier, son aide, était long et maigre, avec une paire de jambes hautes et grêles comme des échasses.

Le troisième employé de la station était un noir, natif de Sierra-Leone, et qui avait de l'instruction. Il affirmait s'appeler James Price; mais, pour une raison qui reste obscure, les indigènes du bas fleuve l'avaient surnommé Makola, et ce nom lui resta pendant toutes ses pérégrinations dans le pays.

Il parlait assez bien l'anglais et le français, mais en grasseyant, connaissait la tenue des livres, avait une fort belle écriture et gardait, au plus profond de son cœur, une foi inébranlable dans le pouvoir des Mauvais Esprits.

Sa femme, une négresse de Loanda, était une personne robuste, bruyante, aux gestes exubérants. Trois enfants, tout à fait nus et dont la peau noire luisait au soleil, s'ébattaient à la porte de

leur longue cabane de roseaux qui ressemblait assez à un hangar.

Makola, d'une nature taciturne et impénétrable, méprisait ses deux compagnons blancs.

Il avait à sa charge le petit magasin de la factorerie, sorte de hutte recouverte d'une toiture d'herbes sèches, et prétendait tenir un compte scrupuleusement exact des verroteries, pièces de calicot, foulards de coton rouge, des rouleaux de fil de laiton et autres marchandises à échange qui y étaient renfermées.

Non loin de ce magasin et de la cabane de Makola, s'élevait, juste au milieu de la station, un grand bâtiment tout à fait isolé. Il était soigneusement bâti en forts roseaux, et, sur chacun de ses quatre côtés, s'avancait une véranda.

La maison était divisée en trois pièces : dans celle du milieu, qui était la salle commune, se trouvaient deux tables grossières et quelques chaises; les deux autres servaient de chambres à

A year ago, my relative and good friend Mme Marguerite Poradowska (born Gachet) translated the story *Outpost of Progress*, which is in the volume in question. I have the manuscript with me. It's quite good, but the style needs a little fortification. I believe she intended to place the piece in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. You see the situation for, to be honest, without my negligence the story would have appeared a long time ago. (2 April 1902; CL2 398)

René Rapin stated that Poradowska's translation never saw the light of day (1966: 174 n. 5), and as recently as 2000, the authors of the *Oxford Reader's Companion to Conrad* likewise recorded that Poradowska's translation "was never published" (372).<sup>2</sup> Research into the impact of Conrad's African stories in Belgium and France has uncovered it: the translation appeared in two issues, those of 22 and 29 January 1903, of *Les Nouvelles Illustrées* (Paris), under the title "Un Avant-poste de la civilisation: Drame sur les rives du Congo par Joseph Conrad, adapté de l'anglais par Marguerite Poradowska." As well as solving the mystery of what happened to Poradowska's translation, this discovery also represents the first known publication of Conrad's work in French translation, pre-dating Davray's work.

### Form and Content: "An Outpost of Progress"

Conrad was pleased with "An Outpost of Progress": "Upon my word, I think this is a good story," he wrote to his publisher (CL1 294). The story "was meant for" his friend Edward Garnett, who "will understand the reason and meaning of every detail, the meaning of them reading novels and the meaning of *Carlier not* having been armed" (CL1 292). The late Michael Lucas emphasized the story's dynamic style, its lack of expansive descriptions, and its lexical insistence, and concluded that in these aspects it is atypical of Conrad's work at the time and "fore-shadows his best work, to be written five to ten years later" (2000: 149). Returning, for the purpose of inspiration to his African trip, Conrad himself recognized in his "Author's Note" to *Tales of Unrest* that he "stepped in a very different atmosphere" and "seemed able to capture new rhythms for my paragraphs" (10). But there is no doubt about the

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<sup>2</sup> Rapin records the first published translation of "An Outpost of Progress" as by the Belgian writer Gaston-Denys Périer (1879-1962): "Un Avant-poste de la civilisation" (Brussels: Renaissance d'Occident, 1925).

painful nature of his memories, or about the anger and psychological resistance that he felt while he was there:

– It is a story of the Congo. ... All the bitterness of those days, all my puzzled wonder as to the meaning of all I saw – all my indignation at masquerading philanthropy – have been with me again, while I wrote. The story is simple – there is hardly any description. ... I have divested myself of everything but pity – and some scorn – while putting down the insignificant events that bring on the catastrophe.

(To T. Fisher Unwin, 22 July 1896, *CL1* 294)

In other words, the reader is to expect “bitterness,” expressions of his “puzzled wonder,” and “indignation” in regard to the European pretence at philanthropy as well as scorn and pity. The tale recounts the plight of two “civilized” Europeans, in effect weak and passive fools *à la* Flaubert’s Bouvard and Pécuchet, who find themselves involved in “inhuman processes in the wilderness.” The futility and insignificance of human endeavour is carefully staged in a structurally simple tale, divided into two parts and hinging on a turning-point in the plot, when the action quickens.

The first part alternates between description, mainly of the characters’ psychological states and narrative, while the second part concentrates on developing action. Michael Lucas’s structural approach to the tale highlights the importance of its grammatical features and their bearing on the reader’s experience. For instance, the significantly lower density of adjectives in the second part shows off the nature of the shift between the more descriptive first part and the eventual focus of the second.<sup>3</sup> Hence, in the context of translation, the meanings are impressed and shaped by the sharpness and rhythms of the prose. This is to say that, faced with the task of preserving or relaying the text’s power into another linguistic system, a translator must attend to and balance both its syntactic and semantic contents.

As George Steiner has said, “To understand is to decipher. To hear a signification is to translate” (1998: 17). Did Marguerite Poradowska “understand” Conrad’s text, or rather, did she share his semantic coding of English, a foreign language to them both? Moreover, to what degree did she comprehend his appreciation and representation of the colonized

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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the text’s grammatical elements, see Lucas (2000: 121–58).



Congo? Given the interpretive and re-creative nature of translation, it is clear that there are many grounds for the achieved translation or Target Text (TT), Poradowska's "Un Avant-poste de la civilisation," to be estranged from the original or Source Text (ST), Conrad's "An Outpost of Progress." The accuracy of the translation depends upon both the translator's linguistic knowledge and conceptual world. Reciprocally, we may expect to learn, from this reading of "An Outpost of Progress," how "close" indeed Poradowska and Conrad were to one another.

### Poradowska's Translation

The purpose of this short and far from exhaustive approach to Poradowska's translation is not to identify a definite meaning in Conrad's text to which the translation would be faithful to a greater or lesser degree, but rather to establish and evaluate a potential semantic distance between the source text and target text and to consider its impact on a global understanding of the tale. To do so, the texts are first compared structurally and then a more comprehensive approach is essayed that encompasses further stylistic and semantic dimensions related to the tale's context and the reader's acquired knowledge.

Evidently, the story's publication in an illustrated weekly involved structural constraints. The text must appear in two vertical columns and must be divided so as to be visually appealing, allowing for momentary pauses in the flow of type. Even so, a comparative first glance at both texts reveals their differing textual density. In ST, the first paragraph extends over more than two pages and covers the first day, until "we shall see, very soon" (88). In TT, the same section is cut eighteen times, and includes nine paragraphs comprised of a single sentence only and four of two sentences. The original's paragraphing, then, has been significantly modified, a fact bound to impact on the reader, especially in light of Conrad's comments in his "Author's Note" to *Tales of Unrest* that, in this tale, he felt able to "capture new rhythms" for his paragraphs (vi), a remark that implies care for structure. By contrast, where Conrad privileged short, neat sentences in descriptive passages, his translator opted for greater length. Part of this is an aspect of French syntax, with most texts translated into French being longer than their English originals, but there is an undeniable loss of impact:

Besides the storehouse and Makola's hut, there was only one large building in the cleared ground of the station. It was built neatly of reeds, with a verandah on all the four sides. There were three rooms in it. The one in the middle was the living-room, and had two rough tables and a few stools in it. The other two were the bedrooms for the white men. Each had a bedstead and a mosquito net for all furniture.

(Outpost 86-87)

Non loin de ce magasin et de la cabane de Makola, s'élevait, juste au milieu de la station, un grand bâtiment tout à fait isolé. Il était soigneusement bâti en forts roseaux, et sur chacun de ses quatre côtés, s'avancait une véranda.

La maison était divisée en trois pièces: dans celle du milieu, qui était la salle commune, se trouvaient deux tables grossières et quelques chaises; les deux autres servaient de chambres à coucher aux agents et n'avaient pour tout ameublement qu'une chaise et un lit.

(APC 89-90)

Conrad's short sentences tend to heighten the focus on individual words, for instance, the choice, and repetition of "it" for the white men's habitation. In Poradowska, the *bâtiment* graduates to a *maison* (house) and the phrase "white men" is replaced by *agents*, thus removing the racial antagonism as the power-invested company employees live in a "house" as opposed to Makola, who lives in a *cabane* (technically, a "shed" rather than a "hut").

The looser structure disinvests words of their power and the approximate translations tone them down further, as does the removal of the colour adjective. The images of the outpost as well as the balance of power between the white men and the native have been blurred, however slightly. Poradowska, moreover, creatively and intrusively adjusts the text, positioning Carlier and Kayerts's dwelling at the dead centre of the station ("*juste au milieu de la station*"), a detail, in conjunction with the phrase "*tout à fait isolé*," arguably of symbolic weight and not in the original and interpreting or extending the notion of "the cleared ground."

The phenomenon of dilution and alteration of meaning is further enhanced by the repetitive – indeed, compulsive – addition of words or nominal groups, at the beginning of sentences, presumably in order to link ideas. Yet, whether they are adverbs (*toutefois*, *cependant*), conjunctions (*mais*), or compound forms (*un jour, et maintenant, de son côté*), they carry additional grammatical and semantic weight, not thought necessary by the author, but deriving, possibly, from Poradowska's sense of an audience culturally different from that originally addressed.

To highlight the structural alterations leads naturally to pondering their impact on the tale's main message. Certain passages of the translation distort the reader's relationship with the text:

Everybody shows a respectful deference to certain sounds that he and his fellow can make. But about feelings people really know nothing. We talk with indignation or enthusiasm; we talk about oppression, cruelty, crime, devotion, self-sacrifice, virtue, and we know nothing real beyond the words. Nobody knows what suffering or sacrifice mean – except, perhaps the victims of the mysterious purpose of these illusions.

(Outpost 105-06)

Les hommes, en général, professent une respectueuse déférence pour certaines phrases qu'ils émettent. Quant aux sentiments qu'expriment ces phrases, ils n'en connaissent souvent absolument rien. Ils parlent avec indignation ou enthousiasme des oppresseurs ou des opprimés, de la cruauté ou du sacrifice, ou bien encore de la vertu. Au fond, ce sont des mots vides! ...

(APC 122)

In Poradowska's version, "everybody" becomes the somewhat neutral *les hommes* (people) and then, crucially, "they." In Conrad, the reader is swiftly, if imperceptibly, sucked in and involved by the choice of the personal pronoun. In the translation, on the contrary, *les hommes* remains *ils* (they) rather than *nous* or *on* (we), with the result that the reader is disconnected from engagement and responsibility. There is some loosening of specificity as "Nobody knows" shifts into the vague and fatalistic "*Au fond, ce sont des mots vides*" (In the end, these are but hollow words), a phrase, moreover, given an strong emotional tinge by an exclamation point that is absent in the original.

The reader's position is similarly modified in one of the final scenes: as Kayerts reflects upon his situation, the reader is suddenly forced to appraise the agent's fate, noticing that "He was completely distracted by the sudden perception that the position was without issue" (112). This strategy of emotional distancing does not appear in the translation.

Even more than blurring or distorting, cases of misinterpretation or even mistranslation occur at the verbal level: "Carlier, smoking native tobacco" is translated as "*Carlier, qui fumait du tabac de son pays*" (Outpost 93; APC 92); literally, "Carlier, who was smoking tobacco from his country." Further, the compound form "to put up with" in "what a fellow has got to put up with in this dog of a country" is obscurely translated by "*qu'est-ce qu'un malheureux a bien pu faire au bon Dieu pour être*

*condamné à vivre dans ce pays de chien!*" (What has a wretch done against God to be condemned to live in this damned hole!), which expresses a guilt being expiated by living in such an abandoned place. These cases show that the translator's lexical and colloquial knowledge were insufficient to convey the original's subtleties.

Similarly, Poradowska's word choice, if not technically wrong, sometimes dramatizes or exaggerates, deviating from Conrad's attempt at an emotionally contained "white prose":

And now, dull as they were to the subtle influences of surroundings, they felt themselves very much alone, when suddenly left unassisted to face the wilderness; a wilderness rendered more strange, more incomprehensible by the mysterious glimpses of the vigorous life it contained. (Outpost 89)

Mais à présent, troublés par les influences occultes environnantes, jetés sans appui au milieu de cette éffarante barbarie, rendue plus incompréhensible encore par les éclairs de vie sauvage qui s'y révélaient, ils se sentaient horriblement abandonnés ... (APC 90)

Here the original contextualizes the characters' feelings of loneliness in surroundings that may, with some logic, be found impressive. Poradowska's version shifts the emphasis, dramatizing the vigorous life impulse of the wilderness and transforming it into occult influences, inhabiting an "*éffarante barbarie*" (bewildering barbarism). This has two consequences: it suppresses the emotional distance the reader is to maintain, and it replaces a sense of menace and mystery by nineteenth-century stereotypes of the occult and exotic.

There is no doubt that the choice of names and epithets, whether they refer to colour or title, is crucial. It is fair to assume Conrad's awareness of the historical contexts surrounding the writing and publication of his text, and, therefore, that his use of "white men," "nigger," and "agents" in the tale is thought through. Their mistranslation affects the characters' profile, or the balance of the characters' relationships, and alters the story's impact on the reader. In these cases, the translator's ability and desire to be faithful to the text's central message is seriously placed in question.

On several occasions, the translation replaces the term "white men" with *agents* as in the description of the dwellings mentioned above, or with their names as in the following episode with Chief Gobila:

<p>The two whites had a liking for that old and incomprehensible creature, and called him Father Gobila. (Outpost 95)</p>	<p>Carlier et lui avaient une predi- lection pour ce vieux barbare mystérieux et le nommaient Father Gobila. (APC 93)</p>
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Paradoxically, in this overt naming sequence, which is supposed to define reciprocal recognition and rank, the linguistic acknowledgement of Father Gobila is subverted by other modifications. The “white men” are identified by their names, while the “creature,” a naming that suggests difference and unfamiliarity, is replaced by a cliché that implies backwardness, especially in nineteenth-century terms: *barbare* (barbarian). Textually, Father Gobila is a reminder of Balzac’s Père Goriot, mentioned a paragraph earlier, a subtlety that evidently escaped the translator as she translates the expression “old image” by *vieille momie* (old mummy). Jean-Aubry’s 1932 translation reinstates the intertextual link and thus, the textual richness by *vieille caricature* (as shown in Stassen and Venayre [2006: 16]).

Finally, Conrad’s tale questions the gradation of beings on the planet and the value of so-called humanity and civilization. Typically, nineteenth-century ideas deemed Africans generally inferior to Caucasians in intelligence, customs, and behaviour, if not totally animalistic. An ironic and subversive thread runs throughout “An Outpost of Progress,” which, through nicknames and insults evoking animality, conveys a questioning of the so-called “humanity” of the two white men at its centre. This thread is repeatedly lost in the transition from ST to TT. “You fiend!” yells Kayerts at Makola, when the nature of the trade is openly admitted between the two agents of a spurious progress. Poradowska oddly translates this insult by the word *lâche* (coward), which alters the moral context, for rather than shirking a task, Makola in Kayerts’s eyes has committed one in such a way as to give him a demonic aspect, setting him outside the pale of morality altogether. Poradowska silences these allusions:

<p>Suddenly Carlier said: “Catch hold of the other end, Makola – you beast!” and together they swung the tusk up. (Outpost 106)</p>	<p>“Allons, imbécile, prenez-la donc par l’autre bout.” Et ensemble, ils soulevèrent l’énorme défense. (APC 122)</p>
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The word “beast,” which qualifies Makola’s behaviour, and implicitly theirs, disappears in Carlier’s banal insult “*imbécile*,” with its racist tinge

(Africans being mentally inferior to Europeans in colonialist thought), while the tusk's size is needlessly, and perhaps distractingly, emphasized by the adjective *énorme*.

The pattern of erasure is twice repeated at the end of the story, first as Kayerts and Carlier fight:

Kayerts in desperation made a blind rush, head low, like a cornered pig would do, and overturning his friend, bolted along the verandah, and into his room. Carlier was kicking at the door furiously, howling.

(Outpost 111)

Kayerts, en désespoir de cause, se rua sur lui, le repoussa, ouvrit la porte de la véranda et se réfugia dans sa chambre. Carlier lacérait la porte de coups de pieds, vociférant.

(APC 124)

Both Kayerts's metaphorical "pig" and Carlier's "howling" are suppressed. Similarly, the last animal image, when Kayerts's identity almost merges with Carlier's, disappears, with "Carlier! What a beastly thing!" being translated into the anodyne "*Devenir Carlier! Quelle bonne blague!*" (Become Carlier! What a ripping joke!) (Outpost 115; APC 126).

In the end, Poradowska's translation of "An Outpost of Progress" diminishes the richness, density, and subtlety of Conrad's text. It does so morphologically, by modifying its structure at the paragraph and sentence level, and by adding adverbs and conjunctions to articulate and loosen longer phrases, essentially diluting an otherwise dynamic prose. It also does so semantically by removing the text's allusive power, whether implicit or metaphorical.

As the mistranslations cited show, this is partly due to Poradowska's inadequate knowledge of English. Yet, there is also a sense that she is insufficiently close to the tale, either rushing her work or oblivious to its troubling questions. It could, indeed, be that she applied her personal knowledge and comprehension of the colonial adventure to her task, calling up preconceptions on the text's surface to the detriment of Conrad's subversive message. Her translation silences the most evocative features of Conrad's short story, along with its irony, so central to its art and meaning.

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## **“Who’s that fellow Lynn?”: Conrad and Robert Lynd**

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ROBERT LYND’S REVIEW of *A Set of Six* in the *Daily News* on 10 August 1908 holds a special place in critical writing about Conrad. Zdzisław Najder claims that “there is a link between Lynd’s painful attack and the genesis of *A Personal Record*” (1983; rev. edn 2007: 391). Undoubtedly the question of nationality confronted Conrad when he read what Lynd wrote:

Mr. Conrad, without either country or language, may be thought to have found a new patriotism for himself in the sea. His vision of men, however, is the vision of a cosmopolitan, of a homeless person. Had he but written in Polish his stories would have assuredly been translated into English and into the other languages of Europe; and the works of Joseph Conrad translated from the Polish would, I am certain, have been a more precious possession on English shelves than the works of Joseph Conrad in the original English, desirable as these are.

*(Daily News, 1908: 3)*

Lynd’s review addressed sensitive subjects to an ethnic Pole raised in the traditions of early nineteenth-century Polish history and philosophy, and accused of deserting the Polish nation by Eliza Orzeszkowa in “The Emigration of Talent” (1899). Arguing for a linguistic nationalism in the tradition of Johann Gottfried von Herder, Lynd insisted that a writer “who ceases to see the world coloured by his own language – for language gives colour to thoughts and things in a way that few people understand – is apt to lose the concentration and intensity of vision without which the greatest literature cannot be made” (*Ibid.*). In presenting Conrad as a literary vagabond, Lynd deprived the author of nationality, cultural roots, adopted and native languages, and, perhaps most significantly, assumed Conrad’s patriotism, a venerated and even fetishized concept in Polish culture, to be mere loyalty to the ocean.



While there may be a connection between Lynd's review and Conrad's treatment of Poland and nationality in *A Personal Record*, it is important to point out that writing on such subjects was not a dramatic departure for him. Nationality and national identity had already featured prominently in his writing. Allan H. Simmons (2006) has pointed out that Conrad was alert to concepts of Englishness, with *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* engaging with the connection between English maritime traditions and national identity. *Nostromo* presented a wondrously complex vision of a South American nation and the myriad claims to authentic or intangible national identities existing in any given state. In his November 1904 review of *Nostromo* in *The Speaker*, Edward Garnett argued that Conrad's novel presented "a whole national drama" (Sherry, ed., 1973: 175). *The Secret Agent* ironically observed the activities of marginal, nationally diverse figures at the heart of the British Empire. With "Amy Foster," that novel constitutes Conrad's study of foreignness in English culture, an exposé of the "insular nature of Great Britain" (212). And, perhaps most clearly of all, "Autocracy and War" (1905) reproduced the rhetoric of nineteenth-century Polish Messianism that had dominated the intellectual climate of Conrad's youth.

A review of his work touching questions of language, identity, and patriotism should not have surprised Conrad given the subjects of his major novels and his striking political essay. Nevertheless, he was deeply irritated by Lynd's appreciation of *A Set of Six*. As J. H. Stape has noted, Conrad probably "took Lynd's observations out of context and exaggerated their intent; he saw real offence (perhaps even malice) where none seems intended" (2007: 163). Lynd's other review of *A Set of Six*, in *Black and White* on 29 August 1908, was much less erratic. While it acknowledged the contemporary high estimation of Henry James and Conrad among "intellectual people," the review questioned whether either writer had "achieved anything like greatness in the sphere of imaginative creation." Still, for the reader resisting the power of Conrad's art, *A Set of Six*, and particularly the stories "Gaspar Ruiz," "The Duel," and "The Brute," would "go far toward making you change your mind" (1908: 269).

Responding to Lynd's *Daily News* review, Conrad wrote to Edward Garnett on 21 August 1908 lamenting:

a fellow in the *Dly News* ... calls me – God only knows on what provocation – a man without country and language. It is like abusing a tongue-tied man. For what can one say. The

statement is simple and brutal; and any answer would involve too many feelings of one's inner life, stir too much secret bitterness and complex loyalty to be even attempted with any hope of being understood. (CL4 107–08)

Lynd's praise of "Gaspar Ruiz," particularly his comparison of the tale with the Turgenev's *A Lear of the Steppes*, baffled and enraged Conrad even more. To compare that story, an "infernal magazine fake," with the work of Turgenev was

enough to make one wonder whether the man understands the words he writes – whether he has sense and judgment enough to come in when it rains? Has ever the Shade of a great artist been more amazingly, more gratuitously insulted? Who's that fellow Lynn? (CL4 108)

Writing later that August to John Galsworthy, himself to be the subject of an essay by Lynd in 1915,<sup>1</sup> Conrad repeated his feelings about Lynd's review, and in September 1908, received consoling words from Stephen Reynolds on the "beastly thing" (CL4 123).

Lynd again featured in Conrad's correspondence in 1913, when he wrote to J. B. Pinker about Lynd's review of *Chance*: "There was last week a long article on J. Conrad in the *new statesman* by Robert Lynd. Do you know who he is?" (CL5 286). In 1917, Conrad was annoyed by Lynd's review of *The Shadow-Line*, which focused on the story's supernatural aspects. He railed against "That donkey Lynd," wondering whether he wrote out of "stupidity or perversity, or what?" (CL6 51). However, by 1919, after Lynd wrote an appreciation of Conrad in *Land & Water*, all seemed suddenly forgiven. Conrad asked Pinker: "Have you seen Robert Lynd's page on me in L.&W.? Very Nice indeed. There are four or five men like this who have been writing about me in a most

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<sup>1</sup> In "The Heart of Mr Galsworthy" in *The Book of This and That* (1915), Lynd scrutinized Galsworthy's political concerns, recalling the writer's correspondence with *The Times*, in which he had condemned "the heartlessness of parliament" (28 February 1914: 5). Galsworthy had campaigned for the implementation of legislation to protect overworked horses and the caging of birds and urged preventing the "Importation of the plumes of ruthlessly slain wild birds, mothers with young in the nest, to decorate our gentlewomen." He provoked Lynd's ire by concluding that the failure to address such atrocities was "productive of more suffering ... I would almost say than the granting or non-granting of Home Rule."

friendly and appreciative manner for a good many years whom I don't know personally" (CL6 347).

### Who, after all, was Robert Lynd?

Ulster-born, Robert Wilson Lynd (1879–1949), the son of a Presbyterian minister, was a noted figure in Irish and London literary circles from the early twentieth century until his death, widely acclaimed as an essayist, and known for his friendships with Roger Casement, James Joyce, and Rebecca West.<sup>2</sup> Lynd, who arrived in London in 1901, was literary editor for the *Daily News* (later the *News Chronicle*) from 1912 to 1947, and he produced a weekly essay on contemporary affairs, signed "Y. Y.," for the *New Statesman*.

Espousing left-wing political views, notably writing an introduction to a collection of James Connolly's work in 1916 after the execution of the Irish socialist, Lynd was an outspoken, but non-militant, Irish nationalist. In the *Irish Times* in 1924, Lynd described himself as "a conservative liberal labour communist nationalist – provided, of course, you spell all the words except one with small letters" (3). In his reviews, essays, and books, such as *Home Life in Ireland* (1909), *Rambles in Ireland* (1912), and *Ireland a Nation* (1919), Lynd sought to bring contemporary Irish politics, society, and economics to the attention of English readers. Like Casement, he was one of the "many Protestants with strong nationalist sympathies [who] emerged from the North" of Ireland in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries (Ferriter 2005: 108). In his writings, Lynd expounded on politics, nationalism, and domestic life, as well as on several writers Conrad respected, such as Turgenev, Anatole France, and R. B. Cunninghame Graham.

On Lynd's death, the Irish playwright Lennox Robinson wrote in the *Irish Times* that the critic ranked "with the greatest of essayists of the

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<sup>2</sup> In a letter to the *Nation* on 13 May 1916, Lynd described Casement as "one of the least self-seeking, most open-handed of men – a man who has lived not for his career but for the liberation of those who are oppressed and poor and enslaved . . . Even those who, like myself, have been diametrically opposed to his recent policy, can never lose our admiration and affection for everything in him that is noble and compassionate" (MacMahon ed., 1990: 22). Lynd and his wife Sylvia also contributed money to the fund for Casement's trial in 1916 (Reid 1976: 368). In his review of *Last Essays*, Lynd noted that the "Congo Diary" was "interesting" for revealing that Conrad had met and liked Casement (1926: 4).

last hundred years writing in the English language” (7). The influential editor of the *New Statesman*, Kingsley Martin, labelled Lynd’s essays “neither wholly literary nor political but almost as good as Lamb” (cited in MacMahon ed., 1990: 24). Lynd’s work appeared in Everyman collections published by Dent in the 1950s, and his essays featured in anthologies of English prose in Irish secondary schools until the latter part of the century.

Owing to his review of *A Set of Six* in the *Daily News* and its importance to Najder’s claim that it engendered *A Personal Record*, Lynd has been wrongly misrepresented as generally hostile to Conrad’s writing. Between 1908 and 1926, however, he regularly reviewed Conrad’s work, praising the writer’s “genius” and his unique position in English literature (see Appendix).

### Critical Values

In an essay titled “A Defence of Critics” in *The Book of This and That* (1915), Lynd addressed a favourite subject of his writing: the role of the critic. The essay notes that “Critics are compared somewhere to ‘brushers of noblemen’s clothes.’ In an honest world, however, one might brush a nobleman’s clothes not out of servility, but out of tidiness” (225). Citing the work of Dryden, Pope, and Hazlitt, and praising both Victorian critics and the recent criticism of W. B. Yeats and Henry James, Lynd asserted: “Oscar Wilde used to say that anybody could make history, but only a man of genius could write it; and one might contend in the same way that nearly anybody can make literature, but only a clever man can criticise it” (226).

“The Critic as Destroyer” and “Book Reviewing” in *The Art of Letters* (1920) and later “The Critic” in *Books & Authors* (1922) also explore the function of the critic. Obligated to avoid “critical folly,” Lynd had to be open to modern talent: “One remembers that the critics damned Wagner’s operas as a new form of sin. One remembers that Ruskin denounced one of Whistler’s nocturnes as a pot of paint flung in the face of the British public.” Indeed, the “history of science, art, music and literature is strewn with the wrecks of such hostile criticisms” (1920: 219). It was, Lynd argued, “the function of the critic to keep the standard of writing high – to insist that the authors shall write well, even if his own sentences are like torn strips of newspaper for commonness.” Lynd believed that not only writers should be scrutinized:

It is frequently the wild claims of the partisans of an author that must be put to the test. This sort of pretentiousness often appears during “booms,” when some author is talked of as though he were the only man who had ever written well. How many of these booms have we had in recent years – booms of Wilde, Synge, of Donne, of Dostoyevsky! (*Ibid.* 224–25)

Lynd would remain true to his aversion to booms by sceptically reviewing Richard Curle’s *Joseph Conrad: A Study* in 1914. In “Book Reviewing,” he attacked those who believed that reviewing was a simple task, and he felt that “What one desires most of all in a reviewer, after a capacity to portray books, is the courage of his opinions, so that, whether he is face to face with an old reputation like Mr. Conrad’s or a new reputation like Mr. [Compton] Mackenzie’s, he will boldly express his enthusiasms and his dissatisfactions without regard to the estimate of the author” (*Ibid.* 239).

### Lynd on Conrad

To set the record straight, it is worth taking an overview of Lynd’s Conradian criticism. Lynd consistently lauded Conrad’s work, albeit within a rather narrow, and sometimes obsessively peculiar critical range, whilst frequently isolating issues that would intrigue Conrad’s critics during the century that followed. Despite his enthusiasm for “Gaspar Ruiz,” Lynd felt, in his early reviews, that Conrad was “a creator of impressions” and “not, when all is said, a tragic writer” (1908: 3). Dismissing “An Anarchist” and “The Informer” as slight, Lynd praised “The Brute” for reasons that would recur in his subsequent appraisals of Conrad: the idea of the supernatural and the “spell-bound ship” (1908:3). Also labelling “The Duel” a fine example of Conrad’s “whimsical, half-humorous, decorative method,” the Napoleonic tale was a “masterpiece of storytelling.” Returning to “Gaspar Ruiz,” and insisting upon comparisons with Turgenev’s *A Lear of the Steppes*, Lynd concluded the piece that has made him the villain amongst Conrad reviewers by stating that the story “alone would make ‘A Set of Six’ memorable among the books of the year – perhaps among the books of many years” (1908: 3).

*Twixt Land and Sea* proved a turning-point in Lynd’s attitude to Conrad. His *Daily News* review began: “If anyone has doubts of Mr. Conrad’s genius he will do well to read ‘The Secret Sharer,’ the second story in this volume. I confess repentantly that I once had such doubts.

But I had not read 'Typhoon' then." Conrad's characters had "frequently something of the quality of victims," but "The Secret Sharer" was "surely a masterpiece," revealing Conrad's "psychological insight." Conrad had produced "one of the wonderful things of the literature of the sea" (1912: 8). Nevertheless, Lynd expressed reservations about Conrad's narrative style in *Chance* in the *Daily News* in 1914, echoing Henry James in the *Times Literary Supplement*. As in his later review of *The Shadow-Line*, Lynd's comments ultimately provoked a response from Conrad in the "Author's Note" to the novel. Lynd wrote: "if Mr. Conrad had chosen to introduce us to his characters in the ordinary way, he could have told us their story in about 200 pages instead of the 406 pages of the present book" (1914: 4). In his prefatory note, Conrad quite precisely recalled: "A critic has remarked that if I had selected another method of composition and taken a little more trouble the tale could have been told in about two hundred pages" (*Chance*, xxxii). Although Lynd predicted that some readers would find *Chance* "tedious," it remained, owing to Conrad's irony and the "deceptive half-light of tragic-comic poetry," "a book of magical genius" (*Ibid.*).

Anticipating E. M. Forster's famous interpretation of Conrad in *The Nation* in March 1921, Lynd, comparing Conrad and Henry James, interestingly questioned the depth and conviction of Conrad's psychological and philosophical insights: "in psychology Mr. Conrad is something of an amateur of genius, while Henry James is a genius of the laboratories and a professor." Conrad was "one of the splendid guessers," and Lynd detected "a certain deliberate indolent hither-and-thitherness in the psychological progress" of *Under Western Eyes*. James, however, especially in *The Turn of the Screw*, "has an efficiency that is scientific as compared with the vaguer psychic broodings" of Conrad (1913: ii).

Lynd's review of Richard Curle's *Joseph Conrad: A Study* in *The New Statesman* in 1914 observed that Conrad's sudden popularity had led to competing claims: "Mr. Joseph Conrad's work has lately sunk to such a level of popularity which makes it incumbent on the more esoteric of his admirers either to give him up as a bad case or to explain that in some way or other the popular Conrad is not the real Conrad" (401). Lynd wondered what exactly Curle's "new and apocalyptic interpretation" would be, and questioned the "chief novelty" of Curle's book – the claim that *Nostromo* was Conrad's masterpiece – insisting that

Conrad's shorter fiction was his greatest achievement, and that Conrad was a master of the novella form.

His reputation would rest on "Typhoon," *Youth*, and *Twixt Land and Sea*, the "pure gold of his romance – written in terms largely of the life of the old sailing ship, used for the purposes of literature by no other writer of equal knowledge and genius. Here he has written little epics of man's destiny, tragic, ironic, and heroic, which are unique in modern (and, I fancy, in all) literature" (1914: 402). In *Books & Authors* (1922), Lynd wrote that "the editor of a collection of the world's best short stories would have to consider a good deal of Mr. Conrad" (171). *Lord Jim* and *Chance*, on the other hand, "come out as awkwardly as an elephant being steered backwards through a gate." Conrad is "not content to tell us a straightforward story: he must show us at length the processes by which it was pieced together."

### Confluences

Searching "in vain for a new vision of Mr. Conrad's genius," Lynd also doubted Curle's positive evaluation of Conrad's women and their superiority to George Meredith's women characters: "Let Mr. Curle turn to *The Egoist* and *Diana of the Crossways* again and he will learn that Meredith had more genius for painting real women in his little finger than Mr. Conrad has in his whole hand" (1914: 401).<sup>3</sup> While Curle "considerably overestimates Mr. Conrad's importance as a psychological novelist," Lynd reiterated that Conrad's best work "awakens in us the excitement of entering a haunted world" (*Ibid.* 402, 401). Reviewing *Victory* in the *Daily News* in 1915, Lynd argued that Conrad's theme was "the virtuous man in conflict with demons," with the novel offering "the true gold of genius" (6). Later in 1915, Lynd placed Conrad's *Within the Tides* alongside *A Set of Six* as "not one of his books of genius," but still "among the most desirable books of the hour" (7). In *Publishers' Weekly*, Lynd was pleased that Conrad's latest volume betrayed no "symptoms of the 'war-book,' and not discovering this trail of the serpent therein he sighs with grateful relief." Lynd noted

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<sup>3</sup> Conrad's women characters were sceptically regarded in Lynd's literary circle. In a letter to Sylvia Lynd of 1915, Rebecca West described meeting a woman in a riverside tavern who reminded her of a "daughter escaped out of a Conrad novel." She was "beautiful and passionate – that is, she used to wander about the hotel caressing her opulent figure, which is what I have always suspected Conrad heroines of doing" (2000: 24).

“nothing could be further removed from the war” than *Within the Tides* (1916: 642), placing Conrad’s writing and response to contemporary history in an apolitical vacuum. Conrad’s dedication of the volume presented “this sheaf of care-free ante-bellum pages.” For Lynd “There is a wistful note about this; the next book may not be so ‘care-free’” (*Ibid.*).

Conrad’s oblique engagement with the war in his next work, however, passed unobserved by Lynd.<sup>4</sup> Reviews of *The Shadow-Line* such as Lynd’s and those in the *New Statesman* and *Nation* were in Conrad’s mind whilst composing the “Author’s Note” to the novella. With his focus on the tale’s perceived supernatural aspect, Lynd again uncovered ghosts, demons, and evidence of “a ship haunted by devilish influences.” He believed the spirit of the dead captain “hovered over the ship like a curse.” Conrad noted later that he had “not intended to touch on the supernatural. Yet more than one critic has been inclined to take it in that way” (*The Shadow-Line*, xxxvii). Conrad opposed the thrust of Lynd’s criticism, with its focus on haunted characters, spectral ships, and eerie landscapes, arguing that he was “too firm in my consciousness of the marvellous to be ever fascinated by the mere supernatural” (*Ibid.*). For Lynd, in any case, *The Shadow-Line* was “a ghost story which does not quite ‘come off,’” owing to the young captain’s being a “spectator” rather than a “conqueror” in a ship with “a less definite personality than most” of Conrad’s ships (1917: 2).

Lynd’s review of *The Arrow of Gold* began: “One would like to read ‘The Arrow of Gold’ twice before saying, without hesitation, that the portrait is an absolute success” (1919: 6). Lynd pondered the political background to the opacity of Conrad’s characters: “One cannot help wondering, whether, as a child in Poland, Mr. Conrad’s life among revolutionists did not leave on him an indelible impression of conspiratorial presences of whom too much must not be told. His characters are as mysterious as conspirators.” Given Conrad’s efforts to transcend his stereotyping as a gloomy, philosophical writer of sea-tales, and his recent financially profitable seduction of a market of women readers, Lynd threatened to upset this hard-won new image: “Mr. Conrad, with his taste for the commentator as a character, is too much of a philoso-

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<sup>4</sup> Lynd also makes no reference to Conrad’s much-publicized journey to Austrian Poland at the outbreak of the war, recounted in “Poland Revisited.” The essay was published in four instalments in the *Daily News* (29 and 31 March and 6 and 9 April 1915), and as the paper’s literary editor, Lynd almost certainly had dealings with Pinker, who was involved in marketing the piece.



pher to write what most people call a love-story. Love with him is neither the world's great comedy nor the world's great tragedy. It is simply an astonishing entr'acte."

Hugh Walpole reported that Conrad was "Annoyed with the reviews of 'The Arrow' especially Lynd's" (cited in Stape, forthcoming). As in his earlier assessment of aspects of Curle's study, Lynd had once more hit upon a theme of enduring interest to Conrad criticism: Conrad's elusive sexual world. Although Monsieur George was present in Marseille in his youth, with all its attendant temptations, "No writer ever kept himself more aloof from the raptures of carnival ... than Mr. Conrad," and Conrad's writing on sexual themes remained problematic:

[He] can paint a portrait of Cleopatra without any hint of the tempting sweetness of honeypots. He remembers all the time the "irremediable joylessness of human condition" [*sic*], and Cleopatra, though she illuminates the world, is after all but a disturber of the peace. (1919: 6)

Lynd noted that the story "fascinates the memory with ever-increasing richness of sensation after one has laid it down. One will certainly have to read it again in order to find out whether Rita is a success."

### Politics, Nation, and Reputation

Lynd's two reviews of *Notes on Life and Letters* addressed Conrad's reluctance to present himself to his public. Recalling *A Personal Record*, Lynd wrote: "He might have written on the title-page of his autobiography: 'Thus far and no further'" (1921: 674). Conrad's volume of essays also allowed Lynd to approach Conrad's politics. His own *If the Germans Conquered England and Other Essays* (1917) had sought to draw attention to the subject of Irish independence and nationhood following the failed 1916 Insurrection. Given Conrad's overt support of the Romantic idea of Polish nationality in "Autocracy and War" and "Poland Revisited," Lynd inevitably found much to ruminate on. It is interesting to note the correlation between Lynd's view of the nation in his essay "On Nationalism and Nationality" and Conrad's position. Lynd supported "Nationalism like Mazzini's – the nationalism which urges countries like Finland, Persia, India, Poland, Egypt, Georgia, and Ireland to strive, not for mastery over other nations, but for an equal place in an international brotherhood of peoples" (147). According to Lynd, "in order to further an Imperial policy, Ireland was to be kept,

like India, a 'geographical expression,' a scene of civil hatreds, and to be prevented by hook or by crook from becoming a nation" (150). In the early nineteenth century, Metternich had famously dismissed Italy as a mere "a geographical expression." Lynd, however, believed that "Every nation begins by being a geographical expression. Nationalism is always a movement, first, to give the geographical expression a soul, and, next, to give the soul a chance of expressing the best and most vital that is in it" (151).

In "The Crime of Partition" (1919), Conrad echoed Metternich and Lynd's language, explaining that the Polish state's disappearance in 1795 did not constitute the death of the nation. Poland, "deprived of its independence, of its historical continuity, and with its religion and language persecuted and repressed, became a mere geographical expression," but "the nation, stabbed to the heart, refused to grow insensible and cold" (*NLL*, 96). When writing of Poland, most notably in "Prince Roman," "Poland Revisited," and "Autocracy and War," Conrad adheres to a vision of national identity indebted to the liberal European nationalism evoked by Lynd, something Conrad always discusses in a metaphysical sense as a nation's "invincible soul" (*NLL*, 99). In his *Daily News* review of *Notes on Life and Letters*, Lynd understood that Conrad wrote "of Poland as a Nationalist might write of Ireland" (26 February 1921: 8).

Reviewing the same collection for the *New Statesman*, Lynd commented that Conrad's piece on Anatole France "reminds us that Mr. Conrad is impatient of political panaceas as of literary formulas" (1921: 675). In *The Book of This and That* (1915), Lynd had likewise written on France, praising the writer's "spirit of irony" and analyzing his Socialism: "He is the last of the true mockers: the twentieth century demands that even its mockers shall be partisans of the coming race. Anatole France does not believe in the coming race. He is willing to join a society for bringing it into existence – he is even a Socialist – but his vision of the world shows him no prospect of utopias" (197–98). France's support of Dreyfus made him a "man of action, a man who believed that the procession of absurdities could be diverted into a juster road" (198–99). France's literary achievement also encompassed his literary essays, *La Vie littéraire* (1888–92), a work of signal importance to Conrad, not least as a trove of quotations. In Lynd's view, it would "survive all but a few of the literary essays of the nineteenth century. They are in a sense only trifles, but what irresistible trifles!" (202). If, as Conrad restated, *La Vie littéraire* represented "the adventures

of a choice soul amongst masterpieces" (36), then in his essay "The Critic" (1922), Lynd wrote that literary criticism in turn "relates, if one may adapt Anatole France's famous phrase, the adventures of masterpieces in the soul of the critic" (267–68).

In Lynd's "The Sea," Conrad made one of his frequent cameo appearances, and Lynd's determination to associate Conrad with his most famous elemental context better explains Conrad's resistance to Lynd. As J. H. Stape has noted, at the time of his response to Lynd's review of *A Set of Six*, Conrad rejected "the press's facile categorisations" and "understandably bridled at being pigeonholed as a writer of the sea," concerned "about the impact such comments might have upon his readership" (2007: 163). Discussing the presence of the sea in music-hall songs, Lynd, specifically echoing his review of *A Set of Six*, introduced the weightier presence of Conrad's work:

Mr. Conrad, who has found in the sea a new fatherland – if the phrase is not too anomalous – never approaches it in that mood of flirtation that we get in music-hall songs. He is as conscious of its dreadful mysteries as the author of the *Book of Jonah*, and as aware of its terrors and portents as the mariners in the *Odyssey*. He discovers plenty of humour in the relations of human beings with the sea, but this humour is the merest peering of stars in a night of tragic irony. His ships crash through the tumult of the waves like creatures of doom, even when they triumph as they do under the guidance of the brave. His sea, too, is haunted by invisible terrors, where more ancient sailors dreaded marvels that had shape and bulk. (1915: 209–10)

In *Old and New Masters* (1919), Lynd combined his earlier reviews of *Chance* with his recently published article "Mr. Joseph Conrad" from *Land & Water* (16 January 1919), which promoted the forthcoming serialization of *The Rescue*.<sup>5</sup> Lynd described Conrad as "one of the strangest figures in literature," believing him to be "the only novelist now writing in English with the grand tragic sense" (1919: 21). However, while Conrad's work "lifts the curtain upon a world in which the noble and the beautiful go down before an almost meaningless malice," particularly in "The End of the Tether," "Freya of the Seven Isles," and

<sup>5</sup> Although Conrad described Lynd's piece in *Land & Water* as "Very Nice indeed" (CL6 347), he may well have been displeased by the heading accompanying a full-page portrait: "A Pole who Writes Perfect English."

*Victory*, “the mass of his work cannot be called tragic,” as some stories – “Youth,” “Typhoon,” *Lord Jim*, “The Secret Sharer,” and *The Shadow-Line* – were “fables of conquest and redemption.” Lynd thought Conrad “an exceedingly passionate moralist,” a writer “in more ardent imaginative sympathy with the duties of man and Burke than with the rights of man and Shelley.” Characteristically, Conrad’s writing lead the reader “through a haunted world in which something worse than a ghost may spring on us out of the darkness. Ironical, sad, a spectator, he is nevertheless a writer who exalts rather than dispirits.” Although Conrad’s “quietism” was “the very opposite of Dostoyevsky,” still “Mr. Conrad keeps open house in his pages as Dostoyevsky did for strange demons and goblins – that population of grotesque characters that links the modern realistic novel to the fairy tale” (1919: 21).

Despite the presence of Dostoyevsky, Conrad seemed reasonably pleased with Lynd’s interpretation of his work in *Land & Water*, as his comment to Pinker testifies. However, Lynd’s extended “Mr. Joseph Conrad” for his collection of essays, it seems, left Conrad unmoved. Conrad received a copy of *Old and New Masters* from T. Fisher Unwin in 1919, for which the publisher received only a perfunctory acknowledgement (CL6 429). Now comprised of his earlier reviews of *Chance*, Lynd’s essay invited comparisons, as most of his writing on Conrad had done, between Conrad and contexts the writer increasingly sought to avoid, particularly as Conrad worked on shaping his posthumous reputation.

In his review of *Chance* in the *New Statesman*, reprinted in *Old and New Masters*, Lynd had asserted that “Typhoon” and *Twixt Land and Sea* were “as heroic and simple” as Stevenson’s *Kidnapped* (iv). Conrad, the “magician of literature” (1919: 216), was doubtless concerned, as he was throughout his career, that he would be entombed and sent to the literary afterlife escorted by the fragile charms of romance, mystery, and the supernatural. As evidenced in all his criticism, Lynd was a reader of conventional tendencies, ultimately valuing Conrad as a writer of the romantic and the exotic and of sea-fiction. In a review of *Last Essays* in the *Daily News* (1926), appropriately titled “The Last of Conrad,” Lynd again undermined Conrad’s attempt to distance himself from the idea of being a sea-writer. *Last Essays* contained “many noble and revealing passages,” but “it is on ‘Youth’ and other stories of the spirit of man amid the perils and mysteries of the sea that his claim to immortality rests most securely” (1926: 4).

## Appendix: A Census of Robert Lynd's Writings on Conrad

### *A Set of Six*

- "A Book of the Day: Mr. Conrad." *Daily News*, 10 August 1908: 3.  
 "Some Books Worth Reading." *Black and White*, 29 August 1908: 260.

### *Twixt Land and Sea*

- "A Book of the Day: Mr. Joseph Conrad." *Daily News*, 14 October 1912: 8.

### *Chance*

- "Joseph Conrad." *New Statesman*, 20 September 1913: iii-iv; rpt. *Old and New Masters* (1919).  
 "A Book of the Day: Mr. Joseph Conrad." *Daily News*, 15 January 1914: 4.

### *Within the Tides*

- "A Book of the Day: Mr. Conrad's New Stories." *Daily News*, 9 March 1915: 7.  
 "Within the Tides." *Publishers' Weekly*, 19 February 1916: 642.

### *Victory*

- "Some of the Fiction that is Being Read This Spring." *Publishers' Weekly*, 20 March 1915: 924.  
 "The New Conrad." *Daily News*, 24 September 1915: 6.

### *The Shadow-Line*

- "Mr. Conrad." *Daily News*, 19 March 1917: 2.

### General Appreciation

- "Mr. Joseph Conrad." *Land & Water*, 16 January 1919: 20-21; rpt. *Old and New Masters* (1919).

### *The Arrow of Gold*

- "Mr. Conrad's New Novel." *Daily News*, 6 August 1919: 6.

### *Notes on Life and Letters*

- "The Literary Sphinx: Joseph Conrad's New Essays." *Daily News*, 26 February 1921: 8.  
 "Mr. Conrad at Home." *New Statesman*, 12 March 1921: 674-75; rpt. *The Living Age*, 23 April 1921; rpt. *Books & Authors* (1922).

### *Last Essays*

- "The Last of Conrad: How He Became a Novelist." *Daily News*, 5 March 1926: 4.

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## Conrad's Early Reception in America: The Case of W. L. Alden

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As a vigorous and positive force in American and English journalism of  
the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Mr. Alden will be remembered.

*The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*

CONRAD'S REPUTATION in America began to flower with the popular success of *Chance* in 1914 and, boosted by the attendant publicity campaign by Doubleday, Page, & Company, eventually brought widespread fame and large sales. Before this date, his reputation rested on a growing number of appreciative reviews and a small circle of champions. Frederic Taber Cooper, regular reviewer of Conrad's fiction in New York's *Bookman* from 1903, has an honorable place in the tradition, as does H. L. Mencken at a somewhat later date. But the history of Conrad's American reception also includes W. L. Alden, a journalist from an earlier time, whose championship of the emergent author is remarkable in its enthusiasm and missionary zeal. An American living and working in London, Alden's reports on Conrad appeared in his regular "London Literary Letter" in *The New York Times Book Review* from 1898 to 1904.<sup>1</sup>

Massachusetts-born, William Livingston Alden (1837–1908) undertook most of his education in Pennsylvania and graduated from Jefferson College (where his father was president) in 1858. He trained as a lawyer and practised at the New York bar until 1865 when he married Agnes Margaret McClure. In that year, he gave up the law for journalism,

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<sup>1</sup> Neither Sherry (1973) nor Secor and Modellmog (1985) mention Alden. Teets and Gerber (1971) and Teets (1990) miss several of his comments, specifically those of 11 March and 6 May 1899 on "Heart of Darkness" and that on the *Youth* volume. See Appendix.

and over a twenty-year period became a leader-writer for several important American journals and papers, widely known for his skittish comic pieces, somewhat in the manner of Mark Twain, in *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Pearson's Magazine* and articles on his favourite recreation, canoeing, a sport he helped to introduce into the United States as founder of the New York Canoe Club. His interests were diverse: he published a biography of Christopher Columbus in 1881, wrote on Italian travel and politics, and was a founding member of the Theosophical Society. His writings include such titles as "Pig-sticking in India" and "Hunting the Walrus" for *Harper's* and *How to Build a Catamaran*. From 1885, Alden lived mainly in Europe, first becoming American consul-general in Rome and later settling in Paris as leader-writer for the Paris edition of *The New York Herald*. He then moved to London to continue his journalistic work, which included his "London Literary Letter" for *The New York Times*. In June 1907, he returned to his native country, where he died in Buffalo in January 1908.

If Alden does not figure very largely in the existing history of Conrad's American reputation, it is because, to put it simply, he had no pretensions to being an orthodox critic or reviewer. His "London Literary Letter," a regular column combining informal diary, up-to-date publishing news, and lively personal opinion, was designed to keep American audiences abreast of what British writers were thinking, planning, and writing. His chief significance was as an enthusiast and flag-waving publicist at a point in Conrad's early career when the writer was virtually unknown. As such, his endeavours on Conrad's behalf in America emulate, in a more popular key, those made by Arnold Bennett and H. G. Wells in Britain to ensure that a new and distinctive talent was not being overlooked (Knowles 1985). The fruits of Alden's sustained campaign are reproduced in the accompanying Appendix, which includes fourteen of his longer notices between 1898 and 1904.

It should be emphasized that several of those notices of 1898 and 1899 were written immediately after he read the serial versions of Conrad's stories – that is, prior to their publication in America and before any formal reviewing had taken place. This fact helps to explain the note of heated excitement in Alden's "discovery" of Conrad as a new literary phenomenon: for instance, in one notice he interjects, "Good Heavens! How that man can write!" and asks rhetorically, "Where did Conrad learn to write?" In another he proceeds to apologize for returning yet again to his hobbyhorse – the subject of Conrad's emergence on the scene. The excited personal testimony adds a dramatic



note to what, in effect, is presented as stop-press news – Conrad’s “arrival” as a new and original talent.

Such a personal note helps galvanize the more conventional language of belletristic eulogy on which Alden the journalist draws to headline the importance of Conrad’s early fiction. Alden had certainly read the early *An Outcast of the Islands*, but it was *The Nigger* that seems first to have attracted his attention in early 1898 as a “capital” piece of sea-literature from a new writer whose “future work will be worth looking for.” There soon followed a reading of the *Blackwood’s* versions of “Youth” and “Heart of Darkness.” One of Alden’s favourites, the first story figures in several notices, attracting his most fulsome praise as “absolutely flawless as a story, absolutely flawless in its beauty”: “That one story is sufficient to place him with the foremost writers of fiction in any language. To have written that one story is an achievement which ought to satisfy any man, however ambitious.” Alden’s reading of “Heart of Darkness” coincided with his having noticed that the story was mentioned in H. G. Wells’s *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899) as one of the few works of the Victorian era to have survived into the future when the sleeper finally awakens<sup>2</sup> – the Wellsian allusion prompting him to add: “If there are two story writers of the present day who are sure of immortality, Mr. Conrad is one of them.” By 1899, Conrad is, in Alden’s view, of equal stature with Kipling and a writer “of true genius – a born story teller and a master of poetical description.”

If Alden’s unflagging hyperbole can sometimes be wordy, it is neither mere puffery nor what he himself calls “gush.” Underlying his notices is a clear, if rudimentary, sense of Conrad’s early development as a writer. On the one hand, his familiarity with Conrad’s early fiction enables him to express doubts about its elaborate and manneristic style, which he often finds tiresome. On the other, it allows him to make a confident and eloquent claim for *Lord Jim* as the high point of Conrad’s achievement:

I venture to say that no book like it has ever before been published in the English language. That does not, of course, mean that greater books have not been published. But “Lord Jim” stands alone. I can recall nothing that can properly be placed in comparison with it. It is the fruition of the blossom that we saw in “The Nigger of the Narcissus”; and “The Outcast

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<sup>2</sup> On the significance of this reference to “Heart of Darkness” in Wells’s novel, see Dryden (2004).

of the Islands,” but admirable as both books were, Mr. Conrad has this time left them nearly out of sight.

Such appreciation invariably appears in tandem with an up-to-date running narrative on Conrad’s early career, providing an American audience with advance tit-bits, biographical snippets, and trailers. The journalist’s nose for topical “news” is always in evidence. As someone who mingled in London’s literary circles, Alden had clearly sniffed out details of Conrad’s personal life, and by 1901 was able to give his readers information (as well as misinformation) about Conrad’s life – his Polish birth and upbringing; his sea career in France, the Dutch East Indies, and the Congo; and his present home in Kent – in order to interest them in the puzzle of “how a sailor has managed to acquire so striking and beautiful a style.” Other notices have a clear element of headline news – as when, in 1899, he informs his readers with relish that Conrad has just won an *Academy* award for his *Tales of Unrest* volume, or that they would be reading *The Nigger of the “Narcissus”* under a changed title in America.

Underlying Alden’s notices are two significant patterns of response. Unlike his British counterparts of the time, there is surprisingly little emphasis on Conrad as an exclusive “writer’s writer.” While he recognizes that Conrad is a gifted “artist” rather than a “workman,” his main emphasis never the less falls on the inclusively democratic quality of the fiction. This emphasis is partly effected by his aligning of Conrad with a tradition of sea-writers already familiar to an American audience and partly by his promulgation of the romantic part-truth that Conrad’s sea stories, like those of his fellow seamen-writers, could only have come from somebody educated almost wholly in the rough-and-ready school of sea-life: “I am inclined to think that if a man wishes to write novels he should keep away from schools and colleges, and go to sea. ... It was the sea that taught them to write, and it taught them far better than Eton or Oxford could have taught them.” Secondly, the curve of Alden’s response to Conrad’s developing fiction is in some measure typical and representative. Like many general readers, he admired Conrad’s works up to and including *Lord Jim*; *Nostromo* forced him (unwillingly) to admit to severe reservations. His 1904 summary of Conrad’s latest novel contains the only really negative judgement ever to appear in an Alden notice: “Frankly, ‘Nostromo’ is to me, who yields to no one in admiration of Mr. Conrad’s genius, a disappointment. There are superb things in the book, but they do not redeem it from the fault of tediousness.”

Since there is no record of Conrad's having known about Alden's sterling one-man publicity campaign in *The New York Times*, it is difficult to gauge what his reaction might have been. Even as a beginning writer, he had a healthy disrespect for the ruck of journeymen reviewers who habitually generated more heat than light, but he was also aware of the need to make an impact upon American audiences and the part played by "notices" in generating publicity. Whatever the case, something of the effect that the American journalist's column had on emerging writers can be gauged by Arnold Bennett's response to having received a notice in Alden's "London Literary Letter." In March 1903, he wrote to his agent, J. B. Pinker: 'Do not fail to get the Literary Supplement of the *New York Times* for Oct 4<sup>th</sup> & see W. L. Alden's extraordinary appreciation of *Anna*. He says it is the best novel of its sort since *Esther Waters*. (It is.) You should lay it before the McClures with your compliments & mine. I have sent mine to Chatto" (Barker, ed., 1966: 34).

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## Appendix

### Notices by W. L. Alden in *The New York Times Book Review*

#### 5 February 1898: 90

Have you yet had in America Mr. Joseph Conrad's "Nigger of the Narcissus"? Mr. Conrad has shown in this book the same intimate knowledge of the sea that Mr. Clark Russell possesses, and at least an equal skill in writing an interesting story.<sup>3</sup> There are several men who know the sea, and who write about it, but until Mr. Conrad published his "Nigger" I never found one – among contemporary writers – with the solitary exception of Mr. Russell, who could write a sea story. Perhaps I ought to except Mr. Morley Roberts.<sup>4</sup> He could write a capital sea novel if he chose to do so; but as yet his sea stories have been only short stories somewhat stretched out. But Mr. Conrad has given us a capital novel, and he is a man whose future work will be worth looking for.

#### 26 March 1898: 197

Mr. Conrad's "Nigger of the Narcissus" I mentioned in a letter written some weeks ago. Since then the reception of the book has more than justified all that I said about it. Owing possibly to the fact that there is no woman in the story, and hence that readers who delight in love stories passed it by, Mr. Conrad's book sold slowly at first. But the reviewers have been so unanimous in its praise that it has made its way, and is now one of the most popular books of the season. I had only read a single page of it before its publication in book form, but when I read that page – it was the one in *The New Review* – I saw that we had a new writer who had a future before him. The "Nigger of the Narcissus" is not Mr. Conrad's first book, but it is his first great success, and shows his powers as nothing he had previously written had done.

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<sup>3</sup> In 1875, after a career in the British Merchant Service, American-born William Clark Russell (1844–1911) began publishing a long succession of sea stories.

<sup>4</sup> Among his seventy volumes of fiction, Morley Roberts (1857–1942) published two collections of "sea comedies."

**14 January 1899: 32**

The other day I wanted to tell a friend in America to read the “Nigger of the Narcissus,” but not remembering the name under which it sold in America I could not do it. The first instance of this changing of titles which I can remember was in regard to the “Marble Faun,” which for some unknown reason was called in England “Transformation.” Since then what was a single instance has become a common practice, and as a rule the new American name is not an improvement on the original English one. The “Nigger of the Narcissus” was precisely the right name for Mr. Conrad’s book, and any change that could be made in it must necessarily be for the worse.

**11 February 1899: 96**

The “Academy” has this year “crowned” with the substantial gift of fifty guineas each three books. These are Mr. Sidney Lee’s “Life of Shakespeare,” Mr. Maurice Hewlett’s “Forest Lovers,” and Mr. Joseph Conrad’s “Tales of Unrest.” Naturally more or less fault is found with this selection. It is asked why Mr. Conrad’s book was selected rather than Anthony Hope’s “Rupert of Hentzau,” or any one of three or four other novels. ...

The English Academy deserves great credit for the liberality with which it pays out a hundred and fifty guineas every year, and for the discrimination with which it selects the recipients of its generosity. Personally I am very glad that Mr. Conrad has had the good fortune to have his book selected for especial honor. There is no man who labors more industriously at his profession than Mr. Conrad. Indeed, the chief fault of his style springs from the excessive elaboration which he gives to every sentence. But he is a man of true genius – a born story teller and a master of poetical description. His sombre and painful “Outcast of the Islands” was, it seems to me, the most notable novel of its year. He will do even better work when he learns the art of condensation.

**11 March 1899: 160**

The birthday number of Blackwood’s Magazine contained a story by Joseph Conrad, which is full of promise. As only the first installment is given, it is of course too early to form a definite judgment as to what the story will prove to be, but I shall be very much surprised if it does not justify all that I have ever said of Mr. Conrad.

**6 May 1899: 304**

Mr. Conrad has already “arrived.” His “Nigger of the Narcissus,” of which I have spoken so often that I must really put myself under bonds not to mention it again; his “Tales of Unrest” and his “Outcast of the Islands,” have given him a place among the most original writers of the day. But those who have read Mr. Conrad’s books and noted their faults see clearly that the latter can easily be eliminated, and that when they disappear his work will be so much better than it now is that he will rank considerably higher than he does at present. From the little that I have read of his “Heart of Darkness,” now appearing in Blackwood’s, I am inclined to think that it will mark a very decided advance. At any rate, he has not as yet done the best that is in him, and when “Heart of Darkness” comes to be published in book form the public may find that there is more in Mr. Conrad than has hitherto been supposed.

**17 June 1899: 388**

Mr. Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness,” which was published in Blackwood’s Magazine, was mentioned in Mr. Wells’s book [*When the Sleeper Wakes*] as one of the few stories of the Victorian era which had survived until “the sleeper woke.” If there are two story writers of the present day who are sure of immortality, Mr. Conrad is one of them. I am almost ashamed again to mention “The Nigger of the Narcissus” – or “Children of the Sea,” as I believe it is called in America – but that book will live as long as “Tom Cringle’s Log.”<sup>5</sup> It is a slighter work than the immortal “log,” but an infinitely greater one. It is not as most people imagine a work of fiction. It is literally true in every detail. Even the name of the ship has not been changed. Mr. Conrad knew the Nigger of the Narcissus on board the Narcissus, and the book is simply a photographic picture of her voyage home from Bombay.

Mr. Conrad is, as every one must perceive who reads his books, a sailor, and has been the master of a British ship. He writes out of the experience of years spent at sea and among the islands of Malaysia. He does not invent, he merely records. But the man has also the soul of the true poet, and his realism is tinted with poetic hues. Mr. Conrad is a Pole

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<sup>5</sup> The popular seafaring tale of 1834 by Michael Scott (1789–1835).

by birth and ancestry, and if you read his “Outcast of the Islands” you will catch the rhythm and pathos of Chopin.

### 3 March 1900: 10

The other day I read Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness,” which was published in Blackwood’s Magazine. Good Heavens! How that man can write! The scene of the story is laid on the Congo, and in truth there is very little story to it, but how it grips and holds one! What mastery there is in its descriptions of the river and the jungle, and how wonderful is the atmosphere of the story! Where did Conrad learn to write? He spent his life at sea, and his education was gained in the fore-castle and on the quarterdeck. I am inclined to think that if a man wishes to learn to write novels he should keep away from schools and colleges, and go to sea. Look at Conrad, and Bullen,<sup>6</sup> and Clark Russell, and Morley Roberts, and Morgan Robertson!<sup>7</sup> It was the sea that taught them to write, and it taught them far better than Eton and Oxford could have taught them. If a man intends to devote himself to science or theology, by all means let him obtain the best classical education that he can command, but if he wishes to be a novelist, let him study in the school of adventure.

Mr. Conrad has a story now running in Blackwood called “Lord Jim.” I have not read it, but it will probably be published in the Spring. Hitherto each one of Conrad’s books has been a distinct advance upon its predecessor, and I have little doubt “Lord Jim” will prove to be the best thing he has so far done.

### 10 March 1900: 6

Mr. Conrad is soon to publish a volume entitled “Three Tales.” It will consist of three stories published by him in Blackwood’s Magazine. These are “Youth,” “In the Heart of Darkness,” and “Lord Jim.” I have not yet read the latter, which is still running in the magazine, but of the other two I fancy that I spoke last week. If not let me say that “Youth” is altogether the most remarkable short story of the year. It is worthy to

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<sup>6</sup> Frank T(homas) Bullen (1857–1915) gave up a career at sea in 1883 and in 1899 became a full-time writer of sea-fiction.

<sup>7</sup> Morgan Robertson (1861–1915) wrote a number of sea-stories, including *Futility, or the Wreck of the Titan* (1898), an eerily prophetic story of the world’s largest liner that, on her maiden voyage, sinks after colliding with an iceberg.

rank by the side of the very best of Kipling's stories, and if there is any higher praise than that I do not know what it is. Nothing could be more dissimilar than Mr. Kipling's and Mr. Conrad's stories, and they can be mentioned together only because each author is in his way supreme. "Youth" seems to me to be absolutely flawless as a story, absolutely flawless in its beauty. It is quite enough to make a man's enduring reputation, and I hope that when it does appear in book form it will have the reception which it deserves.

### **10 November 1900: 700**

Mr. Conrad's "Lord Jim" has finally come to an end in Blackwood, and was published in book form a day or two ago. Mr. Conrad had no idea, when he began the story, of writing a long novel, but, unless I am very much mistaken, "Lord Jim" is already as long, if not longer, than his "Outcast of the Islands." It is an illustration of the way in which the work of the true artist masters the workman. "Lord Jim" would have its way in spite of Mr. Conrad. It would prescribe its own length, and Mr. Conrad was powerless to shorten it. All of which is a good thing for the public, for those who have read the story in Blackwood know that it will rank with the "Nigger of the Narcissus," if not above it.

### **1 December 1900: 8**

I presume as a matter of course that Mr. Conrad's "Lord Jim" has already appeared in America. I only hope that the mania for changing the titles of books republished in America has not led to the conversion of "Lord Jim" into "Senator Dick," or some other improved title. The absurdity of changing the title of "The Nigger of the Narcissus," a title that fitted the book to perfection, into the schoolgirl sentimentality of "Children of the Sea" has always exasperated me.

I wonder what the public will think of Mr. Conrad's new book. It is hardly a novel, for it lacks the essential form. In fact, it does not pretend to be anything of the sort. It is simply a story told by one man to a circle of friends – the story of a sailor who made a ruinous mistake. It is a psychological story, for it lays bare the heart of the man Jim, and shows what he thought and felt during the years of his expiation of his fault, and how he convinced himself that he had been in nowise to blame. But it is infinitely more than this. It gives the reader the salt breath of the sea wind – the warm caress of the tropical breeze. It takes him away from



civilization and convention, and shows him the littleness of life in comparison with the infinite and awful grandeur of Nature. "Lord Jim" enchants the reader. It makes a new man of him. He feels in his veins the beat of pulses stronger than those that civilization permits. He fills his lungs with air that stimulates him as the air he has hitherto breathed could not do. Mr. Conrad is a true magician, and he can do what no other magician of the pen can do.

"Lord Jim" is a great book, a wonderful book, a magnificent book. I fear to praise it as it deserves, for, if I could do it, I should be thought by most people to have fallen into the deepest mire of "gush." But I venture to say that no book like it has ever before been published in the English language. That does not, of course, mean that greater books have not been published. But "Lord Jim" stands alone. I can recall nothing that may properly be placed in comparison with it. It is the fruition of the blossom that we saw in "The Nigger of the Narcissus" and "The Outcast of the Islands," but admirable as those books were, Mr. Conrad has this time left them nearly out of sight.

Here, then, is a work of genius – of unique and superb genius. It has its faults. In it Mr. Conrad still clings to the mannerism of describing everything in three dimensions – that is to say, with adjectives. But that, after all, is not a great fault, and it implies long, slow, and careful work on the part of the author. The book ought to place Mr. Conrad at the head of all English short story writers, with the solitary exception of Mr. Kipling. It is a phenomenon, almost as strange as the author himself – the man who spent a lifetime at sea, dealing with the roughest phases of life, and living almost wholly without books, and then suddenly showing himself to be one of the most striking writers known to English literature.

### 10 August 1901: 5

The recent publication of Joseph Conrad's and Ford Hueffer's "The Inheritors," by McClure, Phillips & Co., and the comments which it has aroused, has inspired more than usual interest in regard to the principal author. When Mr. Conrad's first stories, "Almayer's Folly" and "The Nigger of the Narcissus," were published every one wondered how a sailor had managed to acquire so striking and beautiful a style, and the wonder becomes still greater when we learn that Conrad is a Pole, who received his early training in Poland. He first acquired his yearning for the sea through reading Polish translations of Marryat's novels. When, much against the wishes of his friends, he turned sailor, he began on a

coasting vessel belonging to Marseilles, but he had determined that England was the one country in Europe for the nautical man, and so, in 1887, he landed at Lowestoft. For some time he worked on the east coast of England, laboriously learning the English language from the newspapers, and finally won a sailing master's certificate. Since then he has sailed all over the world, until recently he retired from the sea to devote the rest of his life to gardening and literature. In his self-education and sea-life he is said to resemble John Paul Jones;<sup>8</sup> although a thorough sailor in his walk and in his general manner, he is ready to discuss courteously with a stranger the latest things in literature and art and in almost any European language. His home is a delightful old farmhouse, once the home of Walter Crane, the artist, near Hythe, in Kent, England, where he can attend to his beautiful garden, smell the sea air from his windows, and read his books.

### 13 December 1902: 10

I have mentioned Mr. Conrad's new volume "Youth" half a dozen times during the last year, because it has been constantly promised, and as constantly postponed. This time, however, it is actually published, and at last the public has in book form what many of the best judges in England call the best short story that has been written since the "Drums of the Fore and Aft."<sup>9</sup> There is no plot in the story called "Youth." It is simply the description of a shipwreck; but how wonderfully it is described, and how poetic and subtle is the study of the hero. It is idle to compare it with Mr. Kipling's stories, for the latter have nothing in common with the stories of Mr. Conrad except the fact that both writers are men of singular genius. Of its kind, "Youth" could not be a better story than it is. I have read nearly everything that Mr. Conrad has written, but admirable as was his "Nigger of the Narcissus" and his "Lord Jim," not to mention his earlier books, he has reached the highest level in "Youth." That one story is sufficient to place him with the foremost writers of fiction in any language. To have written that one story is an achievement which ought to satisfy any man, however ambitious. It was published originally in Blackwood's Magazine some five or six years ago, as indeed were the other two stories bound in the

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<sup>8</sup> John Paul Jones (1747–92), the American admiral, had left school at the age of thirteen and risen to be a sea captain at the age of twenty-one.

<sup>9</sup> Rudyard Kipling's story of 1888.

same volume, but it is probably known only to a small circle of readers, and will have for the general public the charm of novelty.

The other two stories are excellent, but they are, of course, a little obscured by the proximity of "Youth."

Any story that is compared with it must inevitably suffer somewhat by the process. I wonder if Mr. Conrad knows what a supreme story he has written. Probably he does not, for although I never met him I am told by a man who does know him that he has a very poor opinion of his own abilities and feels that an old sailor like himself is out of place among literary men. And yet there is probably not a literary man in London who would not give his high teeth to have written "Youth."

## **29 October 1904: 735**

Mr. Conrad's new novel, "Nostromo" has just been published. It is his most ambitious attempt. Hitherto his books have been painted on a small canvas. They have dealt with a few characters and have been virtually short stories expanded. But "Nostromo" is a full-grown novel. It aims apparently at two things – to give us a complete picture of life in a Central American republic and a study of the character of "Nostromo," the hero of the book. There is a vast deal in the book, and in nearly every way it compels our admiration; but as a whole I fancy that most of Mr. Conrad's admirers will find it tiresome. Had he made of it a story of, say, thirty thousand words, dealing wholly with "Nostromo" as "Lord Jim" deals wholly with its hero, he would have given us a book with which no fault could be found. As it is, his portrayal of Nostromo is a wonderful piece of work, as perfect in its way as the best that Mr. Conrad has yet given us. There are other men and women in the book who are thoroughly alive and as thoroughly consistent with themselves as is Nostromo. But the general verdict will probably be that Mr. Conrad has given us far too much of the San Tomas [sic] Mine and far too much of the politics of Costaguana. Frankly, "Nostromo" is to me, who yields to no one in admiration of Mr. Conrad's genius, a disappointment. There are superb things in the book, but they do not redeem it from the fault of tediousness. At least this is the unwilling conclusion to which I have been obliged to come, but very possibly others will come to a different conclusion, and will find the book thoroughly interesting from beginning to end.

## Conrad and “Civilized Women”: Miss Madden, Passenger on the *Torrens*

Martin Ray

“MISS MADDEN” was one of the half-dozen passengers in the *Torrens* with whom Joseph Conrad maintained some contact after leaving the ship in 1893. The purpose of this note is to provide biographical information about her and to advance understanding of Conrad’s social connections in the 1890s.

In their study of Conrad’s relationship with the passengers from the *Torrens*, J. H. Stape and Hans van Marle note that a “Miss C. Madden” featured in the ship’s 1891–92 passenger list (1995: 40). Her name next occurs in a letter to Conrad of 21 March 1896 from a fellow passenger, Nita B. Wall: “Miss Madden spent a few days with me just before Christmas, & carried off ‘Almayer’s Folly’ to read in her leisure moments at the Maidstone Hospital. She will be much interested to hear of your new book & forthcoming marriage” (Stape and Knowles, ed., 1996: 20). Conrad himself mentions her twice in letters of 1904 as providing nursing services to Jessie Conrad when they were living at Pent Farm. The first reference is in a letter to John Galsworthy of 16 May 1904: “I do not know that Jessie is so much better. She walks with difficulty. Massage now is being applied, a Miss Madden coming from Hythe 3 times a week” (CL3 138). A fortnight later, on 29 May 1904, Conrad mentions her in a letter to Ford Madox Ford: “Jessie gets massage three times a week from Miss Madden out of Hythe whom I knew as passenger on board the *Torrens* in 1892” (CL3 143).

The information that Miss Madden was resident in Hythe at the turn of the century allows her to be traced in the 1901 Census return for that town, where she is duly recorded as Caroline A. Madden, a parish nurse, aged 47 years, born at Bergh Apton, Norfolk, and lodging at 8 Slade Street, Hythe (RG 13/854 (86), p. 11). A few months before Conrad met her on board the *Torrens*, the 1891 Census shows her lodging at the same address in Hythe, but at this time she was “Living on own means” (RG/12 753 (126), p. 8).

Miss Madden’s birth certificate gives her full name as Caroline Augusta Madden, born on 9 August 1853, and confirms the birth details

provided in the 1891 census. Her father was Wyndham Carlyon Madden (1793–1864), whose occupation is given as “Clerk,” that is, clerk in Holy Orders. Her mother was Charlotte (née Leeke).<sup>1</sup>

Wyndham Madden, MA, was Rector of Bergh Apton from 1852 until his death on 13 May 1864, and is buried in the churchyard there. His marriage to Charlotte Leeke was registered in the first quarter of 1846 in Ticehurst, Sussex. Caroline Augusta Madden was the eighth of his ten children. A son, Wyndham (born 1849), became Rector of Longford, Shropshire. At least two of the daughters, Caroline and her sister Amy, did not marry (*Tudor Roll of the Blood Royal*, 1903: 352).

A description of Wyndham Carlyon Madden is given in *The Book of Bergh Apton*:

In 1852 he was presented to the living of Bergh Apton by Lord Abergavenny, his wife’s uncle.<sup>2</sup> He was instituted by the Bishop of Norwich on 27 December 1852 and inducted by Revd Richard Cooke Denny on 30 December. Madden was born on 31 August 1793 in the Madras Presidency, educated at Westminster School and joined the 43rd Regiment of Foot when only 14 years old. He served throughout the Peninsular War, then entered Queen’s College Cambridge in 1820 and was ordained priest in 1823. (Kelly 2005: 88).<sup>3</sup>

The volume contains an oil portrait of Madden and a daguerreotype of Charlotte Madden, who is described as his second wife.<sup>4</sup>

Following her father’s death, Caroline moved back with her mother to Fareham, Hampshire (1871 Census), where her father had been rector before his incumbency at Bergh Apton (1851 Census). In 1881, Caroline and her mother were living at Addington, Kent; her mother died, aged

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<sup>1</sup> The birth was registered at Loddon and Clavering (Norfolk) Jul–Sept 1853 4b/179. Caroline’s father wrote in a family Bible that “Caroline Augusta Madden was born in Bergh Apton Rectory on August 9 at about mid-day, and was baptized in the afternoon service on Sunday, September 4th, 1853” (Personal communication: John Madden, Vancouver).

<sup>2</sup> In 1824, William Nevill, 4th Earl of Abergavenny (1792–1868) married Caroline Leeke (died 1873), the sister of Miss Madden’s grandmother.

<sup>3</sup> Madden was the third son of Maj. William Molesworth Hatch Madden and his wife, Elizabeth, and he attained the rank of captain in the Army (Venn, comp.).

<sup>4</sup> Madden had firstly married Mary Whiteacre of Woodhouse, Yorkshire, in 1826. Charlotte Leeke was the daughter of Thomas Leeke, of Longford Hall, Newport, Shropshire (Venn, comp.).

74 years, in 1889.<sup>5</sup> Two years later Caroline made her voyage to Australia probably to visit her elder brother the Revd Wyndham Madden (1849–1926), who was living at North Ipswich, near Brisbane, between 1890 and 1894, where he was the incumbent of St. Thomas's (Personal communication: John Madden).<sup>6</sup> She died in Cornwall in 1913, at the age of 59.<sup>7</sup> A descendant has described her as six feet tall, gaunt, "mannish," dressing in stiff collars and black clothes, and given to smoking cigars and drinking whiskey (Personal communication: Brian Russell).

Stape and van Marle observe that Conrad's relationships with some of the passengers in the *Torrens* "importantly witness that Conrad's social integration into middle-class English life had begun while he was actively pursuing his career as a seaman. ... And the acquaintance with Mrs. Wall (and even possibly with Miss Madden) also suggests that Henry James's comment that Conrad 'had never met "civilised" women' is at the least somewhat hyperbolic" (1995: 24). Caroline Madden's aristocratic, clerical, and military connections indicate a solidly upper middle-class background. Further evidence of the family's social status is provided by the marriage of her sister, Clara Louisa, who was some five years older than she. In 1870, Clara married Ludlow Eustace Maude, and they had a son, Eustace Wyndham Maude (1877–1958), who became the 7th Viscount Hawarden in 1914 in the Peerage of Ireland.

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<sup>5</sup> Charlotte Madden's death was registered in Elham (Kent) Apr–June 1889 2a/548. See the following Census records: 1851 HO107/1661 (198), p. 44; 1871 RG 10/1155 (21) p. 34; 1881RG 11/903 (18), p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> He had left London on the *Oruba*, destined for Sydney, on 4 July 1890 (*Passenger Lists*). He returned to England, and after a career in various places died in Victoria, British Columbia, on 10 August 1926 (Venn, comp.).

<sup>7</sup> Her death was registered in Jan–Mar 1913 Falmouth 5c/222.

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## Conrad and the *Minesweeper's Gazette* : A Note

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IN TWO PREVIOUS ISSUES of *The Conradian*, Donald W. Rude has pursued an enquiry into what he initially assumed to be an unlocated Conrad "essay" of July 1918 titled "Hyde Park Mansions" (Rude 1984, 1991). He was first alerted to the item by an entry in a Sotheby's auction catalogue of 1928 which read: "CONRAD (Joseph) NEWSPAPER CONTRIBUTION, signed, typewritten with autograph corrections, etc. 2pp. 4to. *July 19th 1918, Hyde Park Mansions*, a contribution to the 'Minesweepers Gazette' during the war; a warm appreciation of the work of the merchant navy from a fellow seaman." The entry also includes an extract from the work as follows:

For the twenty years or more of my sea-life I had never perceived that chicken-hearts were a part of the equipment of any ship or fishing boat that ever went to sea. Therefore as an old seaman I am very proud of but not a bit surprised at the fidelity and courage of the men to-day – coasting men, fishermen, deepwater sailors – all the men, who, from their early youth had found their work cut out for them at sea ...

(Item 453)

By the time of his second note, Rude had come to believe that the title of "Hyde Park Mansions" apparently given to document was merely the reproduction of its notepaper letterhead, and that it was more likely to be a *letter* written from Hyde Park Mansions, London, where the Conrads were staying in July 1918, than an essay. This suspicion was strengthened by his discovery of a later description of the item in a 1948 sales catalogue which describes it as a "Letter (Typewritten) with Autograph Corrections and full Signature ... Written as a contribution to the 'Minesweeper's Gazette' ... London, 19th July 1918" (Maggs, Item 57). Rude's note concludes with a call for any information that might help to locate the typescript's whereabouts, a call finally answered here.

With the appearance in 2002 of Volume 6 of Conrad's *Collected Letters*, covering the years 1917–19, we are now in a position to throw light on this mysterious "contribution." The extract printed in Sotheby's



catalogue is, in fact, from a letter of 19 July 1918 (CL6 248–49) to a “Mr Batty,” who had obviously asked Conrad for a contribution on the wartime effort of the Merchant Navy and to which Conrad responded that he was, as the letter concludes, “glad to have this occasion to express to them through you my warmest admiration and my brotherly regard” (248).

The letter’s copy-text is indeed a two-page typescript, with a typed “Hyde Park Mansions” address (Conrad’s letters from this temporary residence are never on printed stationery), and with autograph corrections by Miss Lilian M. Hallowes and greetings and signature in Conrad’s hand. It is preserved at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

The identification of Conrad’s missive to “Mr Batty” as a contribution to the *Minesweeper’s Gazette* seems an unambiguously secure one. It thus takes its place among a small group of Conrad letters designed for publication, in this case one whose tone and content are close to his other celebrations of the Merchant Navy during wartime, such as “Well Done!” (1918) and “The Dover Patrol” (1921). In it, a retrospective glance at his past career in the Merchant Service gives way to a measured eulogy to the present generation of “civilian seamen” who have responded “nobly” to the challenges of war.

Certain peripheral questions still remain. Numerous searches in British archival libraries have not yet succeeded in tracking down any copies of the *Minesweeper’s Gazette*, and so it is impossible to know when, or, indeed, whether the letter was eventually published. Nor is anything known about Conrad’s correspondent. Judging from the tone of Conrad’s letter, “Mr Batty” was most likely a merchant seaman, perhaps in the Royal Naval Reserve, and, presumably, the magazine’s editor. If, as seems probable, the *Minesweeper’s Gazette* originated in one of the English or Scots ports (Dover, Great Yarmouth, or Granton, for example), then any further searches may need turn to maritime records of a more local or regional kind.

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## Joseph Conrad and Germ Theory: Further Thoughts

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PERHAPS TWO HOURS after my copy of the Autumn 2006 issue of *The Conradian* arrived in the mail, I received an e-mail message from Cedric Watts, complimenting me on my essay on *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, "Joseph Conrad and Germ Theory: Why Captain Allistoun Smiles Thoughtfully," and tactfully pointing out an error. Contrary to what I assert, Captain Allistoun does not "quarantine Wait in the forecabin," but as Macdonald (259) and Leach (13) advise, sets up a sick bay: "The forecabin got a clean up that morning; but in the afternoon a sick-bay was fitted up in the deck-house. It was a nice little cabin opening on deck, and with two berths" (*The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* 33).

Reporting and correcting this error provides an opportunity to revisit my harsh accusation that Allistoun's quarantine of Wait is not a moment of weakness but is an error in judgment, command, medical procedure, or a convenient lie. Such accusations seem, at first, counter-intuitive because the narrator has presented Allistoun as the paragon of savvy masters: "He was one of those commanders who ... know everything, hear every whisper, see every fleeting shadow of their ship's life" (92). Clearly, to quarantine Jimmy and sanitize his former quarters is both wise and in keeping with guidelines for the practice of maritime medicine. But if Captain Allistoun is so sensitively attuned to goings-on in his ship, why does he not rigorously enforce the "strict quarantine" Macdonald advises (259) and the isolation he himself imposes?

Repeatedly, the narrator reports "a knot of men ... congregated before Jimmy's cabin" (77), and "in the evening ... the cabin was crowded" (104). Moreover, no order is given to ventilate Wait's cabin, as the maritime medical handbooks of the day recommended (see Leach 1885: 16), although the cabin door is often open or left "ajar" and Wait is sometimes seen wandering on deck at night (34). The narrator conspicuously notices "a warm whiff of vitiated air passed" (86) when the door to Jimmy's cabin is opened for Captain Allistoun to intervene as the devout Podmore tries to save Jimmy's soul. Here, the cook – who goes by the

nickname “doctor” (13) – is ordered by Allistoun to leave, but not before he remarks to the ship’s real acting physician “I make you responsible!” (87). Allistoun’s order that Wait not be allowed on deck for the duration of the voyage prompts “an elderly seaman” to step forward and ask “D’ye mean to say, sir ... that a sick chap ain’t allowed to get well in this ’ere hooker?” (88-89). The “open-air cure,” in which the consumptive patient takes as much fresh air as possible, was a well-known treatment for tuberculosis.

If Wait is, indeed, “Past all help” (94), why does Captain Allistoun seem “ashamed of himself” (93)? It might be because his impulsive act invites mutinous behaviour, but it may also be because Allistoun may be motivated not merely by Wait’s disruption of order aboard ship, but also by personal retribution.

As I was re-reading the novel to tidy up my argument, I noticed another piece of medical evidence. If, as I argue, Captain Allistoun has some knowledge of tuberculosis, germ theory, and the means of contagion, then he may be concerned that Wait has already exposed *him* to the disease. When Wait becomes a problem aboard ship, he is sent to be interviewed by the captain. The steward reports that “he had cheeked the old man.” In the captain’s quarters, “the unspeakable Jimmy had been reeling against the cabin furniture; that he had groaned; that he had complained of general brutality and disbelief; and had ended by coughing all over the old man’s meteorological journals which were then spread on the table” (32). Not long thereafter, and on the novel’s next page, Jimmy is quarantined. Thus Captain Allistoun’s smile in the Board of Trade office may register his dawning recognition of the covert medical plot (Watts 1984) he has set in motion, or it may be a more sinister smile of satisfaction that he has killed two malingerers with one stone.

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## Conrad, James, and Vertical Lintels

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IN HIS PENGUIN EDITION of *The Shadow-Line*, Jacques Berthoud preferred the 1920 American “Sun Dial” Edition reading, “He leaned against the side of the door” to that of the 1917 Dent first edition and the 1921 Heinemann Collected Edition: “He leaned against the lintel of the door” because the latter “presupposes powers of levitation” (1986: 31).

Berthoud’s joke caused scholarly excitement. Having verified that “lintel” was in the manuscript, Jeremy Hawthorn first thought that the leaner might have extended his arm above his head; however, he and the late Hans van Marle subsequently found “lintel” misused in serials or first edition of other Conrad works, including *Almayer’s Folly* (1895) and *Nostromo* (1904). Hawthorn concluded that Conrad consistently misused the word and did not correct it in later editions. He obviously did not in *The Shadow-Line*: it survived in a Dent reprint (1934: 34).

The origin of Conrad’s deep-rooted misconception reflects how we learn a language. Some words we look up in a dictionary; most we learn by hearing or seeing them used. Conrad, who wrote to Henry James in 1896 that many of his creations “clothed in the wonderful garments of Your prose” had “stood, consoling, by my side under many skies” (CL1 307), might have read, long before, one of James’s best-known tales, “The Aspern Papers” (1888), in which The Master evokes the Piazza San Marco:

The wonderful church, with its low domes and bristling embroideries, the mystery of its mosaic and sculpture, looked ghostly in the tempered gloom, and the sea-breeze passed between the twin columns of the Piazzetta, the lintels of a door no longer guarded, as gently as if a rich curtain were swaying there.  
(1888; rpt. 1963: 311-12)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edel’s 1963 edition gives the version published in *Atlantic Monthly* (March–May 1888 and in book form along with “Louisa Pallant” and “The Modern Warning” in September 1888 and October 1900. The 1909 New York Edition (Vol. XII: 51-52) has “great basilica” for wonderful church” and “swayed” for

The passage is so beautiful we may overlook the fact that the vertical columns are likened to the “lintels of a door,” and that a door has only one lintel, which is horizontal. Whether James too was vague about lintels, or whether he placed euphony before meaning is impossible to say, but he provides a possible precedent for Conrad’s confusion. It may be time for the *OED* to add to its definition of “intel”: “*Poet*: The side of a door.”

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“were swaying,” but “lintels” is unchanged. In December 1908, Conrad told James that *The American* was “the first of your long novels I have ever read – in ’91” (CL4 161), suggesting he may have read James’s shorter fiction before then. Writing to Galsworthy in 1899 (CL2 174), he referred to “The Real Thing” (1892), published in a volume of stories by that name in 1893, and to the volume *The Lesson of the Master* (1892).