Joanna Skolik

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2020 - a very Conradian year…

I would like to discuss the idea presented by Josiane Paccaud-Huguet in her article on *Under Western Eyes* "Conrad Our Contemporary?" However, I want to analyse that from different perspective. I aim to illustrate that Conrad is our contemporary for what he described in the past is exactly the same that happens today. I would like to show that all the borderline, so-called, "Conradian" situations which could be found in his works we face today. There are the same doubts, fears and emotions, so we should try to seek solutions and ways out of the trap also in his books. "Black swans" which appeared in the past and appear nowadays were somehow predicted by Conrad, not detailed situations, but the shadow of them, their spectre, spirit. I will employ philosophy and thoughts of G. Agamben, M. Atwood and other modern writers and philosophers in order to discuss the issue.

Tanaka Kazuya

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The Planet, the Crew, and the War: The Representation of the Ship and the Malady in *The Shadow-Line*

In the present worldwide pandemic of COVID-19, its scale is frequently compared with war. Donald Trump, the President of the United States, for example, said that the influence of that malady was more serious than the Japan's attack on the Pearl Harbor in the Second World War. In responding to today's tendency to connect COVID-19 with war, an article in *Time*, titled "Why Comparing the Fight Against COVID-19 to War Is Ethically Dangerous," warns that this kind of association blurs the complex danger which doctors or nurses face. At any rate, however, these two cases exemplify people's disposition that they cannot help imagining similarities

between war and COVID-19 in facing the present huge number of victims and vastness of infected areas.

Taking into consideration the above present situation of COVID-19, this presentation argues that people's current inclination to juxtapose a pandemic with war, in fact, is resonant with *The Shadow-Line*, published more than one hundred years ago. Attention should be paid to the representation of the following three factors: the sail-ship as a planet; the unnamed sick crew, who echo the enormous number of victims in the First World War; and the captain-narrator's recognition of becoming mature as a sailor and a person at the end of the novella. *The Shadow-Line* therefore indicates Conrad's struggle to represent a life of a person—the captain-narrator—in the disaster which alludes to such crisis of society as war or a pandemic.

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James Murphy
University of Bristol

The Illnesses of Joseph Conrad

The Illnesses of Joseph Conrad - in particular one recurring one - have been a puzzle to many researchers over the years. In the 1960's and following years there were a number of publications and books which worked on the hypothesis of a hypochondriacal illness. Although he did survive well the episodes in the main, often used them as an excuse to avoid meeting others, and often was exhausted and probably at time depressed (not without reason) which might suggest a psychological or psychosomatic condition, many of his symptoms were at awkward times for him and frustrated him greatly (suggesting physical illness); and his diagnosis of recurrent gout doesn't work well for a number of reasons.

I see the article has been cited in one paper only since[1]; and that is in the context of 'illness as metaphor'. This is a very valid concept and interests me greatly too. However I am still convinced that Joseph Conrad's major illness narrative was based in physical sickness, complicated at times by his difficulties. We are certainly 'Body, Mind and Spirit' and so untangling the problem is in itself difficult, let alone 100 years later. (192 words)

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[1] JOSEPH CONRAD'S ILLNESS NARRATIVES: EVIDENCE FROM THE *COLLECTED LETTERS* AND A NEW DIAGNOSI**S** **Yearbook of Conrad Studies, 2012, Vol. VII, s. 113-124**

Subhadeep Ray

Bidhan Chandra College, Kazi Nazrul University, India

"The unusual may be dangerous": Dead, Sick and the Other in Selected Short -fiction of Joseph Conrad and Manik Bandyopadhyay

Set on the socio-historical and topographical margins of European empires, Joseph Conrad's fictional narrative often exhibits – to use two phrases from "An Outpost of Progress" – "the negation of the habitual" and "the affirmation of the unusual". The effect of the Tropic, particularly, on European traders/colonizers in Conrad's literary art is generally posited as unsafe for their psychosomatic stability – to refer to the doctor's warning to Marlow about the exposure to the tropical sun in *Heart of Darkness*. However, the characteristic Conradian narrative ambivalence relates the issues of death and sickness in the colony to deeper ethical questions regarding the imperial exploitation and its politics of Othering. The narrative shifts between the 'usual' and 'unusual' in Conrad's African and Asian tales further link them to the author's own ambivalent relationship with imperialism and, on the other hand, the postcolonial fiction examining the similar theme of "evils".

This paper, therefore, proposes to study the narrative journey from Joseph Conrad's treatment of dead and sick as/and the Other in two Malay tales, "An Outpost of Progress" and "The Lagoon", to two tales on Bengali countryside written by the post-Tagore major Bengali modernist author, Manik Bandyopadhyay: "The Right to Suicide" and "Burnt Turmeric". Both Conrad and Bandyopadhyay push the individual character beyond his/her secure zone to suggest the undecided nature of human survival with an urge for companionship that is of particular relevance today.

José González*

Notes on Life. The mental bulkheads against marine establishment and fanfare

After *Titanic* accident in 1912 several commissions were engaged in the investigation of the incident. The society and the industry were shocked by the event and the humongous number of casualties. Joseph Conrad adopted a proactive and responsible role providing his reflections and views on the topic; his knowledge and experience provided a pragmatic vision based on his experience as seafarer and his passion for the sea. His career in the merchant navy spanned nineteen years, hence he gained a lot of practical experience that result very useful for his analysis on the loss of the *Titanic* and *Empress of Ireland* and refuting the arguments all the parties put in the table. The context was the perfect one for that, it was the time when the transition from sails and steam to internal combustion engines was occurring; and that produced the vector conformed by technology-knowledge-safety was heavily unbalanced.

The article provides a review of those mental bulkheads that the author has identified in Joseph Conrad work, they offered well-structured arguments about technical and human topics based on his career at sea and his continue curiosity about the new developments happening around marine industry. The review and study of this aspect acquires special relevance when marine industry is about to face similar challenges in the years to come. Most of the times the events are trumpeted with massive fanfare by the same actors that Conrad challenged in Notes on Life with his mental bulkheads.

* Dr. José González is member of the Joseph Conrad Society (UK). Marine Engineer Officer and Naval Architect. Fellow of the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology (IMarEST) and Fellow of the Royal Institution of Naval Architects (RINA).

Helen Chambers

The Open University

'A chest of Winchester rifles with bullets': further evidence for gun-running on the *Vidar*

In *Conrad's Secrets* (2012), Robert Hampson wrote that 'gun-running is a recurrent motif across the range of Conrad's writings' (p.31), and he specifically discusses 'Karain', *Nostromo, Victory, The Arrow of Gold,* and the background to *The Rescue*. As well as using Gentleman Brown's casual remark that 'the smuggling of guns is no great crime' as the chapter epigraph*,* Hampson also cites corroborative evidence from Eric Tagliacozzo (2005) and earlier from Norman Sherry (1966) that the SS *Vidar* was routinely engaged in this illicit trade. In this short paper, to further support Hampson's argument, I present, using previously unexamined Dutch sources, new and specific evidence for gun-running on the *Vidar* during one of Conrad's four voyages in 1887.

Ellen Burton Harrington

University of Alabama

Aïssa's Curse in *An Outcast of the Islands*

"Your words are worse than the poison of snakes," Aïssa exclaims, upon finding herself humiliatingly abandoned in a trite romantic triangle with Willems and his previously abandoned wife, albeit a triangle where Aïssa will wind up holding the revolver. If Willems's downfall and its implications for Lingard are the crux of the plot in *An Outcast of the Islands*, the visceral power of its imperial critique might lie most powerfully with its betrayed Muslim heroine Aïssa, who confronts the seductive power of the snake in her desolate garden. In *Outcast*, Conrad draws strongly on the

Gothic tradition, echoing both the Imperial Gothic of Haggard's *She* in the bold presence of Aïssa's enchanting, commanding desire as well as playing on the tropes of haunting and confinement common to the European women of Victorian Gothic fiction. Even as Willems's attitude anticipates the narrator's pleasure in both the conquest of and eroticized disgust for the degraded heroine Alice of "A Smile of Fortune," Aïssa inverts the power dynamic of Willem's marriage, initially gazing "upon Willems as a prelude to conquest and possession" as Susan Barras notes in a comparison to Rider Haggard's Ayesha. Like Ayesha, Aïssa cannot maintain control over the European she desires. In realizing her degradation as "the slave of a slave," she kills Willems in bitter victory over her own illusory possession, a rebellion against the profound nature of her imperial dispossession.

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Two Strong Men: Gaspar Ruiz and Eugen Sandow

"But there is neither East nor West, Border nor Breed nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!"

This paper ventures to ask whether Kipling's famous words are entirely true, by facing off two strong men, contemporaries though one was actual and one fictional, and raising the question of what Auden called the Truly Strong Man. What does it mean to be strong, and a man? Conrad's Gaspar Ruiz is musclebound, earthy, inarticulate, a doomed warrior in an obscure war, his story subtitled "A Romantic Tale". The showman Eugen Sandow (1867-1925) was a performer, a shrewd self-publicist, an example and a salesman of masculine strength at a time when, as he and many others argued, modernity was rendering most men puny, neurasthenic, and 'unfit'. Their strengths are entirely contingent, but in a sense both men stand for a

kind of strongmanhood at odds with the perceived tide of history. What do masculinity and the strong body mean in Conrad's South American tale, and Sandow's international career? Border and breed and birth are part of the answer. In the end, what legacy does a strong man leave behind?

DAY TWO

Peter Villiers

Joseph Conrad and George Orwell;

Reflections on imperialism

Subjects and servants of empire

Nationality

Names

Occupation

Authorship

Why do they write?

Conrad

Laughter and a few tears

Orwell

Overt political motive

Under Western Eyes

Attack on imperial Russia?

Disbelief in idealism?

Quote narrator to Miss Haldin

Pessimism? Cynicism? Fatalism?

Explore views on police.

Compare Mikulin and the Assistant Commissioner

The Secret Agent

Plot/Style/Irony

Is this simple tale intended as a tribute to the values and practices of a liberal democracy? Hardly.

A policer roman, pure and simple? We think not. What does it tell us about imperialism? That even at the heart of empire, it does not do to look too deeply. Conrad is not opposed to imperialism, per se, but hopefulness.

Quote Bertrand Russell.

Orwell

Born India

Father's occupation

Private schooling

Lower upper middle class

Indian Imperial Police

Mistaken career?

Disliked imperialism, but…

Shooting an elephant

Blair is the symbol of authority and the font of power: and he must use that power or the crowd will no longer believe in him and the system he represents. In his words, he does not wish to look a fool.

Burmese Days

John Flory

Miss Lackersteen

Dr Veraswami

U Po Klin

Cultural snobbery

Blair attacks imperialism, but his fundamental belief is in the innate decency of human nature. Conrad, as befits his origins, is the less demonstrative writer, and his first choice of the sea as his profession is not entirely surprising. For the sea presents a challenge to character, and as he writes in Chance, its claims are simple and cannot be evaded.

Ahmed Honeini

Royal Holloway University

Bad World for Poor People: Disability, Sibling Relations, and Victimisation in *The Secret Agent* and *The Sound and the Fury*

This paper compares representations of disability and sibling relationships in Conrad's *The Secret Agent* and Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. While Winnie Verloc

and Caddy Compson are both placed as substitute mother-figures for their disabled brothers Stevie and Benjy, they are unable to prevent the exploitation and victimisation that their 'poor boys' experience. The rationale for reading Conrad alongside Faulkner is that Peter Mallios has identified Conrad's lasting, lifelong influence over Faulkner's career. As Faulkner himself once admitted, he 'got quite a lot from Conrad.' *The Sound and the Fury*, therefore, elaborates upon *The Secret Agent*'s concerns with disability, social injustice, gender relations, and family.

Both Winnie and Caddy are placed in explicitly marginalised social positions. Winnie occupies the domestic realm of Verloc's home and shop, and is defined exclusively by her duties as his wife and Stevie's substitute mother. Caddy, on the other hand, is condemned and exiled for her burgeoning sexuality. Nonetheless, their care for their brothers is unwavering, especially after Stevie and Benjy are exploited and victimised by their familial patriarchs. While Stevie loses his life for his devotion to his brother-in-law Verloc, Benjy's younger brother Jason has him castrated and condemned to the state mental asylum. Their exploitation and victimisation leads directly to the ironic downfall of their sisters. Both Winnie and Caddy face exploitation by Verloc and Jason, along with men like Ossipon and Sydney Head, as they attempt and ultimately fail to correct the injustices that Stevie and Benjy have experienced.

Conrad and Faulkner make clear that both women suffer dearly for their futile defence of their brothers. Winnie, Stevie, Caddy, and Benjy are each ensnared by the cyclical cruelty of patriarchal exploitation. Winnie and Caddy are set upon by fate and circumstance, becoming as victimised as the 'poor boys' they are charged with protecting.

Michela Marroni

Cheiti University, Pescara

"…he never returned":

Conrad's *The Return* as a Challenge to Ibsen

Published in 1898, *The Return* is a story which Conrad wrote during his early phase, when he had still some hesitations as to the direction his fiction was to follow. Even though he had already authored two novels (*Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*), he was considering the possibility of abandoning the Oriental settings so vivid in his imaginary. In this sense, *The Return* may be regarded as an attempt to deal with issues closer to such an institution as marriage whose deep-lying crisis Conrad intended to dramatize. Labelled as "an oddity within his canon" (F.R. Karl), this story seems to imitate some novelists (Flaubert, Maupassant and Henry James) who, in turn, have been evoked as its models. In my view, *The Return* was written under the decisive influence of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879), staged in London only on 7 June 1889. Actually, some critics have hinted at Ibsen, but no one has considered adequately the way *The Return* features a dramatic structure close to Ibsen's play. It is no coincidence that Conrad re-writes the final scene in *A Doll's House* presenting a male version of Nora's traumatic homeleaving. Indeed, in *The Return* it is Alvan Hervey who slams his house door and this gendered choice makes a great difference both in terms of social codes and as a token of Conrad's view of women's role in society.

Jim Ward

'Haunted Houses and Secondhand Conradese'. Domestic Space in 'The Lagoon'.

Much has been written about Joseph Conrad's blending of the tropes and conventions of the romance genre in his early colonial fiction with more 'realistic' perspectives. As Linda Dryden notes, '*Almayer's Folly* is a novel that challenges the

assumptions of the romance rather than perpetuating them'.[2] Written the year following the publication of *Almayer's Folly* in 1896, the short story 'The Lagoon' also offers a critical perspective on the imperial romance in its depiction of the relationship between a white imperial trader and his loyal 'native' companion. Elleke Bohemer writes that 'in colonial texts […] the pairing of white master and black slave/servant became an unquestioned commonplace'.[3] However, in 'The Lagoon' Conrad adopts a more cynical attitude to the colonial relationship, conventionally portrayed as harmonious or benevolent, by presenting a trader who 'likes' his faithful friend but 'not so much perhaps as a man likes his favourite dog'.[4] In this paper I examine how Conrad's critical stance towards the imperial romance extends to his use of domestic space in 'The Lagoon'. By contrasting the depiction of the 'house-boat' which houses the trader's Malay crew and the home of Arsat and Diamelen I show how Conrad uses different *kinds* of domestic space to undermine the stability of the imperial romance.

Keti Jmukhadze

Cityscape in *The Secret Agent.*

In my paper, I intend to discuss the urban setting in *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale.*

The aim of the paper is to demonstrate a shift of spatial setting in a work of literature. The main location of the eighteenth-nineteenth-century novel, mostly written by women, tended to be houses, which represented the continuity of tradition, family and the isolation of the character from the outside world. Unlike the traditional

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[2] Linda Dryden, *Joseph Conrad and the Imperial Romance,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999) p.51.
[3] Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial And Postcolonial Literature*. (Oxford University Press, 1995) p.47.
[4] Joseph Conrad, 'The Lagoon', *Tales of Unrest* (Penguin Books, 1987) p.175.

English novel, in twentieth-century literature house is no longer a shelter and the concept of "home" is problematized.

Conrad describes the collapse of the house as domicile and as family in *The Secret Agent*. Home is no longer serves as the clearly demarcated place and dominant chronotope. The novel demonstrates a conflict between the public and private self, contributed by the urban environment.

I also plan to discuss Conradian London, the heart of the British Empire, as a city where social injustice, all-embracing indifference and struggle for survival reigns. The principle according to which the weak will die out and the strong will survive is still persevering. The city life resembles "the cosmic chaos" in the Conradian fictional space.

It should be regarded not accidental that the cityscape was chosen by the author in order to demonstrate the tension between public time and individual freedom, as the center always was regarded as a plane where the fundamental principles and ideas emerge and then spread into peripheries.

Agnes Adamowicz-Pośpiech

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Visual Presentation of the *Wędrowiec* [*The Wanderer*] Magazine

As we all know Conrad was an avid reader of books and journals from his early childhood. The *Wędrowiec* magazine [The Wanderer] was mentioned twice in the recollections and letters to/about Conrad by Jadwiga Kałuska (Konradek's friend from Lwów) and by his uncle, Tadeusz Bobrowski. The aim of the presentation is to show what type of texts Conrad read in that travel magazine and possibly trace some connections between his early reading and later fiction.

Tania Zulli
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Between Law and Literature: Pragmatic Meanings in Conrad's Language of Migration.

Over the last few decades, the field of law and literature studies has increasingly focused on the importance of literary texts in the interpretation of legal doctrines developing wider perspectives on society and on the law's effect on the community itself. By considering the dynamic relationship between narrative works and legal documents, my paper proposes a reading of Joseph Conrad's short story "Amy Foster" (1901) which focusses on the investigation of the social and political aspects of migration in late nineteenth- century Britain. Echoes of the migrant figure as represented in Conrad's story can be found in the Aliens Act, the law passed by the British government in 1905 to regulate the flux of migrants from Eastern Europe. Taking into account the legal value of the Aliens Act and the social consequences of its application, I will first examine general views on migration at the beginning of the twentieth century and I will later explore the language used in the statute and its relevance in the short story. To this end, it will be noted that the notion of "undesirable immigrant," first introduced to describe migrants with well-defined characteristics, is anticipated by Joseph Conrad in "Amy Foster" whose protagonist, Yanko Goorall, is an emigrant from Eastern Europe. Conrad's fictional representation of Goorall as an "undesirable immigrant" allows us to reflect on how his writing deals with (and anticipates) events and socio-cultural trends.

Yao Xiaoling

Lord Jim Revisited: Travel as a Trope of Memory

This paper re-examines the Patna incident in *Lord Jim* by exploring the role of memory that defies "the length of time" and the way in which it is represented in the fiction. It aims to offer an in-depth analysis of how the two seemingly disconnected Patna and Patusan parts are integrated in Conrad's treatment of memory. Extending the observations of Paul Armstrong and Claude Maisonnat that memory constitutes a significant role in understanding the narrative, I argue that memory exists in moving and traveling across different modes of boundaries. It is a central characteristic that offers an insight into understanding why Jim repeatedly escapes and finally chooses to die for his honour, why Marlow's narrative digresses in different times and spaces, and how the sudden change of narrative mode from oral storytelling to written letters accentuates its thematic concerns. To do this, I shift the emphasis from regarding the Patna incident as a static past event to a dynamic agency that keeps interacting and interfering with the present. Also, this study is focused more on the routes towards the past than on the root of the past. Ultimately, this paper highlights the question of how one should look forward into the future by looking backward to the past that continuously exerts its impacts on the present.

Yael Levin

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Joseph Conrad's *Chance:* Determinism, Contingency and the Dictates of Narrative Form

Joseph Conrad's 1913 novel *Chance* has generated diametrically opposed views on its treatment of time. The emphasis on chance appears to serve Conrad's attempt to performatively resist the pervasiveness of determinism in nineteenth century thought. Accident and mutation are offered as alternative models of historical progression. At the same time, the narrative contains a set of motifs that serve as counter-indications to contingency, attesting to narrative investment in

coherence and the familiar. The paper traces the stylistic and thematic expressions of the two warring attitudes by testing them against Bergsonian models of time, narrative and subjectivity. It concludes by suggesting that the ambivalent treatment of chance may be read with Conrad's oscillation between two different artistic commitments and the different philosophical paradigms that generate them. What is at stake is not only the nature of the audience he chooses to address and the authorial responsibilities that such a choice dictates, but the very question of his artistic legacy. The method with which chance is to be treated in the novel will determine if Conrad is a "modern" writer or a pander to public opinion; whether he chooses an art of becoming or being.

DAY THREE

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Reading Conrad in Catastrophic Times: The Mimetic Turn

Conrad's untimely fictions anticipated some of the most influential critical and theoretical turns of the twentieth century, but it is only recently that we can evaluate his ongoing relevance for the catastrophes that cast a shadow on the twenty-first century. Drawing on the realization that "Conrad, well before contemporary theorists, puts readers back in touch with the literal effects of pathological contagion" in order to "survive epidemics" (Lawtoo 2016, 92), this paper steps back to the ancient insight that humans are, for better and worse, imitative creatures—what an ERC-funded project calls, *homo mimeticus* (http://www.homomimeticus.eu/)—to lay out methodological principles that cast new light on Conrad's narratives of catastrophe. The case of epidemic infection in *The Shadow-Line* in particular, will serve

as a case study to outline key principles constitutive of Conrad's mimetic turn: first, mimetic theory does not need to be applied to Conrad for it is already internal to his tales—from the *homo duplex* to affective/viral contagion; second, Conrad uses the microcosm of the ship to diagnose how viral contagion infects the body politic—revealing that the head (captain/leader) is as vulnerable as the communal body (crew); third, Conrad urges critics to pay attention to the agentic power of nonhuman forces—from storms to viruses; and last, he uses the "mirror of the sea" to reflect (on) the nonhuman shadows cast on the Anthropocene. My wager is that Conrad's mimetic principles are Janus-faced: they warn us that catastrophes come in successive waves, and call for mimetic "solidarity" between the "living and the unborn."

Cedric Watts

Thematic Precipitation in Conrad's Works.

In chemistry, a saturated solution may precipitate solids. In a fictional work, a replete theme may precipitate an image or a name.

Here are some examples:

1. In *Nostromo*, the theme 'men short-sighted in good and evil' precipitates the silver-rimmed spectacles that Emilia Gould gives to Giorgio Viola to ameliorate his myopia.

2. In 'The Duel', the theme 'reflective man versus instinctive man' precipitates the mirror (the reflective surface) used by D'Hubert during the final duel.

3. In 'Karain', the theme 'devices of exorcism' precipitates the 'gilt' silver sixpence.

4. In *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, the theme 'the black man burdens and delays the ship' precipitates the surname 'Wait'.

5. In *Heart of Darkness*, the theme 'Where is the heart of darkness?' precipitates the initial image of sunset over London (heart of the empire on which 'the sun never sets').

6. In *Under Western Eyes*, the theme 'After his death, a man may haunt the living' precipitates the cluster of masculine imagery (invoking Victor Haldin) investing Natalia Haldin.

7. In *Victory*, the theme 'Satan walks the earth' precipitates the surname 'Jones' (for, to seamen, 'the Devil' is one of the many meanings of 'Davy Jones', whose 'locker' holds the drowned).

Ewa Kujawska-Lis

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Dickens and Conrad: narrative and stylistic influences

Dickens's impact on Conrad is multi-faceted and already well explored. For instance, thematic similarities in the treatment of prison and family relationships between *Chance* and *Little Dorrit* have been analyzed as well as the depiction of London as maze-like in The Secret Agent inspired by Dickens's descriptions of the capital. However, it seems that the narrative and stylistic influences are much less frequently analyzed. Conrad is credited with mastering the technique of delayed decoding, which, as I would like to argue, he may have developed from Pip's first person narrative in *Great Expectations*. Like Conrad later, Dickens was very fond of withholding information from the reader (delayed decoding) and presenting strong impressions of a character to catch the reader's attention to later provide more in-depth explanation (chronological looping in Conrad). Additionally, Conrad's "adjectival insistence", especially pairing two almost synonymous adjectives may be traced back to Dickens's style. Thus, Dickens's oeuvre that served Conrad to learn

English may have imprinted in him certain stylistic habits and may have inspired him to develop his most famous impressionist narrative techniques.

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Daniel Zurbano García

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"We had a good time discussing Conrad": Conrad, Julio Cortázar, and the short story

Joseph Conrad's narrative fiction has been widely influential in twentieth-century Latin American literature, including the works of such major figures as Borges, García Márquez, Vargas Llosa and Julio Cortázar. This paper takes as its starting point Cortázar's manifest interest in the works of Joseph Conrad, indicated by several explicit references to Conrad scattered throughout Cortázar's *oeuvre*, and analyses two of Cortázar's celebrated short stories in light of their markedly Conradian atmosphere and motifs: "Relato con un fondo de agua" ["Story with a Background of Water"] and "Vientos alisios" ["Trade Winds"]. In both tales, the exotic atmosphere, the disturbing quality of nature and primitive surroundings, and the visionary power of ultimate darkness play significant roles as key elements of the stories. The discussion of these tales, in turn, leads to an appreciation of Conrad's pioneering role in the shaping of the modern short story, examining Cortázar's theoretical assumptions about short story writing, as expressed in the literature classes delivered at Berkeley University in 1980. An attempt will thus be made to offer a global evaluation of Cortázar's interest in Conrad as a writer and, specifically, as a short story writer, focusing on how both writers handle similar themes and motifs within the boundaries of the short story genre. Such an approach to Cortázar's writings is considered a tribute to Conrad's pervasive influence in world literature along the twentieth century and beyond.

Maria Luigia Di Nisio

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"What a horrid mess!": Interpretation and Survival in "Falk: a Reminiscence"

This paper brings attention to the centrality of interpretation in Conrad's short story "Falk", trying to construct what Roland Barthes has called a *topos,* in which the hermeneutic code, as the "Voice of Truth", provides interesting insights into the text. The title itself thematizes the main enigma (namely Who is Falk?) while also anticipating the importance of the narrator. "Falk" is, after all, "a Reminiscence", in which the reader is involved in a process of interpretation along with the narrator, sharing his views, doubts, successes and also failures.

The hermeneutic code will be seen in connection with the referential code, which here will be mainly identified with Darwinian science. Darwin's theories inform the whole story not only in terms of natural and sexual selection, as has been often underlined, but also in terms of more "civilized" forms of struggle. Interpretation as well becomes a crucial strategy of survival for the narrator, and implicitly, for the story itself. It is only by trying to understand and adapt to the complex reality of the colonial city, an unnamed Oriental port, that the captain will finally survive the absurdity which is always threatening the colonizer's efficiency and sanity. While unknotting what he perceives as a "dark plot" ("Falk" 159) entangling him, he also learns to renounce, at least in part, the idea of getting "the whole story" ("Falk" 186). Lack of closure, incompleteness, and misinterpretation pervade "Falk", which significantly ends with an oversimplified tale of rivalry, concocted by the captain himself during a (false) game at cards. Interpreting then for the narrator of "Falk" is a never ending attempt at imparting order and structure to chaos, not unlike Barthes's process of reading, which establishes relationships in a continual play between order and disorder, emphasizing the plurality of the text, throwing light(s) on its complexity rather than disclosing its final truth.

Pei-Wen Clio Kao

The Power "Not to": the Agambenian Thought in Conrad's *Victory* and Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust*

In his timeless Nobel Prize speech, William Faulkner pays tribute to his Modernist predecessor Joseph Conrad by alluding to the resilient and enduring force of human beings espoused by Conrad in the essay "Henry James: an Appreciation." In regard to the human virtues of "compassion and sacrifice and endurance" depicted by any great artist, they are arguably most stoically demonstrated by those marginalized and voiceless people, such as the working-class laborers, the innocent women and children, and the racial minority. The materials worth writing are incorporated in "a life's work in the agony and sweat of the human spirits," says Faulkner; while the value of human solidarity embraced by the artist is always mirrored in the "disregarded multitude off the bewildered, the simple, and the voiceless," observed Conrad.

With a view to connecting the two writers' visions of the artistic responsibility to represent the human spirits of solidarity and resilience in the face of pains and sufferings of a hard life, this paper attempts to analyze the characters of peripheral social status in Conrad's *Victory* (1915) and Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust* (1948) based on the philosophical thought of the contemporary theorist Giorgio Agamben. Both *Victory* and *Intruder in the Dust* are assessed as the two writers' lesser works by virtue of the awkward handling of the romance genre and the loss of experimentation in narrative techniques respectively. Nevertheless, later-day Conrad critics and Faulkner critics have attempted to re-evaluate the merits of the masters' "works of decline" and recognize the important ideological issues addressed in these novels. Following contemporary critics' endeavors to "rescue" the two novels from their former failed reputation, I shall keep an eye on the marginalized but decent female figure Ms. Schomberg in *Victory* and the noble but intractable racial other Lucas in

Intruder in the Dust in order to spell out the enduring and prevailing force of human beings in their status as the most oppressed and the most marginalized. Both Conrad's Mrs. Schomberg and Faulkner's Lucas are not typical heroine or hero: one is a snubbed wife of a lower-middle class white man in the colonial East, the other is a half-black man of a lower-middle family related with a plantation owner father. Neither of them belong to the category of white male bourgeoisie elites. Rather, they move between the divide of life/non-life, white/black, rescuer/rescued.

Giorgio Agamben is a productive contemporary philosopher of ethics, political theory and law. His philosophical thought is mainly based on Walter Benjamin's theorization of history as realized at the "dialectical image," or the concept of "dialectics at a standstill." This is the philosophical attempt to subvert the Western tradition of binarism by disrupting the hierarchical opposition ingrained in our thoughts and everyday practices as well. The philosophical foundation that underpins Agamben's whole oeuvre is a project "to render the production of dialectical relations inoperative, attempting to explore and deactivate them in order to make them unworkable." Inspired by Agamben's undialectical thought with his determination to undermine the hierarchical structure of power, this paper will apply his concepts of "inoperativity" and "im/potentiality" to rethink the issues of justice and law as represented in *Victory* and *Intruder in the Dust*.

William Atkinson

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Almayer's*s *Monkeys

The monkeys in question are Jack, Almayer's monkey, and the misses Vinck, "no better than dressed up monkeys." In many of his texts, Conrad highlights animals that seem to be drifting into humanness and humans who are as much non-human as they are human. In these indeterminate spaces, an entity's ontology as human or

animal is entirely uncertain. This uncertainty finally renders inoperative the whole process of distinguishing the human animal from the non-human animal. The reviewer of *Almayer's Folly* in *The Nation* of 17 October 1895 writes that "a novel in which the only white man of importance is a Dutch trader, while all the women are Malays or half-castes, does not promise much entertainment." He concludes with the complaint that "Borneo is a fine field for the study of monkeys, not men." Jack, however, is a developed character, and one of the more appealing in the novel. The misses Vinck are neither appealing nor developed, yet they are what *The Nation*'s reviewer wanted more of to feel entertained

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Brendan Kavanagh

'Those broken phrases': Environmentally Embedded Stammering in *Heart of Darkness*

This essay addresses the existing problem of responding (in an environmental or eco-critical context) to Chinua Achebe's claim that *Heart of Darkness*'s Congo is a 'space of negations'. To provide an example of Achebean environmental criticism of *Heart of Darkness*, Jeffrey Meyers has argued that 'just as the African people are lumped together in this text as "savages", the animals, plants, rivers, and hills are lumped together as "wilderness" […] the "Other" against which the European man delineates his identity'. According to Meyers, such delineation of 'European man' against 'wilderness' amounts to a Cartesian separation of humanity versus nature, and *Heart of Darkness* therefore 'reinforces' 'the metaphysical underpinnings of human and ecological oppression'. In spite of Jeffrey McCarthy's and Jessie Oak Taylor's more recent and influential essays on *Heart of Darkness*'s ecology, a direct response to Meyers's Achebean claim has yet to be articulated, within twenty-first-century eco-critical discussion of Conrad's text. The proposed essay takes issue with Meyers's argument, and also draws out a hitherto unexplicated aspect of Conrad's language

(specifically, his typographic inscription of human stammering and stuttering), through reading *Heart of Darkness* transtextually alongside *Lord Jim*'s narrative of 'all our stammerings' (*Lord Jim* 171). As the essay shall demonstrate, the texture of *Heart of Darkness* composes itself out of a linguistic substrate of human stammering and stuttering, typographically inscribed, at the same time that the narrative's discourse strategically absorbs and ironically undercuts the sort of 'wilderness' tropology found within certain strains of European exceptionalist discourse. Using contextual discussion of late-nineteenth-century science and the ecological thought of Bruno Latour, the essay will draw out the ways in which *Heart of Darkness* formulates an environmental patchwork of milieus in which various human stammerings and stutterings are situated; further analysis of the text's formal organization shall show that the narrative (by means of such patchwork) generates itself in dynamic relation with what Latour has termed a metanarrative of humanity's 'progressive entanglement' with nonhuman nature. The essay thereby shall argue that *Heart of Darkness*'s text of environmentally embedded stammering and stuttering constitutes a counter-narrative of ecological entanglement; such a counter-narrative not only contests the dominant metanarrative (or 'rot let loose in print' [*Heart of Darkness* 13]) of the 'progress' of European humanity's removal from nature, but also presciently anticipates a number of present-day ecological concerns in our tragic age of the Anthropocene. The conclusion to the essay reconsiders the ecological resonance of Kurtz's last words, in response to the aforementioned critics.

David Mulry

"A Taste for Silence": The failure of Retreat in Conrad's Wildernesses

Stein, in Conrad's *Lord Jim* observes that man has no place in nature, "Sometimes it seems to me that man is come where he is not wanted, where there is no place for him…. Why should he run about here and there making a great noise about himself,

talking about the stars, disturbing the blades of grass?" (*Lord Jim* 208). The casual comment, from which the reader is soon distracted, plays an important role in understanding Conrad's novels of retreat which follow sensational novels like Delisle Hay's *The Doom of the Great City; Being the Narrative of a Survivor, Written AD 1942* (1880), and anarchist novels like H.B. Salisbury's novel *Miss Worden's Hero (1890)*, Marriott Watson's *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (1890) and *Caesar's Colum*n (1890) by Ignatius Donnelly (under the pen name, Edmond Boisgilbert). Each of these narratives speaks to the perceived failures of Capitalism, and burgeoning great cities grown monstrous and clamorous in the late nineteenth century, and each ends with wounded retreats into remote wildernesses to enable characters (and societies) to break cycles of inequity and oppression (in order: New Zealand, Alaska, New Zealand, Uganda). In the aftermath of these popular fictions of *fin de siècle* anxieties about capitalism itself and prospects of empire in decline, Conrad offers alternative models of his own with isolated heroes attempting to escape from the clamor of modernity. Figures like Heyst, Marlow, and Jim, embark into blank spaces on the map, in an attempt to "bind [themselves] to silence" (*Victory* 17), embrace "the interminable miles of silence" (*Heart of Darkness* 111), and sometimes to be mastered by "the great silence of earth, sky, and sea" (Lord Jim 335). But there, where silence, as a sensory experience, is a palpable feature of Conrad's great novels of retreat, where it is sometimes experienced as "jerky spasms of silence," and where man might seem to shake off the gross pathologies of his age, Conrad reaches different (skeptical) conclusions from the sensational novels of retreat (*Lord Jim* 178). He depicts wildernesses where it is all too difficult to shed the "unrestful and noisy dream" of the past (*Heart of Darkness* 105), and offers instead an emptiness we fill ourselves with "confounded screeching about something or other" (*Victory* 129), a clamor which too often is merely "the silence driven away by the stamping of our feet" (*Heart of Darkness* 98).
