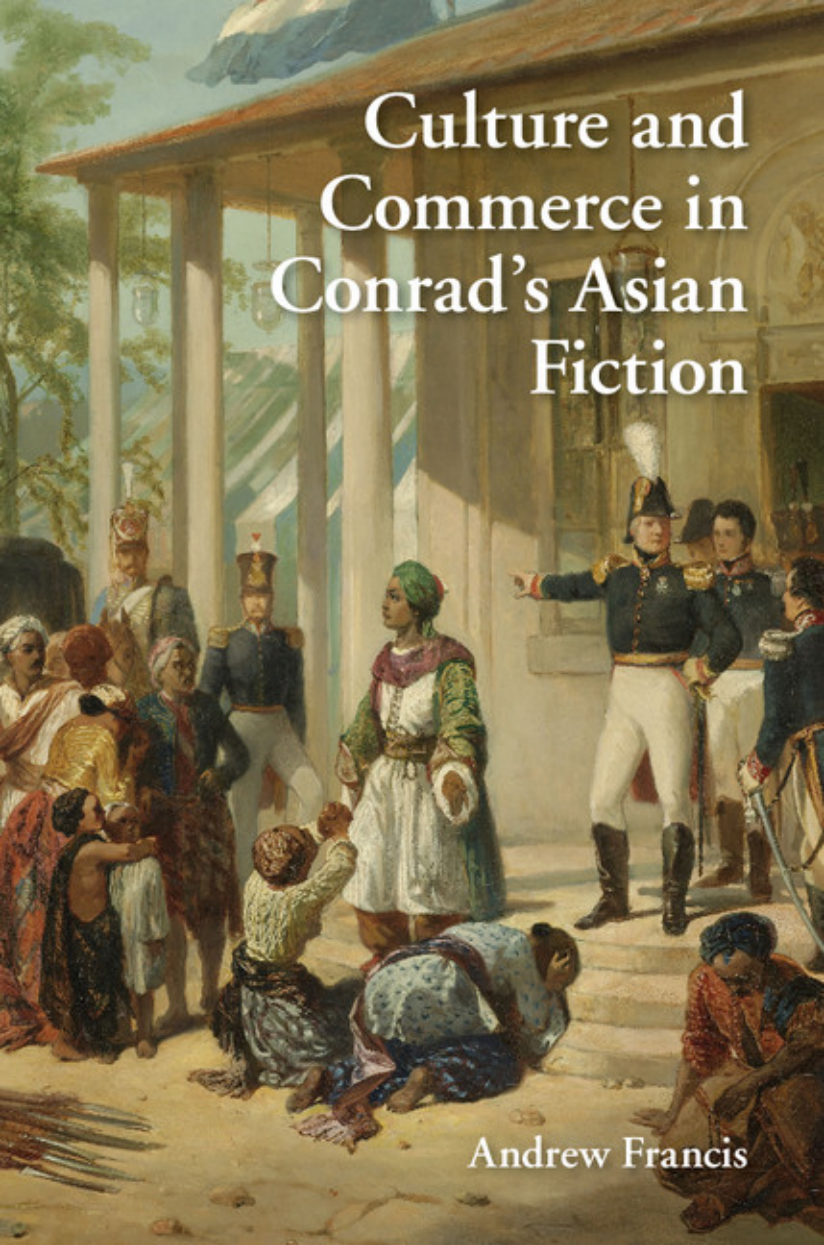
Culture and Commerce in Conrad's Asian Fiction



Andrew Francis

CULTURE AND COMMERCE IN CONRAD'S ASIAN FICTION

Andrew Francis's *Culture and Commerce in Conrad's Asian Fiction* is the first book-length critical study of commerce in Conrad's work. It reveals not only the complex connections between culture and commerce in Conrad's Asian fiction, but also how he employed commerce in characterization, moral contexts, and his depiction of relations at a point of advanced European imperialism. Conrad's treatment of commerce – Arab, Chinese, and Malay, as well as European – is explored within a historically specific context as being both intricate and resistant to traditional readings of commerce as simple and homogeneous. Through the analysis of both literary and non-literary sources, this book examines capitalism, colonialism, and globalization within the commercial, political, and social contexts of colonial Southeast Asia.

ANDREW FRANCIS received his PhD from the University of Cambridge in 2010. He has published in *The Conradian* and contributed to *The New Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad* and is currently working on a book on economics, politics, and society in Conrad's Asian fiction.

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ANDREW FRANCIS

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For Ann

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Cambridge, April 2014

Texts and Abbreviations

All quotations from Joseph Conrad's writings are from the Uniform Edition (London: Dent, 1923–28), with the exception of the following works from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad* (Cambridge University Press, 1990–) :

Almayer's Folly, ed. Floyd Eugene Eddleman and David Leon Higdon (1994)
Lord Jim, ed. J.H. Stape and Ernest W. Sullivan II (2012)
Notes on Life and Letters, ed. J.H. Stape (2002)
A Personal Record, ed. Zdzisław Najder and J.H. Stape (2008)
The Shadow-Line, ed. J.H. Stape and Allan H. Simmons (2013)
Tales of Unrest, ed. Allan H. Simmons and J.H. Stape (2012)
'Twixt Land and Sea, ed. J.A. Berthoud, et al. (2008)
Within the Tides, ed. Alexandre Fachard (2012)
Youth, Heart of Darkness, The End of the Tether, ed. Owen Knowles (2010)

The following abbreviations are used:

CEW	Norman Sherry, *Conrad's Eastern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966)
CEI	P. Boomgaard, et al., *Changing Economy in Indonesia: A Selection of Statistical Source Material from the Early 19th Century up to 1940*, ed. P. Boomgaard, et al., trans. J.W.F. Arriens, 17 vols (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, 1975–96)
FOCP	Great Britain, Foreign Office Confidential Print
KITLV	Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde [Royal Institute for Language, Geography and Ethnology]
KPM	Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij [Royal Packet Company]
Letters	Laurence Davies, et al., eds., *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, 9 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984–2007)

When the work by Conrad to which reference is made is not evident, the following abbreviations are used:

AF	*Almayer's Folly*
BoD	'Because of the Dollars'
EoT	'The End of the Tether'
F	'Falk'
Fr	'Freya of the Seven Isles'
LJ	*Lord Jim*
MS	*The Mirror of the Sea*
NLL	*Notes on Life and Letters*
NoN	*The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*
OI	*An Outcast of the Islands*
PR	*A Personal Record*
Re	*The Rescue*
SL	*The Shadow-Line*
V	*Victory*

Orthography and Translation

Place names are spelled as generally in current usage, unless in a quotation. Consequently, Conrad's spellings of, for example, 'Aceh', 'Bankok', 'Makassar', and 'Surabaya' (and the Dutch spelling 'Soerabaia') are usually 'Acheen', 'Bangkok', 'Macassar', and 'Sourabaya'. However, current usage also sometimes includes alternatives, for example, 'Macassar'.

Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine. For the avoidance of doubt these are occasionally stated as such.

'The experiences of a life spent in mercantile adventures hardly seem to contain sufficient interest to warrant their being made the subject of a book.'[1]

'Commerce is the agency by which the power of choice is obtained'.[2]

'Commerce [. . .] is an affair of money and management; of a thinking man in a dark office, computing the prices of guns or worsteds.'[3]

[1] Ludvig Werner Helms, *Pioneering in the Far East, and Journeys to California in 1849 and to the White Sea in 1878* (London: W.H. Allen, 1882), p. iii.
[2] John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, 11 vols (London: Smith Elder, 1871–80), II: *Munera Pulveris. Six Essays on the Elements of Political Economy* (1872), p. 95.
[3] Walter Bagehot, *Economic Studies*, ed. Richard Holt Hutton (London: Longmans, Green, 1880), p. 53.

Introduction

In the way of business.[1]

In the lithograph 'View of a Coal Seam on the Island of Labuan' (1847) (Figure 1), the viewer is invited to witness possibly the first footprint of the colonizer in what for the newly arrived Europeans is an unknown territory. The landscape seems to overwhelm the two British men admiring a coal seam in the jungle. The figure towards the bottom right-hand corner wears the uniform of a Royal Navy officer, representing the military power by which colonial intrusion was underwritten. The other figure, in white, perhaps a civilian, is someone whose commercial imagination may, in his enthusiastic gesture, see the opportunity for gain in this remote spot, like the remote island coal-mine in *Victory*. However, it is also an image in which place, at the point in time in which the men are looking, aestheticizes entirely the commercial object, the coal seam a setting for a cascading waterfall. Our attention is drawn not to the coal seam – which, without the title to the lithograph, would not be identifiable as such – nor to the figures, but to the play of light, in which patches of light, together with the huge palm on the left, assert the primacy of view, not of utility.

In the commercial discourse on activity evident in the extracts from the company prospectus in *The Times* (1910) (Figure 2), the opportunity for commerce has become reality. The undisturbed jungle view of the lithograph here becomes fragmented into components of company promotion and commercial assessment of risk. What in the lithograph is view, is in the prospectus possession and measurement – 'tenure' and 'acreage'; land has

[1] This phrase, which occurs at least three times in the Asian fiction (*OI*, p. 16; *LJ*, p. 269; *Re*, p. 69), refers to a person's business, as opposed to their personal, activities. As such it signifies the possibilities of congruence or opposition between these activities, possibilities that are part of the relations explored in Conrad's Asian fiction.

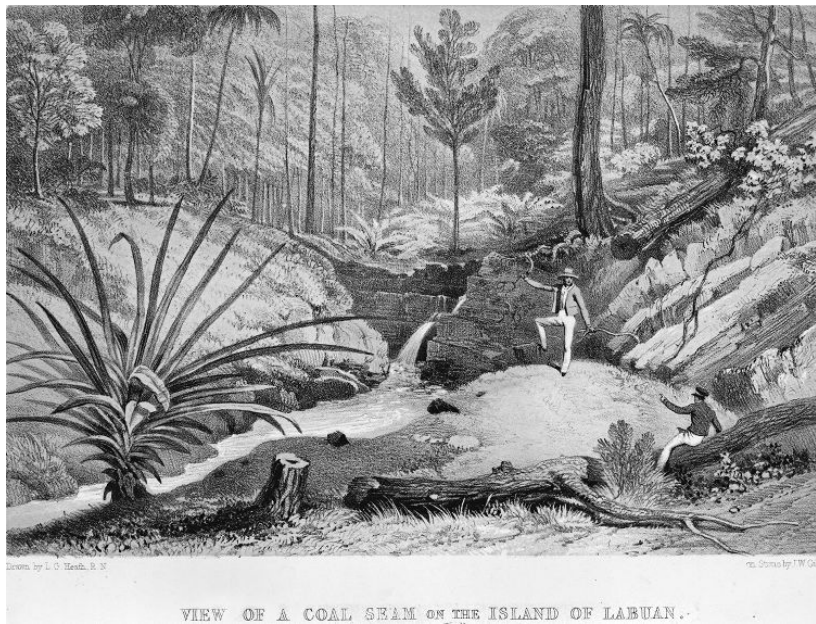
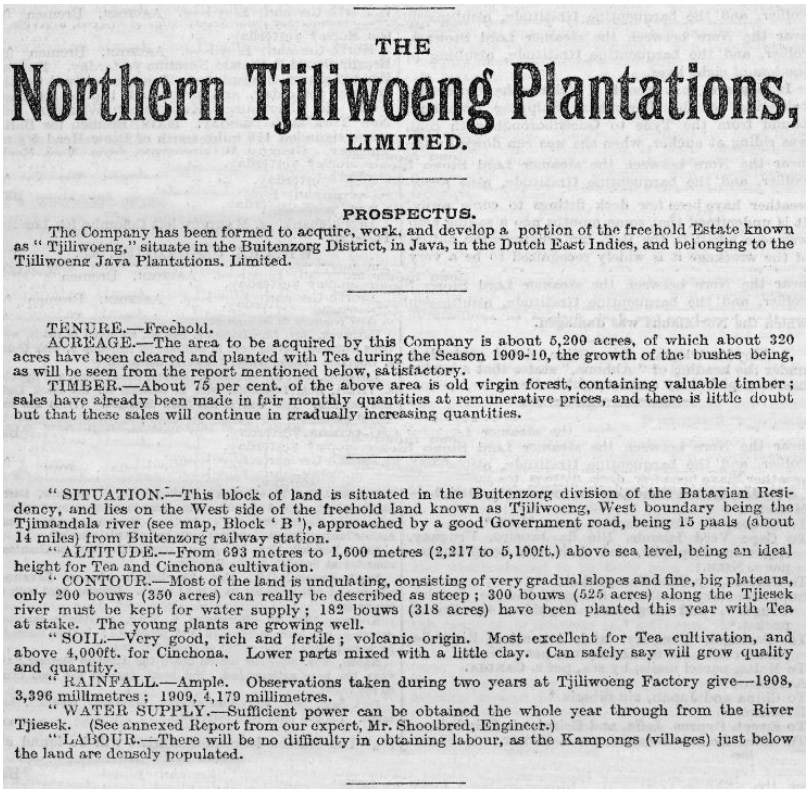


Fig. 1. 'View of a Coal Seam on the Island of Labuan'. Lithograph by C.W. Giles of a drawing by Commander L.C. Heath, R.N., in James Augustus St. John, *Views in the Eastern Archipelago, Borneo, Sarāwak, Labuan, &c. &c. &c. from Drawings made on the Spot by Captn Drinkwater Bethune, R.N.C.B., Commander L.C. Heath, R.N. and Others* (London: Thos. McLean, 1847), n.pag., Plate 12. (Actual size 25.5 by 17 cms). Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

become a function of 'situation', 'altitude', 'contour', 'soil', and 'rainfall'. The section titled 'Timber' announces that 75 per cent of the total acreage is 'old virgin forest', comparable with the view in the lithograph but now seen as 'valuable timber'. The globalized nature of exploitation is evident from the shares being offered in this venture in the Dutch East Indies not on the Amsterdam exchange, but in London. Cultivation is to be by people who, in the same way as the 'virgin forest' has become the commodity timber, have become the commodity 'Labour'. The contemplation of the men in the lithograph has been transformed into purposeful economic activity.

The sites in Figures 1 and 2 are both in the Malay Archipelago, Labuan being the island colony ceded to Britain in 1846 off the north-west coast of Borneo. The lithograph and the prospectus demonstrate a continuity of European commercial interest in south-east Asia by the two major colonial



THE

Northern Tjiliwoeng Plantations,

LIMITED.

PROSPECTUS.

The Company has been formed to acquire, work, and develop a portion of the freehold Estate known as "Tjiliwoeng," situate in the Buitenzorg District, in Java, in the Dutch East Indies, and belonging to the Tjiliwoeng Java Plantations, Limited.

TENURE.—Freehold.

ACREAGE.—The area to be acquired by this Company is about 5,200 acres, of which about 320 acres have been cleared and planted with Tea during the Season 1909-10, the growth of the bushes being, as will be seen from the report mentioned below, satisfactory.

TIMBER.—About 75 per cent. of the above area is old virgin forest, containing valuable timber; sales have already been made in fair monthly quantities at remunerative prices, and there is little doubt but that these sales will continue in gradually increasing quantities.

"SITUATION.—This block of land is situated in the Buitenzorg division of the Batavian Residency, and lies on the West side of the freehold land known as Tjiliwoeng, West boundary being the Tjimandala river (see map, Block 'B'), approached by a good Government road, being 15 paals (about 14 miles) from Buitenzorg railway station.

"ALTITUDE.—From 693 metres to 1,600 metres (2,217 to 5,100ft.) above sea level, being an ideal height for Tea and Cinchona cultivation.

"CONTOUR.—Most of the land is undulating, consisting of very gradual slopes and fine, big plateaus, only 200 bouws (350 acres) can really be described as steep; 300 bouws (525 acres) along the Tjiesek river must be kept for water supply; 182 bouws (318 acres) have been planted this year with Tea at stake. The young plants are growing well.

"SOIL.—Very good, rich and fertile; volcanic origin. Most excellent for Tea cultivation, and above 4,000ft. for Cinchona. Lower parts mixed with a little clay. Can safely say will grow quality and quantity.

"RAINFALL.—Ample. Observations taken during two years at Tjiliwoeng Factory give—1908, 3,396 millimetres; 1909, 4,179 millimetres.

"WATER SUPPLY.—Sufficient power can be obtained the whole year through from the River Tjiesek. (See annexed Report from our expert, Mr. Shoolbred, Engineer.)

"LABOUR.—There will be no difficulty in obtaining labour, as the Kampongs (villages) just below the land are densely populated.

Fig. 2. Extracts from the company prospectus for The Northern Tjiliwoeng Plantations, Limited. *The Times*, 1 December 1910, p. 16. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

powers in the region[2] as well as something of the effect of international commercial forces in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the period which includes the setting of the action of Conrad's Asian fiction and his voyages in the region. It is part of the period in which Robert E. Elson describes economic and social change flowing:

[2] D.G.E. Hall describes 'South-East Asia' as 'a term which came into general use during the Second World War to describe the territories of the eastern Asiatic mainland forming the Indo-Chinese peninsula and the immense archipelago which includes Indonesia and the Philippines'. *A History of South-East Asia*, 4th edn (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 3. Despite its creation after the time of Conrad's fiction, the term usefully describes the region in which most of Conrad's Asian fiction is set. The Archipelago, known in Conrad's day as the Malay, Eastern, or Indian Archipelago, I will term 'Malay Archipelago'.

> essentially from the unprecedented impact of international commerce on the economic and political structures of the region. Such commerce had long exerted a major role in shaping the nature of Southeast Asian politics and society but, driven by the imperatives of developing Western capitalism and the Industrial Revolution, particularly after about 1850, its global reach and irresistible dominance in this century-and-a-half transformed Southeast Asia with an astonishing thoroughness, rapidity and finality.[3]

European powers' colonial interests were not simply about procuring cheap raw materials, but also finding markets for their European over-production. Commenting on literature as reflecting these changes, Angus Easson writes: 'industry, trade, transport transformed the age [. . .] . The age was a business age and the writers were well aware of this transformation: it was the material of their fiction and they saw themselves increasingly as part of it.'[4] Indeed, Bagehot (1826–77) observed of commerce in England that 'it is not only a thing definite and observable, but about the most definite thing we have, the thing which it is most difficult to help seeing'.[5] While it was often claimed that commerce advanced civilization (even that it was divinely inspired),[6] the tendency of literature in this period was to portray commerce as largely pernicious. Little literary criticism has been written on the representation in literature of business history (the history of business enterprises), the detailed activities of trade, or of commercial practice, and very little on the literary role such representation might play. However, there has been literary-critical attention given to concepts in literature such as capitalism, finance, and money.[7] Although critics have sought to place

[3] 'International Commerce, the State and Society: Economic and Social Change', in Nicholas Tarling, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), II: 131–95 (p. 131).

[4] 'The High Victorian Period (1850–1900): "The Worship of Mammon"', in Arthur Pollard, ed., *The Representation of Business in English Literature* (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 2000), pp. 65–98 (p. 69). As an example of Britain's mercantile strength, its merchant marine was as large as that of all other nations combined. Thomas Gray, *'Going to Sea;' or, 'Under the Red Ensign.': A Plain Guide to Parents, Guardians, and Boys, on the only True and Proper Way of going into the Mercantile Marine, and What to do When There* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1878), p. 35.

[5] *Economic Studies*, p. 6.

[6] For example, 'Commerce is one of the principal means appointed by Providence for civilizing mankind'. 'Memoir on the Residency of the North-West Coast of Borneo', in J.H. Moor, comp., *Notices of the Indian Archipelago, and Adjacent Countries; Being a Collection of Papers relating to Borneo, Celebes, Bali, Java, Sumatra, Nias, the Philippine Islands, Sulus, Siam, Cochin China, Malayan Peninsula, &c.* (Singapore: [n.pub.], 1837), pp. 5–12 (p. 11).

[7] Studies of aspects such as capitalism or money, or of the relation between economics and language, include Robert J. Balfour, ed., *Culture, Capital and Representation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2010); Alec Marsh, *Money and Modernity: Pound, Williams, and the Spirit of Jefferson* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998); Walter Benn Michaels, *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism: American Literature at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Francis O'Gorman, ed., *Victorian Literature and Finance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007);

Conrad's writing in a variety of historical and literary contexts, this has included little about that of commerce as represented in his writings, despite the fact that economic imperialism was commercial in realization.[8]

For the purposes of this book, Conrad's 'Asian fiction' comprises works which have for the most part an Asian setting as well as sufficient commercial significance. 'Asian fiction' is used in preference to Robert Hampson's 'Malay fiction' – used in his *Cross-Cultural Encounters in Joseph Conrad's Malay Fiction* – because settings in the works discussed in the present book include India (*Lord Jim*) and Siam ('Falk' and *The Shadow-Line*), the latter two works not being included in Hampson's valuable study.[9] The works of Asian fiction so defined are, primarily: *Almayer's Folly* (1895); *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896); *Lord Jim* (1900); 'The End of the Tether' (1902); 'Falk' (1903); *Victory* (1915); *The Shadow-Line* (1917); and *The Rescue* (1920). In order to concentrate on these primary works in the space available, a second group is only briefly discussed, in those chapters to which each is most relevant thematically: 'Freya of the Seven Isles' (1912), in Chapter 1; 'Karain' (1898) and 'The Lagoon' (1898) in Chapter 3; and 'Because of the Dollars' (1915) in Chapter 7.[10]

This book is the first book-length critical study of commerce in Conrad and the first such detailed critical study of the Dutch East Indies cultural and other background in his fiction. The book argues that Conrad's portrayal of commerce in his Asian fiction offers an informed, complex, and historically specific context which serves as part of a wider cultural discourse to illuminate the underlying moral concerns of his writing ('to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect'[11]). Conrad's portrayal also works against a reductive reading of commerce as either homogeneous or as necessarily contrary to the common good.

and Marc Shell, *The Economy of Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) and *Money, Language, and Thought: Literary and Philosophical Economies from the Medieval to the Modern Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

[8] Richard Bithell wrote that 'Economics [. . .] may be defined as the Science which treats of exchangeable things, and of the laws which regulate their exchange. It is a branch of the wider subject known as Political Economy. Political Economy treats of the laws which control the production, distribution, and consumption of wealth.' *A Counting-House Dictionary Containing an Explanation of the Technical Terms Used by Merchants and Bankers in the Money Market and on the Stock Exchange* (London: George Routledge, 1882), p. 108. Commerce is 'the exchange of merchandise or services' (*OED*).

[9] *Cross-Cultural Encounters in Joseph Conrad's Malay Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000).

[10] 'The Secret Sharer' (1910), 'Typhoon' (1902), and 'Youth' (1902) are excluded on grounds of insufficient commercial interest. 'The Planter of Malata' is not included as it has a Pacific setting, as illustrated by its Kanaka workers. Similarly, 'A Smile of Fortune' (1911) is set in Mauritius and Australia and so not included.

[11] 'Preface' to *NoN*, pp. vii–xii (p. vii).

Indeed, Bagehot wrote that 'the facts of commerce, especially of the great commerce, are very complex. Some of the most important are not on the surface; some of those most likely to confuse *are* on the surface'.[12] Displaying in his works both critique and criticism of commerce, Conrad's often ironic treatment of commerce reveals its ambiguities both for good and evil as well as its combination of active life in the workaday world with the inner life and aspirations of an individual.[13] Indeed, Conrad's treatment of commerce is what takes it beyond the satirical approach evident, for example, in Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1850), Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1875), and Wells's *Tono-Bungay* (1909).

A broadly historicist methodology, allied to close readings of the texts, is employed to illuminate the significance of commerce in Conrad's writings, reading with literary-commercial eyes. In the 'Preface' to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* Conrad specifically links the moral activity of the discovery of truth to a process involving the senses: 'It is an attempt to find in its forms [of "the visible universe"], 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' (p. vii).[14]

'Aspect' and 'vision' are significant words associated with this attempt. 'Aspect', appearing three times in the first paragraph of the 'Preface', conveys the importance of human perception and apprehension. 'Vision', mentioned three times in the 'Preface' (e.g. p. vii), represents not simply the act of observation, but of seeing within – a form of insight – which combines the senses and intuition to perceive the essence of the object, event, or feeling, the writer's task being, as often quoted, 'to make you *see*' (p. x), the emphasis on the word conveying its special, insightful nature. With the inner truth of individuals obscure and unknowable and the outer world mysterious, phenomenology performs, as in the initial depiction of the shadowy Almayer in *A Personal Record* (1912), what sometimes cannot otherwise be adequately articulated, reflecting Conrad's views about the inadequacies of language. This aesthetic informs all his writing and includes commerce as part of the 'visible universe'.

[12] *Economic Studies*, p. 10. Conrad himself considered careers in trade. See G. Jean-Aubry, *Joseph Conrad, Life and Letters*, 2 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1927), I: 82, 87; and Stephen Donovan, '"Figures, facts, and theories": Conrad and Chartered Company Imperialism', *The Conradian*, 24/2 (Autumn 1999), 31–60 (p. 34).

[13] The present book's approach shares something of David Trotter's shift of emphasis 'from social and intellectual to economic and political history' in *The English Novel in History 1895–1920* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 2.

[14] See also 'Preface', p. ix.

In his study of Conrad's Malay fiction, Hampson mentions some aspects of commerce, for example identifying that the narrative of *Victory* is 'grounded in the material conditions of the archipelago' and that commerce and mobility are characteristic of Conrad's first two Malay novels.[15] The present book argues that commerce is part of the formation, and a key occupation, of community and that in its historical specificity it relates to what has been described as 'Conrad's power to evoke the subjective lives of his characters in their interaction with each other and to place those lives in the wider historical perspective of their time, showing the personal and the historical as two sides of the same coin'.[16] Indeed, this book aims to show, as a key objective, Conrad writing through commerce in order not only to illuminate his underlying moral concerns but also to contribute to characterization and to his depiction of relations at a point of advanced European imperialism. Investigating these aspects in relation to his Asian fiction offers the possibility of new readings. The book is organized into chapters on individual works of Conrad in order to allow such readings to be as fully evident and thorough as possible, as well as helpful for the reader wishing to study a particular work of the Asian fiction.

Conrad's portrayal of various communities in south-east Asia – colonial, indigenous, and immigrant – shows commerce propelling activity, and, tellingly, as a vivifying and shaping force on community – Macassar 'teeming with life and commerce' (*AF*, p. 7) – as well as pervasive and inextricable. Conrad shows it too as shaping time, space, and culture – commercializing time and space – through, for example, communications, labour, and finance. Indeed, in Conrad we find the major

[15] *Cross-Cultural Encounters*, pp. 148, 99. The book situates Conrad's Malay fiction 'within a specific discursive context, the British tradition of writing about Southeast Asia' (Robert Hampson, *Conrad's Secrets* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), p. 23). In this, and in the contextual information of the times that *Cross-Cultural Encounters* provides, it does not seek significantly to draw out or draw on the specifically Dutch East Indies elements of this fiction. In *Conrad's Secrets*, Chapter 1, Hampson discusses 'covert plots and secret trades' in connection with *Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands*, and *The Rescue*, with the focus regarding trade being on gun-running, slavery, and the smuggling of gunpowder, treating certain aspects of the significance of these illicit trades in the texts as well as aspects of these trades' histories. After finishing the underlying writing and research for this book I became aware of Agnes Yeow, *Conrad's Eastern Vision: A Vain and Floating Appearance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Although not concentrating on the Dutch East Indies, Yeow's book provides very useful information and discussions about the region (the Siamese element is not specifically discussed), including some aspects of the region's trade and ethnic groups.

[16] Jacques Berthoud and Mara Kalnins, 'Introduction' to Joseph Conrad, *Nostromo*, new edn, ed. Jacques Berthoud and Mara Kalnins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. x–xxiv (p. xv).

economic, political, and social issues of capitalism, colonialism, and globalization – in its evolving historical manifestations well before those of our own time – presented in the moral, physical, and social situations of his characters.[17] While historically specific context is therefore provided – something which is informative in its own right – the book also uses this contextual material to serve other, more interpretative, literary-critical, aims. To understand the business conditions to which Conrad's characters are subject it is necessary to understand something of the economic, social, and political history of the area and period.[18] Rather than such issues and commerce being represented satirically (though they are often represented ironically), or as sites of ideological argument, they find representation in the texture and detail of the culturally specific context, and it is from the lived, subjective experience of that commerce that Conrad's representation draws its effectiveness. For example, Conrad depicts certain individuals of integrity and generosity of spirit connected with commerce (Mr Tesman and Captain Davidson in *Victory*, Captain Ford in *Almayer's Folly*) and businessmen who are endowed with special wisdom and who exemplify the Conradian virtues of faithfulness, restraint, and compassion (Stein in *Lord Jim* and, it can be argued, Alfred Jacobus in 'A Smile of Fortune'). Part of Conrad's treatment of commerce is linked to what is in effect his industrial creed, in which the participant's role in industry is couched in *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906) in terms such as 'redeeming', 'ideal', 'art', and 'grace' and, above all, the 'moral' (p. 24) measure so significant to Conrad's writing, rendering it a crucial articulation of the high value which such work occupies in his ethos.[19]

While some of the ways in which Conrad utilizes commerce in order to lend significance are relatively apparent, this book further analyses this process through research into commercial history and into the commercial practices then current. The book draws on academic sources and on a

[17] This contrasts with the suggestion by some writers that the globalization of commerce is a phenomenon of our own times.

[18] The historiographical principle of seeing economics and politics in the light of each other is discussed in, for example, Howard Dick, 'Introduction' to Howard Dick, et al., *The Emergence of a National Economy: An Economic History of Indonesia, 1800–2000* (Crows Nest, NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2002), pp. 1–8 (p. 2).

[19] Alan Heywood Kenny points out some of the links between Conrad's and Carlyle's writings and 'work ethic', analysing briefly their relevance to the character of Marlow. 'Conrad and Carlyle', *The Journal of The Joseph Conrad Society (U.K.)*, 5/2 (March 1980), 7, 19 (p. 7). For an in-depth study of Conrad and Carlyle, see Rob Breton, *Gospels and Grit: Work and Labour in Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

range of largely nineteenth-century commercial, government, and other non-literary discourse, areas of discourse which are not commonly applied to Conrad studies; in the case of the wider contemporary commercial record, such sources and academic writing have been rarely applied, and never extensively. Some use is also made of records and writing in Dutch, a necessary requirement for such a study. Detailed reference to historical sources, some of them archival, that are contemporary with Conrad's settings enables a new, historically specific, light to be thrown on Conrad's Asian fiction. Such reference is also part of the historical recovery the book seeks to achieve, as well as of how it makes and evidences its argument, aiming to avoid discussion by generality and admitting a sense of the texture and granularity of the times. This extensive historical reference would not always sit well in the main text, the purpose of which is to convey the argument and to provide readings of the texts. A proportion of the historical reference has therefore been included in footnotes, some of which are necessarily detailed, so that the book's argument and textual interpretations can be read coherently.

The readings of individual works by Conrad incorporate this research and reflect the topics arising in individual texts against a broader social, commercial, and political background. The significance of commerce in Conrad's fiction is such that it would merit examination in many of his writings. Limiting the scope of this book to Conrad's Asian fiction, which comprises approximately a third of Conrad's works, offers the opportunity to investigate the topic in a body of work which is both substantial and culturally cohesive, albeit this excludes *Nostromo* and 'Heart of Darkness', both important works with major commercial elements.[20] The category of Asian fiction, like that of Malay fiction in Hampson's *Cross-Cultural Encounters*, also works against the received literary-critical concept of a Conrad canon which, although now no longer wholeheartedly endorsed, has coloured some critical opinion and reduced the attention given to those works claimed by some to be of lesser importance – for example, *Almayer's Folly*. The category of Asian fiction therefore allows not only for a fresh interpretation of several major works of Conrad, such as *Lord Jim* and *Victory*, in relation to commerce, but also for critical re-examination of a number of works sometimes considered of less value, which benefit from investigation under this new approach.

[20] Similarly, 'A Smile of Fortune' is a work with a particularly commercial interest. See Andrew Francis, '"In the Way of Business": The Commerce of Love in "A Smile of Fortune"', *The Conradian*, 37/2 (Autumn 2012), 67–79.

The structure of the book is to a certain extent chronological by date of publication, although the three works of the Lingard Trilogy are treated in the first three chapters in view of the features they share, including the decline of Lingard's mode of trade in the face of increasing competition and globalization. Chapter 4 explores *Lord Jim*, Conrad's broadest representation of commerce and colonialism in the Asian fiction. 'Falk' and *The Shadow-Line* are considered in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively, both works being partly set in Bangkok and concerned with issues of commerce and dependability. Chapter 7 discusses 'The End of the Tether' and Chapter 8 *Victory*, both as evincing later colonial capitalism.

The settings of the Asian fiction include the British Straits Settlements, the Dutch East Indies, British India, and Siam. Although present-day readers are likely to be familiar to a degree with some of the background to these locations – and, in the case of British readers, particularly those of India and Singapore – the Dutch East Indies and independent Siam are more obscure, as are the activities of the Arab, Chinese, and indigenous communities in the region to whom Conrad also gave expression. While further information is provided in the following chapters, a brief introduction to the political and commercial background is appropriate, concentrating on the Dutch East Indies since this is the most frequent setting of the Asian fiction.

Political Background

Conrad's south-east Asia comprised a great variety of races, creeds, languages, and polities. Although his Asian fiction centres mainly on Singapore, east Borneo, Bangkok, and ports in Java, it is set in a wider geographical and political context which included French Indo-China, Portuguese Timor, Siam, British Burma, the Spanish Philippines, and Australia, a region dominated by five European powers and one indigenous kingdom (map, Figure 3).

Conrad experienced south-east Asia first-hand during voyages in 1883 and 1887–88, when he visited Bangkok, Singapore, Surabaya, and other ports, including Tanjung Redeb in east Borneo, which was to provide the setting for *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* as well as his inspiration to begin writing. He also visited Bombay and Calcutta (present-day Mumbai and Kolkata). Although *The Rescue* is set at the end of the 1850s, his Asian fiction mainly reflects Asia of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. During this period and into the following century, European colonial powers, motivated by profit and prestige, continued to acquire possessions in south-east Asia. In the nineteenth century France acquired various territories in Indo-China. The Dutch, having almost entirely displaced

Fig. 3. Map of Conrad's South-east Asia c. 1888. © Andrew Francis 2014.

Portugal as an imperial power, had faced little competition in the Archipelago until the nineteenth century, British possessions consisting only of Bencoolen on the west coast of Sumatra (1685) and the island of Penang (1786) off the Malay Peninsula.[21] But Britain acquired Singapore in 1819, with its strategic position on the route to east Asia, and established it as a free trade port.[22] This was followed by the cession by the Dutch of Malacca to Britain in 1824, situated between Penang and Singapore; Britain then possessed three substantial settlements, incorporated in 1826 as the Straits Settlements, on the important Straits of Malacca, although Malacca – with its town and port and some 900 square miles inland – lacked the commercial importance of Penang and Singapore.

The spheres of influence of Britain and the Netherlands were defined, following Dutch concern at the establishment of Singapore, in the 1824 Treaty of London, with the British sphere to the north of Singapore and the Netherlands' to the south; equal trading rights were assured. Difficulties arose when the Dutch began concluding treaties with independent, so-called native states in Sumatra, which lay north of Singapore.[23] There were many protests by the British, who also feared loss of trade owing to 'the exclusive [trade] system which had been the tradition of Dutch colonial policy'.[24] The Dutch pleaded 'political necessity' for their assumption of sovereignty, that is, that misgovernment by these states damaged Dutch interests.[25] This tension was lessened by the Sumatra Treaty of 1871 by which Britain waived its theoretical right of influence in north Sumatra for an assurance of equal trade terms.

Having first arrived in Indonesia in 1596, the Dutch had steadily strengthened their position, at first through the *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* [United East Indies Company] or 'VOC' established in 1602.

[21] The settlement of Penang was enlarged in 1800 by the purchase of Province Wellesley on the mainland.

[22] 'Freeports are ports where international shipping is free to enter and conduct business without payment of taxes'. P. Boomgaard, et al., *Changing Economy in Indonesia: A Selection of Statistical Source Material from the Early 19th Century up to 1940*, trans. J.W.F. Arriens, 17 vols (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, 1975–96), XIIa: W.L. Korthals Altes, *General Trade Statistics 1822–1940* (1991), 31. Hereafter, '*CEI*'. The founding by the British of Singapore was in a sense a re-foundation, Singapura having been an important Malay settlement until destroyed by the Portuguese in the late sixteenth century.

[23] 'Native' is used in this book to denote what was indigenous to the Archipelago, thus excluding Europeans, Arabs, and Chinese. It does not imply indigenous racial homogeneity, however, nor the existence of only one Malay race in one place (especially given Malay migration, for example Bugis settlers in Patusan in *Lord Jim*).

[24] Great Britain, Foreign Office Confidential Print, no. 2398, 'Memorandum upon the Sumatra and Gold Coast Treaties between England and Holland'. January 1874, p. 8. National Archives, Kew. FO 881/2398. Crown copyright. Foreign Office Confidential Prints hereafter 'FOCP'.

[25] Ibid., p. 10.

When it was dissolved in 1799 its assets and substantial debts passed to the Dutch government, making its possessions a colony. However, Dutch claims to much of the Archipelago were nominal, and their colony remained centred on Java and the adjacent island of Madura. With the exception of Sumatra and the Moluccas, exploitation of the *Buitenbezittingen* [Outer Possessions], for example Dutch Borneo, was modest until the late nineteenth century.[26] The distinction between Java and the Outer Possessions in the Asian fiction is important, for in concentrating his settings in these remote possessions, Conrad is able to represent the colonial endeavour at a point closer to its inception, and thus more plainly the conflicts and choices it entailed.[27] Anxious that the lack of a substantial physical presence in the Outer Possessions might lead to foreign incursions such as James Brooke's in 1841 in Borneo[28] – when he was made Governor of Sarawak and following which he steadily expanded his territory and influence, becoming Rajah – treaties with local rulers were widely used by the Dutch to achieve suzerainty and thereby at least a political claim to these Possessions.[29] As Vincent J.H. Houben has observed: 'colonial state formation entailed a spread of control, both horizontally (the size of territory under effective rule) and vertically (the penetration of indigenous society and economy from

[26] 'The extensive interiors of islands such as Sumatra, Borneo, or Celebes were not penetrated because, for the seaborne empire of commercial interests, exploration of such regions was unprofitable, hence not desirable.' E.M. Beekman, 'Preface' to Rob Nieuwenhuys, *Mirror of the Indies: A History of Dutch Colonial Literature*, ed. E.M. Beekman, trans. Frans van Rosevelt (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), pp. vii–xii (p. x). An official report terms these Possessions '*lastposten*' [nuisances]. Ian Black, 'The "Lastposten": Eastern Kalimantan and the Dutch in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 16/2 (September 1985), 281–91 (p. 281).

[27] The periphery of the region is often a place of last resort in Conrad's Asian fiction, as with Bamtz's plans to 'open another shop in Vladivostok, Haï-phong, Manila – somewhere far away' (*BoD*, p. 156).

[28] Others with interventionist characteristics of one form or another were Erskine Murray in Kutai (east Borneo) in the 1840s, and, in the 1850s, the American adventurer Walter Murray Gibson in Sumatra. G.J. Resink gives further information about such individuals. 'The Eastern Archipelago Under Joseph Conrad's Western Eyes', in *Indonesia's History between the Myths: Essays in Legal History and Historical Theory*, trans. James S. Holmes (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1968), pp. 305–23 (pp. 312–13). Brooke's ambition was not only for Sarawak: his journal (December 1840) records 'I would make it a stepping stone across the island of Borneo to Koti [Kutai], or from west to east.' In Rodney Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes, down to the Occupation of Labuan: from the Journals of James Brooke, Esq. Rajah of Sarāwak, and Governor of Labuan. Together with a Narrative of the Operations of H.M.S. Iris*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1848), I: 196.

[29] As Robert Cribb writes, there were some 280 states in the Dutch sphere of influence in the Archipelago. In the 1880s there were 'a few regions acknowledged by the Dutch as independent in international law, though the colonial government regarded them as falling within a Dutch sphere of influence [. . .]. Then there were states which were formally allied with the Dutch, states which were under Dutch protection, and states which were vassal to the Dutch, as well as territories formally annexed to the Dutch crown but administered by their former rulers as agents of the Dutch crown'. A variety of both uniform and individually designed treaties governed relations. *Historical Atlas of Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), p. 124, an invaluable reference work.

the top downwards)'.[30] Dutch East Indies government, subject to the *Indische Regeeringsreglement* [Regulations for the Administration of the Indies Government] of 1854, achieved this control by means of an 'administrative structure, called the Binnenlandsch Bestuur (Interior Administration) [. . .] generally described as dualistic. A "native" administrative hierarchy, the Inlandsch Bestuur, was partly parallel, partly subordinate to an exclusively European administrative hierarchy (the Europeesch Bestuur).' There were variations, however, for example with regard to indirectly ruled territories. In the Outer Possessions, the native states, or 'Zelfbesturende Landschappen (self-governing territories)' had an 'Inlandsch Gemeentebestuur (Native Community Administration)', but even in these states the rulers' 'succession was generally subject to the approval of the colonial government'.[31] Reporting to the Minister of Colonies in The Hague, the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies was supported by a General Secretariat, which devised policies, and the Council of the Indies, a consultative body. Executive control was through *Resident*'s, *Assistent-Resident*'s, *Controleurs*, and *Assistent-Controleurs*.[32]

The Dutch made frequent use of military force. The Java War (1825–30), the Padri War in Sumatra (1821–38), and the Aceh War (1873–1903) stand out among many other conflicts.[33] As Adrian Vickers writes, 'from the 1870s onwards the Dutch fought a series of wars to enlarge and consolidate their possessions'.[34] It was only 'by about 1910' that 'the boundaries of the present state of Indonesia had been roughly drawn by colonial armed forces, at a great cost in lives, money, devastation, social cohesion and human dignity and freedom'.[35] The most expensive and damaging conflict for the Dutch was the Aceh War, and only political manoeuvring slowly isolated resistance, but even after peace was declared further campaigns were required. The Bone, Bali, Padri, and Aceh Wars are mentioned in Conrad's Asian

[30] 'Java in the 19th Century: Consolidation of a Territorial State', in Dick, et al., *The Emergence of a National Economy*, pp. 56–81 (p. 58).

[31] Cribb, *Historical Atlas*, pp. 123, 124, 124, 124.

[32] Houben, in Dick, et al., *The Emergence of a National Economy*, pp. 59–60. Entry to the Dutch East Indies colonial service was often to a post of *aspirant-controleur* [trainee-*controleur*].

[33] Others were: the Pattimura uprising (1817); the Lampung rebellion (1825–26); the Flores Wars (1838, 1846, and 1907–08); the Bone Wars (1838–1905) in southern Sulawesi; the Bali Wars (1846–49 and 1906–08); the Palembang rebellion (1848); the Kongsi Wars in Borneo (1850–54); the Jambi War in Sumatra (1858–1907); the Banjarmasin War (1859–63, with resistance continuing until 1906); the Lombok War (1894); the Toraja War (1905). Cribb, *Historical Atlas*, p. 122. The length of some of the conflicts points to the bitterness of this resistance.

[34] *A History of Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 10.

[35] M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1300*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), p. 146.

fiction and need to be read in this context of frequent resistance to colonial power, a significant feature of Conrad's portrayal of the Archipelago.[36] After the Padri War the Dutch officially established their *Onthoudingspolitiek* [Policy of Non-Interference] in 1841,[37] designed to avoid the unprofitable costs of expansion, but various factors – including prestige, the difficulties arising from troublesome kingdoms, economic interests, the availability of modern weapons that indigenous states could not match, and the fear of foreign encroachment – worked against this policy.[38] Although the Dutch colony became the state of Indonesia, and the name 'Dutch East Indies' suggests a unity, if not homogeneity, the many islands of the Archipelago, spread over a vast area, were as separate politically as geographically.[39] Indeed, 'because Indonesians were still divided from one another, they were not only subdued by relatively small colonial forces but actively assisted in the subjugation of each other. [. . .] A sense of a common Indonesian identity or of common goals simply did not yet exist.'[40]

On the Malay Peninsula, persuasion rather than warfare delivered colonial success more cheaply.[41] The Dutch, having removed the local rulers' rights to taxes and in return paying them inadequate financial allowances, created both political and social problems, as the leaders augmented their incomes by oppressive rule. Working from the Straits Settlements, the British from 1874 gradually introduced the Residential system to four southern states of the peninsula, which in 1896 became the Federated Malay States. 'In practice the Residents became more and more the actual rulers in their states', 'but

[36] Examples are the Padri Wars in *The Rescue* and unrest in the Wajo States in *Lord Jim*.

[37] The 1865 Ministry of Colonies document stated 'no extension of administration and no interference unless absolutely necessary'. Black, 'The "Lastposten"', p. 287.

[38] I am indebted to Ricklefs, 2nd edn, Chapter 12, in particular p. 131.

[39] 'Before the twentieth century, there was no Indonesia and thus no Indonesians. In the archipelago that stretched between continental Asia and Australia, states and statelets abounded, some loosely articulated by slowly gathering Dutch imperial power, but localism remained the predominant motif of political and cultural identity'. R.E. Elson, *The Idea of Indonesia: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 1.

[40] Ricklefs, 2nd edn, p. 147. For example, the use of indigenous troops drawn from various parts of the Dutch East Indies and used in the subjugation of Lombok is mentioned in Capt. W. Cool, *With the Dutch in the East. An Outline of the Military Operations in Lombock, 1894, Giving also a Popular Account of the Native Characteristics, Architecture, Methods of Irrigation, Agricultural Pursuits, Folklore, Religious Customs, and a History of the Introduction of Islamism and Hinduism into the Island*, trans. E.J. Taylor (London: Luzac & Co., 1897).

[41] There were exceptions, such as the British response to the Perak Outrages, in which a British Resident was murdered, as were some troops sent to avenge his death. One of the officers of the subsequent punitive expedition reflects the insouciance of overpowering colonial force: 'We found the houses here hastily deserted, and committed the whole town to the Flames. We then enjoyed our tiffin under the cocoa-nut trees by the river bank'. *The Journal of Wentworth Vernon Bayly Gentleman. A Sub Lieutenant in Her Majesty's Fleet* (MS. 1868–77), 27 November 1875.

notwithstanding the discrepancies between theory and fact the sultans were satisfied. They retained their offices with added guarantees, larger incomes and enhanced pomp and ceremony';[42] the benefit of British protection underwrote those guarantees. As Reynaldo Ileto writes, 'peasants, furthermore, were shielded from the export economy and its concomitant dislocations through the importation of Chinese and Indian labour'.[43] The northern states, formerly under nominal Siamese suzerainty, together with the southernmost state, Johore, received in due course Advisers instead of Residents, to form in 1909 the Unfederated Malay States. From the beginning of the twentieth century the Dutch standardized their relationship with their subject Dutch East Indies states by the use of the new *Korte Verklaring* [Short Declaration] introduced in 1898, a brief if not perfunctory document; in Malaya a degree of difference in the relationship was pragmatically permitted to persist.[44]

Commercial Background

The nature of the powerful capitalism behind the commercial changes is well summarized by Bagehot: 'The capitalist is the motive power in modern production, in the "great commerce". He settles what goods shall be made, and what not; what brought to market, and what not. [. . .] Everything depends on the correctness of the unseen decisions, on the secret sagacity of the determining mind'.[45] J.C. van Leur, while noting in his *Indonesian Trade and Society* that 'capitalism, that is to say, the search for profit on the rationalized basis of money (capital) calculations, is as old as the urban history of mankind', summarized the effects of globalized business as having 'spread a cobweb net over the earth':

> Every land, every people is now brought together in one tremendous structure, an interdependence of the most fundamental basic interests, a constantly progressing uniformity in ways of living, a more and more perfect social and

[42] Hall, *A History*, 4th edn, pp. 597, 602.

[43] 'Religion and Anti-Colonial Movements', in Tarling, ed., II: 197–248 (p. 239).

[44] Leonard Blussé writes of the disappearance of the Netherlands East Indies government's 'ritual relations with the many local rulers in the Archipelago [. . .] superseded by the law-making process accompanying the imperial strategy. Former contracts between these rulers and the Batavian government were gradually replaced by the "uniform model contract", first conceived in 1875. [. . .] Sovereign realms could still be recognized in the term "native states of the Eastern Archipelago in amity with the Netherlands government", which saw the light of day in the Indies Tariff Act of 1873, but they vanished for good from the world of that law in 1915.' 'Queen among Kings: Diplomatic Ritual at Batavia', in *Jakarta-Batavia: Socio-Cultural Essays*, ed. Kees Grijns and Peter J.M. Nas, Verhandelingen van het KITLV, 187 (Leiden: KITLV, 2000), pp. 25–41 (p. 39).

[45] p. 52. Bagehot, who wrote on social, political, literary, and economic matters, was also a banker and businessman.

> psychological mobilization of the masses down to the last man. [. . .] Modern capitalism has set the pattern of nineteenth and twentieth-century civilization.[46]

Globalization too had earlier manifestations. As Dick writes, before 1800 it took the form of 'trade in high-value goods. The archipelago was well integrated into the world economy through networks across China, India and the Indian Ocean before the coming of the Europeans. [. . .] During the 19th century, globalisation became a matter of large-scale commodity production. The quickening of trade and investment was a worldwide phenomenon associated with the industrial revolution in Europe and North America'.[47] Andrea White, quoting Eric Hobsbawm, draws attention to the combination of imperial political ambitions and the 'global connectedness of the new imperialism' created by economic forces.[48] Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, writing of the Dutch East Indies, usefully summarizes the historiographical aspects of 'modern imperialism' and 'the new academic paradigm of "configurations" or "networks", the pattern of interdependent factors underlying any new phenomenon'. Under such models imperialism 'is seen as a complex and nuanced interplay between West and non-West, between the centre and periphery, and among the Western powers'.[49] Such models seem also to reflect the practices of commerce in the region and its complex and interdependent political and social implications in the Asian fiction.

Within an imperial framework, commerce in the Archipelago was complex. Fundamental to Dutch and English trade rivalry was a difference in outlook. With Dutch policy tending to monopoly, there were frequent claims by the British of Dutch trade discrimination.[50] Owing to competition from the free trade of Singapore, the Dutch granted (qualified) free trade status, with little success, to a number of their ports.[51] Singapore's

[46] *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History*, trans. James S. Holmes and A. van Marle (W. van Hoeve: The Hague, 1955), pp. 16, 9, 10.

[47] Howard Dick, 'Introduction' to Dick, et al., *The Emergence of a National Economy*, pp. 1–8 (p. 5).

[48] 'Conrad and Imperialism', in J.H. Stape, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 179–202 (p. 187); see also pp. 180–87 for White's helpful discussion of colonialism and imperialism. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914* (New York: Vintage, 1989), p. 41.

[49] *Sumatran Sultanate and Colonial State: Jambi and the Rise of Dutch Imperialism, 1830–1907*, trans. Beverley Jackson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 2004), pp. 19–25 (pp. 19, 23, 24).

[50] As illustration, FOCP no. 1737, 'Correspondence respecting the Policy of the Netherlands Government in the Eastern Seas, as affecting British Commerce. 1824–67' (December 1869) had 336 pages. National Archives, Kew. FO 881/1737. Crown copyright.

[51] Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore, said in 1978 that 'had the Dutch who then governed the Netherlands East Indies accorded these same ground rules [i.e. free trade and lack of taxes on trade, established in Singapore at its foundation by Thomas Stamford Raffles] for trade and commerce in the Indonesian Archipelago, Singapore might never have got started'. Roderick MacLean, 'Preface' to Roderick MacLean and Alex Josey, *From Early Days: Some*

success was due to its location, its links with many European ports, and its 'processing, sorting and grading, bulking and despatching of Southeast Asian produce', as some jungle and agricultural products needed its 'specialized services to make them marketable in Europe'.[52] Freedom of movement also differed between the two colonies. The British accepted Chinese and Arabs in an attempt to create wealth; in the Dutch East Indies the presence of foreigners had to be reported to the authorities, and local rulers could not grant permission for them to settle without Dutch approval.[53] Nevertheless, in the Dutch East Indies, as I.J. Brugmans writes, 1870 was a watershed owing to the opening of the Suez Canal, the gradual end of the policy of non-interference, and the Agrarian Law which opened the way for land for agriculture to be held in private ownership.[54]

Within these differing colonial economic contexts, European, Arab, Bugis, and Chinese traders operated, each with their own commercial history and practice.[55] The Arab traders are described by Rajat Kanta Ray:

> the Arab sailors of Muscat and Hadhramaut, despite the opposition of the English and Dutch fleets, vastly expanded the domain of Arab shipping in the Indian Ocean at the turn of the nineteenth century. [. . .] The Arab trading tribes of Hadhramaut sailed in even larger numbers to Singapore, Penang, Malacca and the Indonesian Archipelago, developing an independent trade and forming Arab colonies in Palembang, Pontianak, Surabaya and Singapore. The Arab naval emigration, which started around 1800, reached its zenith in 1845–1855, when Arab shipping realized enormous profits in the Eastern Archipelago.[56]

Singapore radically changed trade in the region, and Buginese, Arab, and Chinese traders increasingly 'abandoned the old inter-Asian trade routes

Longtime Members of the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce (Singapore: The Singapore International Chamber of Commerce, 1979), pp. 7–10 (p. 8). Although Macassar was made a freeport in 1847, 'private traders were not allowed to enter the market until the national company, the *Nederlandse Handelmaatschappij* (NHM) had satisfied all its requirements; the result was that these traders quite frequently were unable to obtain a return cargo'. Chiang Hai Ding, *A History of the Straits Settlements Foreign Trade 1870–1915*, Memoirs of the National Museum, 6 (Singapore: National Museum of Singapore, 1978), p. 5.

[52] Ding, p. 96.

[53] See Peter G. Riddell, 'Arab Migrants and Islamization in the Malay World during the Colonial Period', *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 29/84 (July 2001), 113–28 (p. 117) regarding British encouragement of Arab immigration. The Dutch prohibition on foreign settlement was provided for in treaties with local rulers.

[54] *Geschiedenis van het onderwijs in Nederlandsch-Indië* [A History of Education in the Dutch East Indies] (Groningen: J.B. Wolter, 1938), p. 157.

[55] Judging from *A Code of Bugis Maritime Laws with a Translation and Commentary, Giving the Pronounciation and Meaning of Each Word* (Singapore: Printed at the Mission Press, 1832), Bugis trading may have been subject to clear rules.

[56] 'Asian Capital in the Age of European Domination: The Rise of the Bazaar, 1800–1914', *Modern Asian Studies*, 29/3 (July 1995), 449–554 (p. 472).

and came to Singapore to sell the products of the islands (rice, coffee, tobacco, hides, gambier, forest products, etc.) and buy the products of Britain, India and China which they marketed at various far-flung ports in the region'.[57] J. Thomas Lindblad writes:

> Among indigenous traders, the Bugis had the most extensive archipelago-wide trading networks. [. . .] Bugis traders controlled much of the trade along the eastern coast of Kalimantan. [. . .] After the mid-19th century, however, the Bugis lost ground. [. . .] Bugis traders were challenged by Chinese merchants on the coast of Kalimantan. In long-distance trade they suffered from lack of the commercial contacts and sources of credit needed to keep abreast of other Asian competitors.[58]

Lindblad attributes the success of the Chinese to:

> their exceptional internal cohesion and mutual loyalty combined with a greater willingness to adopt the newest improvements in sailing techniques. The Chinese immediately introduced European-style square-rigged vessels, while the Bugis stuck to their traditional prahus. Besides, the Chinese were especially favoured by the colonial authorities, as they by definition did not contribute to any Muslim revivalism.[59]

By 1880 a differentiation by type of trade and ethnic origin had become evident in, for example, south-east Borneo:

> Malays or Banjarese specialized in riverside and short-distance trade and maintained direct contacts with the Dayaks. The Chinese entered the river-side trade too, but only in connection with long-distance deliveries. They controlled the regional staple market at Banjarmasin and the trail to Singapore. The Europeans specialized in overseas trade, both foreign and intra-Indonesian, and rarely appeared on the small markets along the rivers.[60]

'The rise of the class of towkays [owners of businesses] among the Singapore Chinese [. . .] coalesced the far-flung Chinese networks in the Archipelago'. These included 'Chinese campongs of Batavia, Semarang and Surabaya', 'the

[57] Alfons van der Kraan, 'Bali and Lombok in the World Economy, 1830–50', *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, 27/1–2 (1993), 91–105 (p. 95).

[58] 'The Outer Islands in the 19th Century: Contest for the Periphery', in Dick, et al., *The Emergence of a National Economy*, pp. 82–110 (pp. 89–90). The Chinese were adept at mobilizing capital through their connections in the East. Anthony Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in South East Asia 1770–1890* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), p. 199. 'Kalimantan' is the present-day name for Indonesian Borneo.

[59] J. Thomas Lindblad with Peter E.F. Verhagen, *Between Dayak and Dutch: The Economic History of Southeast Kalimantan 1880–1942*, Verhandelingen van het KITLV, 134 (Dordrecht: Foris, 1988), p. 11.

[60] Ibid., p. 13.

gold mining Chinese republics (kongsis) of Sambas in West Borneo', Aceh in north Sumatra, 'the settlements of the Riau Archipelago and the tin mining communities (kongsis) of the Banka-Billiton islands', as well as 'the flourishing Chinese trading settlement in and around Bangkok'.[61] The Chinese, universally recognized as consummate businessmen, were indispensable to both British and Dutch, partly for their skill in revenue farming (which was also exploited in Siam, Sarawak, and French Saigon).[62] In the Straits Settlements, apart from language problems, there were too few Europeans to trade directly with indigenous producers and consumers.[63] European merchants were dependent on the Chinese to 'dispose of their imports of manufactured goods, and for their supply of exports of Southeast Asian produce. The Chinese merchants depended on the European merchants for credit facilities with which to trade.'[64] However, after conflict with Chinese gold-miners in Borneo, the Dutch saw the Chinese as a potential problem, and until 1905 they were not allowed to travel to or live in rural areas.[65] The Dutch also had reservations about the political, economic, and religious influence of the Arabs on the indigenous people;[66] their movements were similarly restricted,[67] the religious element of these reservations reflecting networks and allegiances other than colonial, something which is apparent in Conrad's Asian fiction.

Goods exported from the Archipelago comprised sea and jungle products, tin, and agricultural products such as rice, sugar, coffee, tea and, later, tobacco. These four last products were largely for the European market,

[61] Ray, pp. 508, 503.

[62] Ibid., p. 468. Robert Cribb and Audrey Kahin define revenue farming as a contract in which the state 'sold or granted rights over a particular sector of the economy to a private entrepreneur, who was then at liberty to extract what he could from it and to enforce his rights with his own private police force'. They included pawnshops, gambling, opium, and salt sales, the collection of taxes, and the harvesting of sea and jungle products. *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia*, 2nd edn (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2004), pp. 307, 307–08.

[63] Ding, p. 50.

[64] Ibid., p. 53.

[65] Cribb and Kahin, *Historical Dictionary*, p. 77. J. Thomson recorded the tendency of the Chinese to move from commercial activities to a 'semi-mercantile semi-political league'. *The Straits of Malacca, Indo-China and China, or Ten Years' Travels, Adventures and Residence Abroad* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, & Searle, 1875), pp. 14, 15. Raffles generously summarized the three ethnic groups' trading: 'The persevering industry and speculative turn of the Chinese is too well known to need description; and the Arab traders are here, what they are all over the world, keen, intelligent, and adventurous. The *Búgis* have long been distinguished among the Eastern Islands for the extent of their speculations and the fairness of their dealing.' Thomas Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java*, 2 vols (London: Black, Parbury, and Allen), 1817, I: 204.

[66] Huub de Jonge, 'A Divided Minority: The Arabs of Batavia', in *Jakarta-Batavia: Socio-Cultural Essays*, pp. 143–56 (p. 143).

[67] Henry O. Forbes, *A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1885), p. 7.

carried by European vessels, but Arab, Bugis, and Chinese traders all participated in the transport of these as well as other products, whether for the intra-island market or, in the case of the Chinese, for the Chinese and Siamese markets. Sea products included trepang (sea slug; also known as sea cucumber or *bêche-de-mer*) and pearls; jungle products included birds' nests, rattan, gutta-percha (a rubber used amongst other things in telegraph cables), beeswax, feathers, and timber. Goods imported to the Dutch East Indies, Siam, and the Straits Settlements were largely British, including 'Manchester goods' (cotton textiles from Manchester, including piece goods), metal goods, firearms, and gunpowder.[68]

The transformation of trade from the freer, more individualistic trading characteristic of the nineteenth century until about 1880 was supported by large-scale investment in labour and infrastructure, with labour the scarce resource. The British in 1860 persuaded the Chinese to permit labourers to emigrate to British possessions; there was a ready supply by the 1870s.[69] In the Dutch East Indies, Javanese 'coolies' were an important labour force, especially in less populated Sumatra and its tobacco plantations. The introduction of the Coolie Ordinance in 1880 to 'safeguard the supply of labour in the thinly populated area' of Deli in Sumatra allowed criminal prosecution 'if employees were judged, by the employers, to have failed to fulfil their contractual obligations', a law which offered every chance of exploitation.[70]

In the case of infrastructure, the telegraph facilitated not only colonial control but also trade.[71] Owners were enabled to be rapidly in touch with ships in port and to trade forward, by which a price was agreed for delivery at a fixed future date compared with the shipping of goods for speculative sale on arrival, reducing risk and tying up less capital. In the Dutch East Indies the *Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatchappij* [Royal Packet Company] or 'KPM' was founded in 1888 and provided increasing capacity for passengers and cargo as well as serving a wider network of ports; British shipping lines also expanded significantly. Railways were laid in Java and

[68] Piece goods were 'cloth woven in fixed lengths' (*OED*).

[69] Thomas Heslop Hill, *Report on Johore* ([n.p.]: [n.pub.], [1878–79(?)]), p. 15. Five million arrived in the nineteenth century. Elson, 'International Commerce', p. 148. Densely populated Java supplied much of Dutch East Indies labour.

[70] Lindblad, 'The Outer Islands', p. 103.

[71] M.T.H. Perelaer recorded the telegraph office at the Governor-General's Palace in Buitenzorg which connected with the Netherlands government in the 'Binnenhof' in The Hague. *Het Kamerlid van Berkenstein in Nederlandsch-Indië* [Van Berkenstein, Member of Parliament, in the Dutch East Indies], 4 vols in 2 (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, [1888(?)]), II: 45. See Ray, p. 477 for details of the expansion of the telegraph in the region.

Sumatra; Java was to have an extensive railway network reminiscent of those of western Europe. Also supporting the transformation was a sustained improvement in surveying on land and sea and frequent revisions of pilot and sailing guides. This is illustrated by comparison between the Admiralty charts for the west coast of Sumatra: information is sparse on the 1860 version, but by 1913 there has been a dramatic improvement, although Findlay in 1889 cautioned 'against placing implicit reliance on what few particulars, necessarily imperfect, can be gleaned respecting the more remote regions here described, and hitherto scarcely if at all visited by surveyors'.[72]

The possibility of large profits had always made the Archipelago attractive, but the type of venture and trader was already changing by the time of Conrad's journeys there. European trader-adventurers, exemplified by Lingard, financed by their own capital, were displaced by traders with access to larger capital resources and bigger trade networks, whether Arab, Chinese, or European.[73] Trading was also affected by new technology: with steam's predictable journey times and with forward freight rates and the selection of consignments facilitated by the telegraph, a consignment's profitability could be ascertained, thus eliminating the risks – and reducing the potentially larger profit – of speculative voyages.[74] Such changes can be seen in the Lingard Trilogy. *The Rescue*, *An Outcast of the Islands*, and *Almayer's Folly* move respectively forward in historical time (though written in reverse order, with *Almayer's Folly* first). They show Lingard decaying from the confident and successful seaman-trader – an owner-operator – he is portrayed as being in *The Rescue*. In *An Outcast of the Islands* Arab use of a steamship spells the end of his independence and success in sail. In this novel's story the main focus of the decline in his trading fortunes is on the

[72] See Great Britain, Admiralty, 'Sumatra. West Coast. Sheet 1. From Acheen Head to Tyingkok Bay' (London: Admiralty, 1860; corr. 1885). Chart 2760, and 'Sumatra. West Coast. Sheet 1. From Acheh Head to Chingkuk Bay' (London: Admiralty, [1913]). Chart 2760. Alexander George Findlay, *A Directory for the Navigation of the Indian Archipelago, and the Coast of China*, 3rd edn (London: Richard Holmes Laurie, 1889), p. viii. Eric Tagliacozzo gives a useful summary of British and Dutch surveying on land and at sea in *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865–1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 37–42.

[73] The Dutch, as for example reflected in Heemskirk's disdainful description of Jasper in 'Freya of the Seven Isles' (p. 140), regarded European trader-adventurers, especially British, as pedlars, as their mode of trade differed from Dutch monopolistic shipping concentrated between their colony and the Netherlands.

[74] Ray, p. 478.

betrayal of his secret knowledge for navigating a large vessel up the Berau river to Sambir, but the historical reality of his decline is present in Abdulla's steamship *Lord of the Isles*. Lingard also appears to trade traditionally, that is, taking a cargo speculatively and in the expectation of a satisfactory return cargo, whereas the new way of trading, assisted by the telegraph, has trimmed margins but also risk; certainty of trade comes to outweigh the less predictable trading of earlier times. The dramatic betrayal of his secret sailing-route to Abdulla, a competitor, can be seen as another historical reality of the period: increasing competition. Such competition became predominantly Chinese, although that is evident in *Victory* and 'The End of the Tether' rather than in the Lingard Trilogy. Additionally, 'The End of the Tether' shows the competitive growth of steamship lines.

Almayer's Folly sees Lingard absent and commercially a spent force, intent now on prospecting for gold and diamonds. Mining is an enterprise much more speculative and capital-intensive than that of the trader-adventurer, and he lacks and cannot procure the necessary capital resources. Lingard's earlier life as a seaman-trader benefited from his willingness to take risks, from the speed of his brig *Flash*, and from his navigational skills and (sometimes secret) knowledge of the region's geography. All these produced 'enormous profits' (*AF*, p. 9) and were tools appropriate for his earlier days and commercial context.

Previously too, the responsibilities of ships' captains embraced both navigation and commerce (as with Hermann in 'Falk' and Lingard), even if they were only employees (as with the narrator in 'Falk'). The higher purchase and operating costs of steam compared with sail meant a shift in ownership to individuals or firms able to access larger sources of capital, seen in Davidson's being an employee of a Chinese in *Victory* and 'Because of the Dollars'. The former dual responsibility was reduced to navigation; for all the complaints about business by captains in, for example, 'Falk' and 'A Smile of Fortune', the passing of commercial responsibility can be seen as an impoverishment of the skills required of a successful merchant navy captain and a diminution of his contact with those ashore, and forms part of the changes depicted in the Asian fiction.

Another factor changing trade in the Archipelago was the need in long-distance trade for particular business competences, defined by Ray as 'marine experience, account-keeping, and the handling of money'. As globalization increased, lack of the latter two competences became a severe disadvantage, as for Bugis and Arab traders: 'though doughty sailors, they lacked the special skills that would enable them to participate

in a modern financial system. The Hadrami Arabs operating in the Malay Archipelago were quite ignorant of the double entry book keeping used in European trade.'[75] Arab trading, depicted in the fiction as vigorous and successful, was nevertheless waning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[76] Less successful traders, including European, survived increasingly only in remote areas, a situation reflected in Massy's trade in 'The End of the Tether'. The competitive advantage enjoyed earlier by the European trader-adventurers and Arabs and Bugis as a result of their more advanced seamanship, however, was supported by their valuable knowledge of navigation of the Archipelago, and their extensive voyaging is evident in the Asian fiction. The exuberance of directions and geometric patterns of Nelson's seafaring in 'Freya of the Seven Isles' conveys the comprehensiveness of Nelson's voyages: 'trading and sailing in all directions through the Eastern Archipelago, across and around, transversely, diagonally, perpendicularly, in semicircles, and zigzags and figures of eight. For years and years' (p. 123). This European tradition went back to the 'country ships' (vessels based in the East engaged in Asian trade) of the eighteenth century, conducting trade beyond the remit of the East India Company, and Captain Giles undoubtedly owes to the time of his 'wonderful adventures' the fact that 'he was supposed to know more about remote and imperfectly charted parts of the Archipelago than any man living'. It is a knowledge which is being commoditized, however, as this 'secular experience of seamen [becomes] recorded in books' (*SL*, pp. 19, 17, 71).

Accompanying the changes in modes of trade was a regulatory framework which sought to control contingency and enforce standards. Vickers describes Dutch colonialism thus: '"Peace and order" was the stated aim of the administration, but it was an order obsessed with files and memos.'[77] A similar picture emerges of British administration which, if perhaps more pragmatic,

[75] Ray, pp. 454, 481–82.

[76] Riddell (p. 117) describes the earlier Arab success, which extended into social and political influence: 'The Arabs in the various South-East Asian centres quickly came to wield considerable economic power. For example, in cities such as Palembang and Pekalongan in the Netherlands East Indies, the Arabs became so powerful financially that they rivalled the Chinese for influence in local affairs. The leading Arab families in Singapore [. . .] were in a position to attract the interest of the local Bugis royalty in linking through intermarriage, which further increased Arab influence in local affairs. This was further enhanced by the encouragement of the British authorities for Arab immigration to Singapore, in recognition of its positive impact on the trading life of the colony'. See also Locher-Scholten regarding Arab influence, pp. 139–41.

[77] p. 15.

was increasingly rule-bound, as, for example, the *Reports of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce and Penang Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture* for the period show,[78] a development also evident in Captain Whalley's musings on the changes in Singapore in 'The End of the Tether'. Trade was not, however, carried out simply in accordance with regulations. In his important study of smuggling, Eric Tagliacozzo documents the nature and extensiveness of what he also terms 'illicit commerce';[79] this is part of a broader phenomenon in the Asian fiction which I term 'transgressive commerce' in order to include not only prohibited goods but also unacceptable means of trade, such as evading customs dues, onerous or fraudulent contracts, or avoiding other regulatory requirements such as ships' seaworthiness. Smuggling is one of the most evident manifestations of such commerce in the Asian fiction, and the existence of slaves implies illegal trading in them (as was historically the case), a trade which continued to flourish long after it was abolished. There was also a substantial trade in women for prostitution[80] – a trade not mentioned in the Asian fiction – but that prostitution exists is evident from the women in Saigon and Haiphong with whom the narrators' predecessors in 'Falk' and *The Shadow-Line* consort; however, both official and newspaper reports of the trade would have made it likely that Conrad's original readers would have been aware of it.[81]

J.N.F.M. à Campo, in his important business and political history *Engines of Empire: Steamshipping and State Formation in Colonial Indonesia*, writes that 'we can distinguish two stages in the process of colonial state formation in Indonesia: the traditional colony (1808–1870/1890) and the modern colonial state (1870/1890–1942)'; he goes on to define that state formation as involving 'a politico-administrative, an economic and a spatial aspect', a definition that also has relevance to the British Straits Settlements and British expansion into the Malay Peninsula.[82] Conrad's Asian fiction reflects the interaction between these three aspects, within the varied contexts of society, at a time when

[78] 2 vols in 1 (Singapore: Printed at the 'Singapore and Straits Printing Office'). Hereafter '*Reports*'. Vol. I of each year is the report of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce; Vol. II is the report of the Penang Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture.

[79] p. 5.

[80] For example, Thomson (p. 49) writes of Chinese women caught up in this trade and of the 'native agents, who purchase them for a few dollars and ship them, often as involuntary emigrants, to foreign ports where their countrymen abound, and where they are imprisoned in opium-dens, and brothels, until their price and passage-money have been redeemed by years of prostitution'.

[81] Tagliacozzo's chapter 'Illicit Human Cargoes' (pp. 230–58) provides valuable information on the smuggling of women and slaves.

[82] trans. Peter Mason (Hilversum: Verloren, 2002), pp. 27, 29.

commercial pressures were a defining force in the changes. Asserting the pervasive and inextricable presence already noted of commerce in the world, and writing within a context of economic imperialism, Conrad nevertheless shows that commerce is more than this context implies and, in doing so, encourages us to make generous allowance for commerce and its activities, making no automatic judgements about it or its participants; commerce, as part of Conrad's depiction of relations, is more than merely interest or utility. To focus on these commercial forces, however, is not to dilute or displace the importance of Conrad's art in drawing on them, but to appreciate that art better by understanding more fully the nature and extent of the transformation of such material through his artistic imagination in ways which can be shown to be deeply reflective about the conditions of the time.

CHAPTER I

Commerce and the Edge of Colonialism: Almayer's Folly

Teeming with life and commerce (*AF*, p. 7)

In *Almayer's Folly: A Story of an Eastern River* (1895), Conrad's first work of Asian fiction and his first novel, commerce and its implications are portrayed in historically specific political, spatial, cultural, and colonial contexts which foreshadow the treatment and significance of commerce in the Asian writings which followed. Jacques Berthoud has written of Conrad's conception of 'the individual subject [. . .] as at once the centre of its own perceptions and the product of group formations, whether social, sexual, racial, religious, or national. This means that no human life, however private, can be understood merely internally but has also to be construed in terms of its location in an external world'.[1] In *Almayer's Folly*, its first pages portraying the sights and sounds of trade, the operations and ironies of commerce as part of this external world are shown to go to the heart of the colonial endeavour and advancing globalization.

Set both literally and figuratively at the edge of colonial ambition, commercial reach, and European knowledge, the novel depicts obscurities of vision and ambition. Almayer's description of himself as 'the only white man on the east coast. That is a settled resident' (p. 92) not only introduces a (coastal) edge, but also locates him as isolated in a geographical flux in the least-known part of 'the unknown Borneo' (p. 19) on a very long coast.[2] In *A*

[1] 'Introduction: Conrad's Realism', in Joseph Conrad, *Almayer's Folly*, ed. Jacques Berthoud (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. xi–xxxviii (p. xix).

[2] Measured as the distance along the coast from where the Dutch Eastern District (*Oosterafdeeling*) bordered British North Borneo in the north to its boundary with the Dutch Southern District (*Zuiderafdeeling*) west of the island of Pulau Laut off south-east Borneo, the distance keeping to the coast is some 750 miles. Almayer may, however, have had some other concept of the extent of the east coast, perhaps from the border with British North Borneo to that point on the coast nearest Samarinda in Kutai, the seat of the Dutch *Assistent-Resident* for the Eastern District (some 290 miles). Almayer's

Personal Record Conrad describes the historical Almayer,[3] appropriately for this uncertain geography, as someone caught sight of, accentuating his indefiniteness despite the final assertion of identity which simultaneously defines and problematizes Almayer's manifestation:

> I caught sight of Almayer. He was moving across a patch of burnt grass, a blurred shadowy shape with the blurred bulk of a house behind him, a low house of mats, bamboos and palm-leaves with a high-pitched roof of grass.
>
> He stepped up on the jetty. He was clad simply in flapping pyjamas of cretonne pattern (enormous flowers with yellow petals on a disagreeable blue ground) and a thin cotton singlet with short sleeves. [. . .] I had heard of him at Singapore; I had heard of him on board; I had heard of him early in the morning and late at night; I had heard of him at tiffin and at dinner; I had heard of him in a place called Pulo Laut [. . .] I had heard of him in a place called Donggala. (pp. 73–74)

> He governed his conduct by considerations removed from the obvious, by incredible assumptions which rendered his logic impenetrable to any reasonable person. I learned all this later. That morning seeing the figure in pyjamas moving in the mist I said to myself: 'That's the man.' (p. 75)

The existence of this shadowy Almayer seems to be in doubt, an effect emphasized by the repetition of 'I had heard'. The moment of recognition and the mist which resembles the obscurity of Almayer's conduct parallel the relevance for *Almayer's Folly* of definition, identity, and location. The historical Almayer's clothes, inadequate for the chilly morning fog, and the trousers of an unsuccessful pattern suggest him to be ill-suited in both clothes and situation. His 'moving across', as opposed to walking, suggests motion divorced from locomotion, movement disengaged from surroundings; someone in transit, out-of-focus as an individual, and on, rather than in, a landscape itself out-of-focus. The colonial presence here seems overwhelmed by a space beyond articulation; it does not suggest a 'settled resident'.

Colonial Control

The fictional Sambir where Almayer lives, based on the actual settlement of Tanjung Redeb in east Borneo, in present-day Kabupaten Berau, Kalimantan

isolation is augmented by the fact that, as told in *An Outcast of the Islands*, access to Sambir was restricted, with only Lingard knowing the navigable route for larger vessels through the estuary until his secret was betrayed.

[3] For a summary of knowledge about the historical Almayer – 'Olmeijer' – see Andrew Francis, 'The Olmeijer Family and a Wedding Photograph', *The Conradian*, 37/2 (Autumn 2012), 126–35.

Timur (Berau Regency, Province of East Kalimantan), Indonesia, is also at the edge politically. In the late 1800s the Dutch administered their possessions in Borneo, which covered some two-thirds of the island, through two *Resident*'s: those for the *Westerafdeeling* (Western District) and for the *Zuider- en Oosterafdeeling* (Southern and Eastern District).[4] By the time *Almayer's Folly* is set, in the 1880s, the expansion of Brooke's Sarawak, and the granting in 1881 of a charter to the British North Borneo Company, had prompted the Dutch to increase their control over the *Oosterafdeeling* of their *Zuider- en Oosterafdeeling* in Borneo. The three sultanates – Gunungtabur, Bulongan, and Sambialung – situated in the region known as Berau had acknowledged Dutch suzerainty in political contracts between 1834 and 1837 but remained under native rule.[5] Berau was also the name by which the region's principal settlement, Tanjung Redeb, was known, in the north of the *Oosterafdeeling*. The concentration of Dutch military resources to fight the Aceh War and the modest commercial prospects of Berau lie behind the lieutenant's remark: 'we haven't enough hold on this coast. They do what they like' (p. 109); the area is only 'under the nominal power of Holland' (p. 28). With the *Resident* for the *Zuider- en Oosterafdeeling* some 750 miles away in Bandjermasin to the south, an *Assistent-Resident* for the *Oosterafdeeling* some 320 miles away in Samarinda, and therefore 'no Dutch Resident on the river' (p. 62), Sambir is remote enough even for gunpowder to be sold illegally to resist Dutch colonialism elsewhere,[6] the transient Dutch presence suggested by their vessel's smoke, merely 'a slight puff' (p. 80). Equally, the breeze, as if undaunted, plays 'capriciously' on 'the tri-colour flag of the Netherlands', hoisted only 'on the arrival of the man-of-war boats' (p. 99), and that other symbol of Dutch indirect rule, the 'patent leather belt bearing a brass plate with the arms of [*sic*] Netherlands under

[4] 'The administrative term "afdeeling" (generally translated as "district") is confusing in the case of Dutch Borneo. An *afdeeling* was normally an administrative division below the level of residency, and the term was used in this way in Borneo. For historical reasons, however, the two Borneo residencies themselves were also referred to by the term "afdeeling".' Cribb, *Historical Atlas*, p. 129.

[5] J.N.F.M. à Campo, 'A Profound Debt to the Eastern Seas: Documentary History and Literary Representation of Berau's Maritime Trade in Conrad's Malay Novels', trans. Peter Mason, *International Journal of Maritime History*, 12/2 (December 2000), 85–125 (p. 88). This essay is perhaps the most significant contribution to understanding Conrad's time in the East since Norman Sherry, *Conrad's Eastern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), (hereafter *CEW*) and Jerry Allen, *The Sea Years of Joseph Conrad* (London: Methuen, 1967). The first colonial official in Berau appears to have been a *controleur* appointed in the late 1880s or early 1890s. Black, p. 287. This appointment, following so soon after Conrad's visits to Berau, emphasizes the incipient tightening of Dutch control evident in *Almayer's Folly*.

[6] These distances are by sea, keeping to the coast. The position of *Assistent-Resident* in Kutai had been established in 1846. 'Colonial rule was only exercised by rare visits from civil servants and by cruising marine vessels'. À Campo, 'A Profound Debt', p. 89. The vast area of the *Oosterafdeeling* reflects its relative unimportance to the Dutch East Indies government until late in the nineteenth century.

the inscription, "Sultan of Sambir"' (p. 71), can be as quickly donned as taken off.[7]

Commercial Agriculture

In this colonially remote location, and employed by a British trader, Almayer may therefore seem remote from a Dutch colonial context. However, in the earliest pages of the novel his association with this context is established by the reference to the leading botanical research institute in the Dutch East Indies, as Almayer recollects his arrival at 'the godowns of old Hudig':

> It was an important epoch in his life for on that day began a new existence for the son of a subordinate government official employed on the staff of the Botanical Gardens in Buitenzorg [. . .] where the father grumbled all day at the stupidity of native gardeners; and the mother – from the depths of her long easy-chair – bewailed the lost glories of Amsterdam where she had been brought up, being indeed the daughter of a cigar dealer there. (p. 6)

This information appears to be offered more or less innocently.[8] However, the father's employment in the Botanical Gardens is significant, for they were the centre of colonial enterprise – that is to say, of colonial botany – in the primarily agricultural economy of the Indies, where various plants were tested and selectively bred for large-scale cultivation by indigenous work-forces to increase funds for transfer to the Netherlands. Its occurrence so early in Conrad's first work of Asian fiction suggests the fundamental significance of these Gardens to the entire Dutch colonial endeavour and their relevance for Conrad to the colonial context.[9]

[7] F.H.H. Guillemard records 'a brass coat-of-arms' as being 'the insignia placed by the Dutch on most of the islands claimed by them' in the New Guinea area. *The Cruise of the Marchesa*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1886), II: 318. Wearing such an insignia additionally emphasizes the wearer's personal and representative subjection, whether it was Conrad's fictional creation or not.

[8] J.F. Eijkman records the complement of staff at the Gardens. Nine are clearly Dutch, including the Director, and occupy apparently senior positions, and there are six indigenous government officials and superintendents comprising '*mantries* [indigenous scientific officials]' and '*hoofdmandoers* [superintendents of the garden and its employees]'. In addition there were about 180 'indigenous employees' (my translations). *Een bezoek aan 'S lands plantentuin te Buitenzorg* [A Visit to the National Botanical Garden at Buitenzorg] ('s-Gravenhage: De Gebroeders Van Cleef, 1887), p. 13. The position the fictional Almayer's father might have occupied as a European in such a structure as 'a subordinate government official' is unclear.

[9] The Gardens are now the Kebun Raya Indonesia and remain in Bogor (formerly Buitenzorg), where botanical research continues. Further discussion of economic botany, and in particular the Compulsory Cultivation System established in the Dutch East Indies, can be found in Chapter 4. The discussions in the present book are brought together in a fuller version in Andrew Francis, 'Recovering the Ethics of Economic Botany in Conrad's Asian Fiction', *The Conradian*, 34/2 (Autumn 2009), 75–89. Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan argue that 'the development of botany and

The Buitenzorg Botanical Gardens were founded in 1817, in the grounds of the Governor-General's palace, where initially they were an ornamental garden, in keeping with the Dutch word for his country residence: 'Buitenzorg', meaning *sans souci* or 'without care'. Developing then partly into a botanical garden with the taxonomic aim of collecting plants from the Archipelago, there quickly arose alongside this pure scientific pursuit the demands of economic botany, supported by a series of scientific laboratories: 'Pharmacological Laboratory', 'Tea Experiment Station', 'Java Tobacco Experiment Station', 'Botanical Laboratory', 'Coffee Experiment Station' and 'Chemical Laboratory'.[10] In 1876, the important *Annales du Jardin Botanique de Buitenzorg* began publication, and, under the Gardens' noted director Melchior Treub (director from 1880 to 1909), their research in economic botany and agriculture achieved great success.[11] *The Times* wrote of 'the world-famous botanical garden' and included his obituary.[12] No travel book on the Dutch East Indies was complete without describing a visit to the Gardens, with one writer declaring:

> Enthusiastic 'savants' [. . .] have declared it to be the finest botanical garden in the world, assigning the second place to famous Kew, and mentioning the gardens of Berlin, Paris, and Vienna as third, fourth, and fifth in order of merit.[13]

So successful was the process of agricultural exploitation in the Dutch East Indies, particularly through the *Cultuurstelsel* (Compulsory Cultivation System), so successful were the Dutch in changing the face of the earth in much of Java and Sumatra,[14] that as a result of the System 'a substantial budget surplus (*batig slot*) was [. . .] transferred to the Netherlands each year,

Europe's commercial and territorial expansion are closely associated developments'. 'Introduction' to *Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World*, ed. Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), pp. 1–16 (p. 3).

[10] J. J. Smith, *Illustrated Guide to the Botanic Gardens, Buitenzorg* ([Buitenzorg, Java]: [Department of Agriculture(?)], [after 1905]), map following p. 64. H.H. Zeijlstra records that owing to a lack of space the 'economic plants' were moved to nearby Tjikeumeuh to a new '*Cultuurtuin*' (translated in Zeijlstra as 'Garden for the Cultivation of Economic Plants') begun in 1876. *Melchior Treub: Pioneer of a New Era in the History of the Malay Archipelago*, trans. Dutch (Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1959), p. 28. See also Harro Maat, *Science Cultivating Practice: A History of Agricultural Science in the Netherlands and its Colonies, 1863–1986* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), p. 40. A School of Agriculture was also established in Tjikeumeuh in 1876. Ibid.

[11] Zeijlstra, p. 84.

[12] 22 April 1910, p. 15; 21 October 1910, p. 11.

[13] Augusta de Wit, *Facts and Fancies about Java*, 2nd edn (The Hague: W.P. van Stockum, 1900), p. 193. There were 'twenty or thirty tropical gardens established in the colonial possessions of the various European powers'. W. Basil Worsfold, *A Visit to Java with an Account of the Founding of Singapore* (London: Richard Bentley, 1893), p. 117.

[14] Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore wrote: 'All Java is in a way as finished as little Holland itself, the whole island cultivated from edge to edge like a tulip-garden [. . .] All the valleys, plains, and hillsides are

paying off the country's international debt and financing the national railway system. In the 1850s these transfers comprised 31 percent of the Dutch national income.'[15] Buitenzorg was a global exemplar of colonial economic botany. None of the crops that feature most importantly in the trade export statistics for the Dutch East Indies from the middle of the nineteenth century were native to the colony: coffee, sugar, tobacco, tea, and cinchona.[16] Many crops were experimented upon in Buitenzorg for suitability for cultivation in the Dutch East Indies or were improved in terms of productivity or disease resistance. An example of the success of the Gardens was quinine. Starting in the 1850s with cinchona seedlings brought from the existing source of production in South America, most of the world's production gradually transferred to the Dutch East Indies. In the nineteenth century tension regarding the relative merits of pure and applied botanical research in the Dutch East Indies led J.E. Teijsmann, one of Treub's predecessors, to compile in defence a list of fifty plants and trees of economic value in the development of which the Gardens had been involved.[17]

Almayer's complicity in colonial culture is remarked on in various ways in the novel, most obviously by his attitude towards his Sulu wife and his reference to his work 'amongst those savages here' (p. 77). Buitenzorg, however, also links him, through his parents, to colonial exploitation, which turned jungle into plantation and into money, the Gardens' fame increasingly spread by the growth of tourism, such as the £100-round-the-world tours mentioned in *Lord Jim* and advertised in *The Times*; for tourists in the Dutch East Indies, Buitenzorg was only an hour-and-a-half's train journey from the capital Batavia, a major port for the steamship lines. It is not surprising that one of the greatest Romantic works in Dutch and of its colonial literature treats the subject of this vast agricultural exploitation and has an agricultural commodity in its title: Multatuli's *Max Havelaar, of de Koffij-veilingen der Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij* [Max Havelaar, or

planted in formal rows, hedged, terraced, banked, drained, and carefully weeded as a flower-bed.' She later observes that the tea and coffee estates appear indeed to be botanical gardens: 'one feels as if in some ornamental *jardin d'acclimatation* [a garden for the acclimation (acclimatization) of plants] rather than among the most staple and serious crops of commerce'. *Java, The Garden of the East* (New York: The Century Co., 1899; facs. rpt. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 71, 75.

[15] Cribb and Kahin, *Historical Dictionary*, p. 99.

[16] W.K. Huitema and H.V.A. van Heeteren, *The Economic Garden at Bogor: Guide and Outline of the Most Important Crops* (Bogor: Chuo Noozi Sikenzyoo Bogor-Daiwa, 1943), p. 7; *CEI*, I: P. Kreutzberg, *Indonesia's Export Crops 1816–1940* (1975), 51–53, Table 5.

[17] [M. Treub, et al.], *Der Botanische Garten „S Lands Plantentuin" zu Buitenzorg auf Java: Festschrift zur Feier Seines 75Jährigen Bestehens (1817–1892)*, [The National Botanical Garden at Buitenzorg in Java: A Festschrift to Celebrate the 75th Anniversary of its Foundation], trans. Dutch (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1893), pp. 53–55.

the Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company], first published in Dutch in 1860 and in English in 1868.[18]

The colonial context revealed by the passage about Almayer's parents also links his mother, who dreams of her past in Amsterdam as 'the daughter of a cigar dealer there' (p. 6), to another major Indies crop, tobacco, as well as to the globalized economic process through her father's being a dealer. Capital markets and investments on a global scale provided capital for the Dutch colony, flowing through corporations both quoted and unquoted on stock markets, the ownership of which could be not only Dutch but, for example, British, American or Japanese.[19] Developing globalization and worldwide market processes meant that there were efficient markets for the resulting produce. Almayer's family sit at the point at which botanical research is increasingly joined with indigenous labour and with colonial imperial and capital power, resulting in a striking exploitation of resources.[20]

Patterns of Trading

Almayer and Lingard's business was successful because it was at the edge of European knowledge (Lingard had 'discovered a river!'), nautical capability ('the little "Flash" could outsail every craft'), and risk ('desperate fights with the Sulu pirates') (p. 8), but it has succumbed to competition. Almayer, who wanted 'to conquer the world', has ironically mundane skills: 'speaking English well, and strong in arithmetic' (p. 6). Whereas Lingard can speak of 'escaped dangers' (p. 9), Almayer, arriving in Macassar innocently 'clad all in white', had come 'to woo fortune' (p. 6), an altogether less forceful plan of engagement. Lingard and his fellow adventurers are for 'making money fast' (p. 7), and 'made love to halfcaste girls under the broad verandah of the

[18] Multatuli (pseudo. Eduard Douwes Dekker), trans. Baron Alphonse Nahuÿs (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1868). G.J. Resink argues that it is likely that Conrad read *Max Havelaar* in Singapore. See 'The Eastern Archipelago', pp. 305–23 (pp. 307–08).

[19] J.N.F.M. à Campo provides a valuable investigation of such developments in 'The Rise of Corporate Enterprise in Colonial Indonesia, 1893–1913', in *Historical Foundations of a National Economy in Indonesia, 1890s–1990s*, ed. J. Thomas Lindblad (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1996), Verhandelingen van het KITLV, CLXVII (1996), pp. 71–94.

[20] J. Chailley-Bert comments on 'cette agriculture intensive et tant de puissantes plantations: café, thé, tabac, indigo, quinquina, qui mettent en oeuvre à la fois les capitaux européens et le travail javanais'. *Java et ses habitants* [Java and its People] (Paris: Armand Colin, 1900), p. 49. ['This intensive cultivation and so many mighty plantations: coffee, tea, tobacco, indigo, quinine, which put to work European capital combined with Javanese labour'.]

Sunda Hotel' (p. 8).[21] Almayer, in ironic contrast, foregoes such activity to have a Malay woman forced on him in marriage.

Lingard's commercial activity has been highly mobile, his times in port apparently short, his base in Macassar seemingly only a hotel. His 'banker, Hudig of Macassar, failed' (p. 21): Hudig, also a trader, epitomizes a less developed form of banking than the incorporated banks present in the Indies, and the risks of dealing with him are suggested by Lingard's greeting of 'old pirate!' (p. 9).[22] Lingard's opportunist trading expeditions entailed both greater risk and greater potential reward than more settled trade,[23] and, although Owen Knowles criticizes Lingard's pattern of trade as that of 'a here-today-gone-tomorrow visitor',[24] such movement provided goods for communities which would not otherwise have benefited from them, nor from trade, which created opportunities which could be exploited to the benefit of both.[25] Lingard has also established a trading-post at Sambir, part of a trading community of 'Arab, Chinese, and Bugis' (p. 44) traders in the settlement, and is not simply a 'visitor'. Lingard's trading needs to be seen in the context of these other traders and of the statement at the beginning of the novel about Macassar 'teeming with life and commerce' (p. 7), which seems powerfully to admit of the possibility of a beneficial rather than injurious conjunction of the two.

The Impact of Colonialism

Although the Dutch do not control the coast, their naval presence in the novel indicates the expansion of their interests and reflects the considerable

[21] John Dill Ross records trader-adventurers who reflect Lingard's situation, and his losses caused by Hudig's failure: '"The trading captains of the old days made their money very fast, and got as much of it as they wanted, but they seldom succeeded in keeping it. Their fortune was generally entrusted to some one or another who made away with it in the end."' *Sixty Years: Life and Adventure in the Far East*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: Hutchinson, 1911), I: 16. The quotation is from John Dill Ross' earlier book, *The Capital of a Little Empire: A Descriptive Study of a British Crown Colony in the Far East* (Singapore: Kelly & Walsh, 1898), p. 51.

[22] For an introduction to Indies banking, see J.T.M. van Laanen, 'A Preliminary Look at the Role of the HongKong Bank in Netherlands India', in Frank H.H. King, ed., *Eastern Banking: Essays in the History of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation* (London: Athlone Press, 1983), pp. 392–408 (pp. 399–400).

[23] It is important to note that the word 'adventure' connotes not just adventurism, but business ventures which were speculative in that no certainty of sale existed. See, for example, P. Kelly, *The Elements of Book-Keeping*, 5th edn (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1815), p. 117.

[24] 'Introduction' to Joseph Conrad, *Almayer's Folly*, ed. Owen Knowles (London: Dent, 1995), pp. xvii–xliii (p. xxv).

[25] Lingard's turning to the highly speculative business of mining in preference to trading prompts his disappearance to raise the large sums of capital required.

power they wielded elsewhere in the Indies.[26] Berthoud writes that although Conrad did not of necessity have 'a complete, or even a commanding, grasp of the context that formed him [. . .] that context is inside him [. . .]. It follows that history belongs to his book'.[27] That context would have included such expansion, which saw large areas of south Borneo, a more attractive area commercially than east Borneo, being brought under direct Dutch rule following the Banjarmasin War (1859–63), with the sultanate abolished in 1860.[28] Despite an 'unsettled state of affairs' following the 'unsuccessful Dutch expedition' (p. 38) in Aceh, the eventual outcome is in little doubt, as Babalatchi remarks: 'Now when we fight with you we can only die!' (p. 155); his hope on hearing of there being 'a breath of war on the islands' (p. 154) and Mrs Almayer's of 'white men driven from the islands' (p. 115) are both plainly groundless. The Sulu nation's experience of colonialism underscores the encounter between Dutch and Malay in *Almayer's Folly*.[29] The Sultan of Sulu had capitulated to Spain in 1878, only a short time before the setting of the novel, following the destruction by the Spanish of 'all prahu shipping in the Sulu archipelago'.[30] While the colonial powers categorized the Sulus as lawless pirates, Warren has shown that this marginalizing view is symptomatic of the European 'shipboard view of the eastern archipelago' and demonstrated that the Sulu nation was one of the 'region's numerous maritime traditions' which have remained 'largely caricatures in the historiography of the region'.[31] The energy, pride, and sense of independence of Babalatchi and Mrs Almayer reflect their Sulu

[26] Dutch surveillance and awareness of the affairs of Borneo's east coast extended to a file on the historical Lingard. À Campo, 'A Profound Debt', p. 91, n. 18.

[27] 'Introduction: Conrad's Realism' to *Almayer's Folly*, p. xxx.

[28] Following the abolition of the sultanate of Banjarmasin, and, in an example of the colonial rewriting of space, 'ses contrées [. . .] furent transformées en division méridionale et orientale de Borneo' by the Dutch [its territories were transformed into south and east divisions of Borneo]. H.C. Millies, *Recherches sur les monnaies des indigènes de l'Archipel Indien et de la Péninsule Malaie* [Enquiries into the Native Coinage of the Indian Archipelago and the Malay Peninsula], ed. G.K. Niemann (La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 1871), p. 165.

[29] The Sulu area of influence is described by Warren as a zone created by trade, a 'borderless history', 'comprising the Sulu Archipelago, the Northwest Coast of Borneo, the foreland of Southern Mindanao and the Western Coast of Celebes'. James Francis Warren, *At the Edge of Southeast Asian History* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1987), pp. xi, 5. I am indebted to Warren's writings on the Sulu zone which are very helpful, as is evident in this chapter, in considering aspects of the historical context of *Almayer's Folly*.

[30] Ibid., p. 7.

[31] James Francis Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981), pp. xii, xi, xi. Berthoud reflects the European view when writing of the 'lawless virility of [Mrs Almayer's] Sulu past'. 'Introduction: Conrad's Realism' to *Almayer's Folly*, p. xxxi.

origin, which they keep alive by 'long conversations in Sulu language' (p. 31); her memories of 'the glories of the Sultan of Sulu' (p. 33) similarly resist Sulu marginalization.[32]

The imperial Dutch vision, its brash confidence suggested by the attitude of the lieutenant 'astride on his chair' (p. 92), has forced Sambir to acknowledge Dutch power as a means of survival. Lakamba's 'small eyes took in the signs of the times' (p. 21), suggesting an awareness, not shared by the Dutch, of the transience of all circumstances; through his clever diplomacy he has 'been well served by his Arab friends with the Dutch authorities' (p. 22).[33] Recognizing pragmatically that resistance will bring destruction, Lakamba and Babalatchi (who with his one eye sees more than any other character) have succeeded in retaining self-rule: 'We had to pay a fine and listen to threats from the white men, and now we have to be careful' (p. 154).[34] Cultural adaptation implies this political accommodation: Malay culture can embrace both 'a wooden drum' (p. 39) and the 'small hand-organ' (p. 67); Lakamba in his sleeplessness is comforted by Verdi, embracing a foreign musical tradition which nonetheless for him crosses cultural boundaries. His request to Babalatchi to turn the handle of the hand-organ signifies his openness to at least the artistic achievements of a foreign culture, a peaceful intermingling evident in his 'delighted smile' (p. 67). By contrast, Nina's 'smile died out' at the report of the Dutch steam launch's gun which signifies the imperial achievements of that European culture; its echo is appropriately like 'a mournful sigh' (p. 81), an expression of sadness characteristic of Sambir's and the Indies' troubled state.

[32] Sulu links with Berau are also recorded in history, as Taosug ('the dominant ethnic group') of the Sulu sultanate trading zone 'intermarried with tribal people and lived at the middle reaches of the rivers on Borneo's Northeast coast', Sulu obtaining payment of tribute from the sultanate of Gunung Tabur. Warren, *At the Edge*, pp. 5, 6; *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, p. 88.

[33] Malay 'is essentially a diplomatic language, and one admirably adapted for concealing the feelings and cloaking the real thoughts', and therefore well suited to dealings with European colonialism. Hugh Clifford and Frank Athelstane Swettenham, 'Preface' to *A Dictionary of the Malay Language: Malay-English*, Parts I–V (Taiping, Perak: [Government Printing House], 1894–1902), pp. i–iii (p. ii). Conrad probably knew little Malay, but is likely to have absorbed something of its character.

[34] This accommodation may reflect the success enjoyed by the historical Sultan Mohamad Soleiman of Kutai (1845–99), whose sultanate retained self-rule until 1942 by cooperating with the Dutch. Locher-Scholten, pp. 247–48. Black (pp. 285–86) records the historical reality of Lakamba's position: before 1900 the Dutch turned a blind eye to 'shortcomings they saw in the old regimes' of Borneo's east coast states. 'For the shrewder indigenous leaders Dutch patronage became a factor, though still only one factor, in the complex politics of their states. As they manoeuvred, amongst other individuals and factions, for control of trade, and hence for power, these leaders decided that the Dutch might be profitably used, particularly in the later nineteenth century when Bugis and Sulu power was demonstrably in decline.'

The Impact of Commerce

The impact of trade on Sambir may appear modest, but analysis of its portrayal and of the historical context reveal its part in coercive and transgressive aspects of the regional and global economy.

Buitenzorg, as we have seen, prompts reference to agriculture in the Indies. In 1830 the Compulsory Cultivation System had been instituted, under which the native workforce in Java, and later in parts of Sumatra, was compelled to grow cash crops, especially coffee, for sale at artificially low prices fixed by the government. Consequently the workforce often had insufficient opportunity or land to grow food for themselves and their families, and in some areas the System was administered corruptly – for example, taxes imposed in contravention of the original scheme. These problems contributed to the introduction of the Agrarian Law of 1870 which formally ended the System, although it took until the twentieth century for it to be fully eradicated.[35] Although not practised in the Outer Possessions beyond parts of Sumatra, for some of its critics it stood as virtual national enslavement, and although the economic effects were complex, it could be regarded as symptomatic of the severity of Dutch direct rule and thus of the context that causes anxiety in Sambir.

Gunpowder acts, both in the novel and in historical reality, as a commercial focus and political reference point. Because of the war in Aceh the Dutch wished to end all arms imports and issued a ban in 1876, succeeding in 1879 in obtaining Singapore's agreement to the ban since the British were afraid that fighting would spread from Aceh 'under a banner of Islam which was regional in orientation'.[36] One of Singapore's main exports was arms, and it is not surprising that Lingard's cargoes to Sambir included 'rifles and gunpowder' (p. 8). The unsuccessful attempt by Reshid to import 'one hundred fifty [*sic*] barrels' of gunpowder (p. 38) on behalf of Lakamba, and Ford's transporting gunpowder for Dain in the steamer from Singapore, bear witness to the widespread smuggling which ensued. A detailed report in 1888 from the Dutch Vice-Consul in Singapore to the Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs gave Borneo and Bali among the destinations of weapons exports from Singapore in 1887.[37] Indeed, as reports from both the *Assistent-Resident* in Kutai in 1874 and the Dutch Consul-General in Singapore in

[35] As Frans van Baardewijk remarks, 'in an institutional sense the end of the system was ushered in in 1870, but matters grew to a very gradual close; it was not until 1917 that the last "compulsory plantations" were formally returned to the population'. *CEI*, XIV: Frans van Baardewijk, *The Cultivation System, Java 1834–1880* (1993), 11.

[36] Tagliacozzo, pp. 263, 323. Aceh had unsuccessfully sought help from Turkey.

[37] Ibid., p. 275.

1885 indicate, the *Vidar* on which Conrad served as first mate was strongly suspected of arms smuggling, the firearms being 'in the possession of Arab passengers transiting on board'.[38] Those who have effectively given up any assertion of independent statehood, such as the Rajah Lakamba, see gunpowder – which is the means in others' hands, such as Dain's, of the chance of independence and self-determination – purely as a means to commercial gain, the commercialization of their former political vision.

Commerce is also evident in the trade in slaves and in jungle produce, with Sambir's commerce again shown to be part of regional and global trade.[39] Slaves had provided the manpower necessary for the Sulu economy to expand and to become 'the prime redistributive center for the zone',[40] with slaves occupying roles from the menial to the highly influential. As several critics and historians have noted, the *Straits Times Overland Journal* reported the widespread presence of domestic slaves in Berau and that an estimated three hundred were sold each year at Gunung Tabor;[41] in the novel Almayer, Bulangi, and Abdulla are all described as having slaves.[42] However, what is not apparent in the novel is the need for slaves up-river. A large labour force was needed to collect jungle products: 'Bird's nest, procured primarily from limestone caves, and wax were obtained in abundance by thousands of slaves who initiated expansion of settlement and mined the riches of the forests of east Borneo for their Sulu overlords'.[43] Sulu slave-raiding provided slaves for exchange for goods; as Jérôme Rousseau remarks: 'because of their limited agricultural base, Borneo states were dependent on slavery, piracy, and trade for their continued existence'.[44] The middle reaches of Borneo's rivers, with their Sulu

[38] Ibid., p. 278. See also à Campo, 'A Profound Debt', p. 116, n. 102.

[39] See Gene M. Moore, 'Slavery and Racism in Joseph Conrad's Eastern World', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 30/4 (2007), 20–38 for a very helpful summary.

[40] Warren, *At the Edge*, p. 5.

[41] 26 March 1883, p. 3. Cited in, e.g., Tagliacozzo, p. 241; p. 255, n. 62.

[42] Taminah's slavery is the most abject in *Almayer's Folly*. Her Siamese origin indicates the extensiveness of the trade. Her commodity status is apparent in Babalatchi's offering Bulangi 'one hundred dollars' (p. 48) for her, deciding later to offer 'fifty dollars more' (p. 101), and her finally being sold to him for fifty dollars. Her owner's rights would include sexual relations, the suggestion of which Conrad conveys through Babalatchi's thinly disguised sexual interest in Taminah: he 'looked her over carefully with great satisfaction. [. . .] The girl pleased him' (p. 101). Captain Ford's reproaches ('Why do you speak bad words?' Babalatchi asks him) seem to be for this interest, as Babalatchi goes on to justify his interest in Taminah as only that of an old man wanting a 'young face' and a 'young voice' (p. 155) in his house, something which, were it apparent, would hardly have caused Ford's reproach.

[43] Warren, *At the Edge*, p. 60.

[44] *Central Borneo: Ethnic Identity and Social Life in a Stratified Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 284.

connections, were, as Warren notes, where the 'commercial link between ethnic groups at the periphery' and the Sulu centre manifested itself with regard to high-value jungle products, and in *Almayer's Folly* we read of 'the men loading and unloading the up-country canoes' (p. 82).[45]

Warren's research has mapped the slave-raiding routes of the Sulus and their impact across most of the Archipelago 'as one Southeast Asian coastal population after another was hunted down'.[46] While this activity strengthened the Sulu nation, it ran counter to Dutch and British colonial state-formation as well as to European ideas of the rights of man, and the elimination of slave-raiding was central to protecting colonial interests. Berthoud states that 'slavery officially ceased to exist in Indonesia on 1 January 1860',[47] but the process of abolition had begun earlier, as Taylor records: 'The Constitutional Law of 1818 forbade international commerce in slaves; that is, it prohibited import of slaves for sale to Indies households. It did not outlaw the sale of slaves within Indonesia itself until 1855'.[48] When in 1874 Batavia began to force indigenous chiefs to give up their slaves, these chiefs were compensated.[49] The prevalence of slavery in *Almayer's Folly* therefore confirms the lightness of Dutch control in Sambir, with tradition as well as the requirements of trade ensuring continuing slave-trafficking.[50]

Sulu interests had operated a monopoly on the collection of sea and jungle products in the zone, and it was a desire to control this trade, as well as their claim to need to protect their own possessions in the Philippines from the Sulu commercial-raiding economy, that caused the Spanish to intervene. However, in an example of the interconnectedness of trade and politics even in this remote region, Sulu commercial decline was not simply the result of Spanish military action, but also of the mobility of labour which ensued, which saw a significant immigration of Chinese into the Sulu Archipelago, taking the commercial initiative and filling the gap in the labour market which the reduction in slave-raiding had created.

[45] Warren, *At the Edge*, p. 6. 'Up country canoes' are also mentioned in *AF*, p. 23. In *An Outcast of the Islands* Willems watches 'the up-country canoes discharging guttah or rattans, and loading rice or European goods on the little wharf of Lingard & Co.' (p. 64).

[46] James F. Warren, *The Sulu Zone: The World Capitalist Economy and the Historical Imagination* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1998), p. 39.

[47] 'Explanatory Notes' to *Almayer's Folly*, ed. Jacques Berthoud (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 209–39 (p. 223).

[48] Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), p. 125. See also Cribb and Kahin, *Historical Dictionary*, p. 394.

[49] Tagliacozzo, p. 237.

[50] Ibid., pp. 240–41.

Warren records Berau as a Bugis trading centre[51] and *Almayer's Folly* refers to Bugis among the principal traders. Tagliacozzo states that:

> many of these same Bugis shippers also had interests in slaving further east, as a huge traffic in humans still managed to take place between Sulawesi and East Borneo throughout the 1870s. The perpetrators of most of these sales were Arabs who sailed from Pontianak in West Borneo and had networks and outposts stretching from Sulawesi to Singapore.[52]

As well as providing evidence for the *Vidar*'s arms smuggling, à Campo also provides evidence that it was involved in slave-trading, citing 1889 reports by Dutch Navy officers. À Campo writes:

> *SS Vidar* was involved in the import of repeating rifles and the supply of slaves, some of whom were destined to be offered as human sacrifices, and it is extremely likely that as first officer of *Vidar*, Conrad was aware of what was called a 'well-known fact' in administrative circles. As first officer, he was directly responsible for the cargo and for passages. In this function he had close contact with the *sjahbandars* of Donggala, Gunungtabur (Adipatti) and Sambialung (Rajah Alam). Even if he had not noticed what was going on, his attention would certainly have been drawn to it by his fellow crew, who had been voyaging on board *Vidar* for years and with whom he exchanged so many stories.[53]

Such trading is perhaps suggested when Almayer says of Abdulla: 'There is nothing he would not buy, and there is nothing he would not sell' (p. 41).[54] À Campo also cites an 1890 Dutch colonial report which records that slaves owned by the Dayaks were killed 'to accompany [their master] on his journey to the other world' and two other such reports of 1885 and 1886 which mention 'groups of Dayak who came down stream in their *prahs* to request slaves for human sacrifices', noting that 'in the past, head-hunting

[51] Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, p. 88, and p. 143 for the previous point regarding Sulu commercial decline.

[52] p. 238.

[53] 'A Profound Debt', p. 124. See also pp. 116–17. As first officer (or, first mate, chief mate, or chief officer) Conrad was in fact 'the representative in everything of the master, who intimates to him what he wishes to have done'. The first officer's role under the master included practical responsibility for everything about the ship except for its business relations but included bookkeeping, although the master would be directly involved in navigation. R.J. Cornewall-Jones, *The British Merchant Service* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1898), pp. 286, 289. The *Vidar* was owned by an Arab; Ford's steamer in the novel is owned by Abdulla and runs 'between Singapore and the Pantai settlement every three months or so' (p. 23). There is a contradictory reference to Ford's 'monthly visits' (p. 152) to Sambir, a frequency which aligns with Conrad's own sailings to Berau from Singapore in the *Vidar*.

[54] Robert Hampson provides further useful information about Conrad's probable awareness of the *Vidar*'s involvement in transporting slaves. *Conrad's Secrets*, p. 33.

expeditions had been organised against neighbouring tribes, but it had become easier to exchange slaves for forest products'.[55]

Tenuous though it might appear, this change, as Warren skilfully argues, is linked to the tea trade between Europe and China, with the latter's demand for sea and forest products in exchange for tea bringing new-found wealth to the Dayak tribes, a long shadow of European consumer demand impacting on Berau's culture and economy from before Lingard's time.[56] Commercial pressures impact even remote Berau, linking it plainly to advancing globalization, and in *Almayer's Folly* the signs of these forces are evident, provided the commerce of, for example, the 'up-country canoes' (p. 82) and of the slaves is interrogated.

Cultural Separations

In *A Personal Record* Almayer 'stepped up on the jetty' (p. 74), and in *Almayer's Folly* – as in other works of the Asian fiction – the jetty represents the means of trade and contact, as well as emphasizing the flimsiness and temporariness of the connection between colonial characters, their commerce, and their surroundings. The jetty, often damaged or decayed, reaches out from remote tropical locations into nothingness, awaiting an arrival of what will soon again depart, but for Almayer the jetty can never again be a point of departure. As a young man in the novel he had stepped hopefully 'from the Dutch mail-boat on the dusty jetty of Macassar' (p. 6); his later situation is mirrored in Lingard & Co.'s 'rotten little jetty' (p. 26).

In a village populated by people whom he says 'are not company for a white man' (p. 92), and with a Malay wife and a half-caste daughter, Almayer cannot bridge the cultural differences implicit in the colonial relationship. This separation is reflected in frequent images of home and furnishings; 'a narrow ditch, full of stagnant water that overflowed from the river, separated Almayer's Kampong from the rest of the settlement' (p. 90), the imagery of separation and stasis. Living between two houses, both built to reflect commercial opportunity, neither is a home, the second 'new but already decaying' (p. 5). His first house has 'no ceiling' (p. 14), suggesting a shelter more than a home: his paraffin lamp lacks its globe; the tumbler is 'cracked' (p. 15) and the blinds 'tattered' (p. 14). In contrast, Abdulla's property is described in terms of space and light, 'founded solidly on a firm ground' (p. 13), the home of a man truly settled; the depiction of

[55] 'A Profound Debt', p. 118. See also p. 119.
[56] Warren, *At the Edge*, p. 49 and *The Sulu Zone: The World Capitalist Economy*, p. 39.

Mahmat's house being built on a raft 'securely moored' (p. 70) also suggests a firm culture, bridging both earth and water. Regarding his wife as 'a Malay woman, a slave after all, to his eastern mind' (p. 10), with slavery also a metaphor for cultural otherness, Almayer reveals himself as retaining a European's sense of racial superiority as well as an adopted 'Eastern' male superiority. Ironically it is his slaves, people whom he owns, whom he can describe euphemistically as 'my own people' (p. 14). The representatively ordinary Almayer's criticism of his wife in his description of her, and his having slaves, imply a wider colonial criticism, Almayer reflecting the views of Dutchmen both European- and Indies-born and implying that, however long the colonial presence in a culture, prejudices and separation will persist if not increase. Yet cultural expectations are disturbed by Mrs Almayer as a young girl imagining herself as Lingard's 'wife, councillor [*sic*] and guide' (p. 19); although happy then in imagining that she could bridge cultural difference, she is, ironically, destined only ever to be 'Mrs Almayer', a form of colonization as well as a mark of possession by Almayer and a sign that through marriage to him she is assumed to be subject to both European law and culture. The fundamental nature of Almayer's wider failure is evident in Conrad's portrayal of his sexual failure. At his wedding, 'uneasy – a little disgusted, and greatly inclined to run away' (p. 19), despite the bride's prettiness and the promise of a fortune, Almayer is as apparently lacking in sexual vitality as he is in commercial energy, suggesting enfeebled colonial vigour, and undermining the stock literary manly imperial adventure.[57] In contrast Conrad emphasizes the sexual vigour of non-European cultures, through Mrs Almayer's relationship with Lakamba, her advice to Nina about using her sexual influence over Dain, in Babalatchi's desire for Taminah, and in Reshid's being unmarried but the 'possessor of several Malay women' (p. 36).

Nina's half-caste status serves as a reference point for cultural values and cultural integration, and an ironic play on a feature which, although it can be readily perceived – unlike the obscurer significances of so many visual representations in the novel – produces only conflicting interpretations for those who see her. Her status also typifies the changes at this time in the

[57] See Knowles, pp. xvii–xliii (pp. xxiv–xxv). Given the frequency with which Dutchmen in the Indies took Malay wives and concubines (Taylor, pp. 147–48), Almayer's behaviour is all the more effete. Concubinage and marriage are discussed further in Chapter 4. Almayer's encounter with the frontier, like other Europeans' in Conrad's Asian fiction, is the opposite of the imperialist idea discussed by David Trotter, whereby 'the vitality of the race could be renewed by journeys to the frontier'. 'Modernism and Empire: Reading *The Waste Land*', *Critical Quarterly*, 28/1&2 (Spring and Summer 1986), 143–53 (p. 145).

Dutch East Indies. In the second half of the nineteenth century mixed-race marriages were becoming less acceptable, partly because of 'the sheer numbers of Europeans moving into Java's cities' which assisted 'efforts at reproducing Dutch bourgeois society in Indonesia', whereas in the first half of the nineteenth century, for example, no fewer than three Governors-General had been married to 'Mestizas' (none were after 1851).[58] In the case of Eurasian children 'born out of wedlock':

> their status, like women's, depended entirely on their white fathers. When they were acknowledged, such offspring were Europeans; when not, they were Indonesians. To be accepted as European required, generally, Christian baptism with a Dutch name, Dutch schooling, and Dutch costume. What only the novels [novels about the Dutch East Indies written by women from the colony] make clear, however, is an additional condition: permanent residence in a European household until adulthood.[59]

Nina is legitimate and has fulfilled these requirements, but her equivocal position, to Europeans, is reflected in it being 'halfcaste girls' to whom the 'sea going adventurers' make love; women, therefore, who are presented as sharing the adventurers' marginal engagement in community, where the sounds are the noisy 'carouse' (p. 8) amidst comings and goings, neither sound nor motion suggesting permanence.[60] Hampson writes of Nina's Malay and European cultural 'hybridity';[61] her specifically Eurasian ethnicity is one which disappoints British and Dutch colonial whites at this period of history and which, as Conrad portrays more fully in *An Outcast of the Islands*, often distanced Eurasians from their non-European roots. 'All in white' (p. 15), Nina's appearance recalls Almayer's when he too was 'clad all in white' (p. 6), but Nina's whiteness is not a sign of an irresolute, innocent individual; her whiteness mimics the racial whiteness she cannot achieve but which her father desires for her, and which hides the contempt she experienced in Singapore, paralleling her mother's experience in the Semarang convent.[62] For Nina, white and Malay exhibit the same characters, whether

[58] Taylor, pp. 128, 128, 126.

[59] Ibid., p. 156. This is the historically specific context to Nina's residence with the Vinck family in Singapore.

[60] In trying perhaps to secure marriage to white traders, these 'halfcaste girls' may also have been seeking to achieve affirmation of their Europeanness. For a fuller discussion of the situation of Eurasians, see Chapter 2.

[61] *Cross-Cultural Encounters*, p. 107.

[62] For a discussion of colonial and indigenous dress, see Sandra A. Niessen, *Batak Cloth and Clothing: A Dynamic Indonesian Tradition* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993), and in particular the advent of the wearing of white clothing by indigenous peoples under the influence of colonizers' education and religious training (esp. photographs nos. 88, p. 105 and 89, p. 106).

'they made love under the shadows of the great trees or in the shadow of the Cathedral on the Singapore promenade' (p. 34), but she has come to realize that the 'uncompromising sincerity of purpose' of Malays is preferable to 'the sleek hypocrisy' of the white people she has known (p. 35).[63] In the eyes of Europeans the matter of Nina's colour is an ever-present problem: as Ford says, 'You can't make her white' (p. 25). Similarly, Mrs Vinck scorns Nina on realizing that it is Nina whom 'that young fellow from the Bank' (p. 25) (personifying the promising modern world of globalized finance) is calling to see. Ironically, in Sambir as 'the young Mem Putih' (p. 26), it is the honorary colonial whiteness ('Putih') she has gained in Singapore which earns her the form of address.

Other races do not necessarily view being half-caste as a bar to being admired or respected. Indeed, on her return to Sambir both Arabs and Lakamba call to see Nina, as no doubt do other Malays, who 'eagerly discussed her arrival' (p. 25). Both Lingard and Almayer believe that Nina's mixed blood can be overcome by money: as Lingard says, 'Nobody will see the colour of your wife's skin. The dollars are too thick for that, I tell you!' (p. 10). Almayer is offended at the prospect of Nina marrying a non-European when Abdulla offers to pay so that Reshid may make Nina his 'favourite wife' (p. 36); it is an irony that Almayer nevertheless believes that money will achieve acceptance for his daughter as a wife to a European, even in Amsterdam. The reality is evident in the sub-lieutenant's reflection that Nina 'is very beautiful and imposing, [. . .] but after all a half caste girl' (p. 95). As Eduard J.M. Schmutzer notes: 'The Dutch colonial ideal was more evident in the creation of a contented community, wherein the guardian country is mostly interested in peace and order, to be achieved by means of a rather impersonal and rational relationship'[64] – in other words, a policy of separation. Such a relationship is evident in the lieutenant's reminding his sub-lieutenant that 'coldly civil' (p. 109) is the appropriate demeanour to Nina. However, even Almayer, whose parents were Dutch, is doubtless suspect to the Dutch officers, for Dutchmen born in the Indies were increasingly classified derogatorily, like Indies Eurasians, as 'Indos'; his 'white jacket and flowered sarong' (p. 29) suggestively convey someone who, living as he does and married to a Malay, for European-born Dutchmen was too well adapted. Hampson refers to Almayer's Sambir 'rootedness' and his

[63] John A. McClure rightly argues that *Almayer's Folly* 'questions the moral superiority of "civilized" to "savage" men'. *Kipling & Conrad: The Colonial Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 120–21.

[64] *Dutch Colonial Policy and the Search for Identity in Indonesia, 1920–1931* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), p. 15.

'originary identity' in Amsterdam; Almayer's ambivalent Indies identity is an additional element in this equation.[65]

Almayer's final decline, as his earlier life, may be read through images of his house. Burning his first house signifies the end of his colonial dream founded on Lingard's promise. More staging-post than home, it looked forward to the fantasy inherited from his mother of 'the big mansion in Amsterdam' (p. 10), in a country he has never visited and where, although among many people he does not know, he supposes he can be himself.[66] He can very aptly be described as 'traditionless' (p. 35), his birth and residency having undermined his authenticity. The continuing centrality of commerce is signalled by the office within the house.[67] As often in the Asian fiction, Conrad employs the trope of the abandoned office and of the empty or defaced account book for loss of direction and purpose. The pre-printed 'blue and red ruled' (p. 149) pages invite a record of activity, of transactions which require contact and engagement, but in this office the pages are torn or unturned. The office chair can no longer turn on its pivot, echoing the ending of the crucial – 'pivotal' – role it should occupy as the seat of the business mind. Withdrawal into opium ironically provides Almayer with the 'earthly paradise' (p. 10) of the house in Amsterdam when Jim-Eng names the new house 'House of Heavenly Delight' (p. 154), by which time Almayer is beyond objecting to sharing his house with a non-European, Almayer's head resting on the Chinese, not European, 'wooden pillow' (p. 154) of the opium-smoker.[68]

Almayer is introduced as having 'inattentive eyes' (p. 6), unlike the 'attentive eyes' (p. 45) of everyone else in the village. At the end of the novel Almayer's face has lost all expression, leaving nothing for 'attentive eyes' to read, as if 'there was no need for any record' (p. 143) – just as the dusty ledgers are blank. His face declares the failure of vision, including insight into his wife's and daughter's cultural situations, as well as the pain of sight when he appeals to his daughter finally to 'take your eyes off my face' (p. 134). Linking this failure of vision with commerce, Conrad writes of

[65] *Cross-Cultural Encounters*, p. 105.

[66] For a discussion of the significance of such illusion see John H. Hicks, 'Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*: Structure, Theme and Critics', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 19/1 (June 1964), 17–31, and Juliet McLauchlan, 'Almayer and Willems – "How Not to Be"', *Conradiana*, 11/2 (1979), 113–41.

[67] Hampson observes that Almayer's decline is depicted in commercial terms. *Cross-Cultural Encounters*, p. 101.

[68] It is also ironic that in succumbing to opium, the trader Almayer himself falls victim to colonial commerce in the form of a trade-good originally exported from India as a means of paying for imports of tea from China. Graham Irwin, *Nineteenth-Century Borneo: A Study in Diplomatic Rivalry* (Singapore: Donald Moore Books, 1955; repr. 1967), pp. 8–9.

the obscuring and decay of what were originally to be the instruments of Almayer's vision: the words '"Office. – Lingard & Co."' (p. 14) on the door, denoting corporate existence, being half-obliterated; account books 'with torn pages bestrewed the floor', others 'looking as if they had never been opened' (p. 149); the jetty, significantly, that has left the bank 'and floated down the river' (p. 152).

Conrad has placed Almayer 'at a crossroads of cultures where the elements, old and new, that make up the life of the Archipelago converge and collide'.[69] This collision is all the more significant in that it is evident even in this remotest of places. Inescapably subject to colonial intrusion, albeit at an early stage, Sambir is on the map and already subject, through Mrs Almayer's and Nina's links with Semarang and Singapore and through Almayer's own roots, to the conditioning forces of European culture. For Almayer, to be a 'settled resident' is ultimately untenable; despite being married and with a daughter, he can only describe his experience of Sambir as 'great solitude' (p. 92). Although Almayer's situation is at least partly the result of his own personality, the novel suggests, through his experience, the ultimate impossibility of settled residence for the colonial endeavour more widely. His inverted creed – 'I do not believe' (p. 123) – signifies by its lack of any article of faith the widest destruction of belief, including in the colonial endeavour. No larger, well-intentioned project of a Raffles or a Brooke has any resonance in Almayer; his is a privatized 'gorgeous vision' (p. 49). That vision, however, is expressed in a book in which the opening scene is at night and in which the settings are often at night, dusk, or dawn, and in which vision is, suitably, barely possible, and where seeing is limited to guarded, anxious peering.

Almayer's folly, committed by a man 'weak, irresolute, and unhappy' (p. 34), attracts pity, as his death prompts in Abdulla a 'feeling of regret' (p. 156) both for himself and for Almayer. Conrad's 'sentiment akin to piety' in rendering 'the memory of these beings seen, in their obscure sun-bathed existence' (*PR*, pp. 24, 23) recovers a wider folly than Almayer's, whose personal illusions are embedded inextricably in the colonial endeavour.

'Freya of the Seven Isles'

The portrayal of ill-will and oppressive attitudes in individual Dutch officials, and by implication in their colonial regime, which occurs relatively restrainedly in *Almayer's Folly* and in *Lord Jim* (in the deputy-assistant

[69] Berthoud, 'Introduction: Conrad's Realism' to *Almayer's Folly*, p. xix.

resident), occurs elsewhere in the Asian fiction in 'Freya of the Seven Isles' (1912), where they are savagely depicted.

In Heemskirk's desire for Freya and jealousy of Jasper is reflected the Dutch desire for monopolistic trade and their antagonism towards rivals, especially the British, Heemskirk reminding Nelson that no Englishman would have been allowed to settle in a Dutch dependency. Ostensibly patrolling to 'look after the traders' (p. 132), he scorns the likes of Jasper whom he regards as a 'pedlar' (p. 140) and 'vagabond' (p. 170). His steam-powered gunboat, 'short, squat, with her stumpy, dark spars naked like dead trees' (p. 169) and overbearingly named *Neptun*, contrasts with Jasper's 'wonderfully fast and pretty brig' (p. 126), the sailing vessel *Bonito*, its name evoking the grace and speed of the fish. Heemskirk's vessel with its Javanese sailors uses colonial subjects to prosecute colonial aims, a hegemony also implied in Heemskirk's annoyance at Nelson's ignorance of Dutch. Contrasting with Heemskirk's uncommunicativeness and slowness of movement, Freya and Jasper are expressive and mobile: Freya's 'line' and 'curves' (p. 158) and the *Bonito*'s form are both attractive and agile; Freya's piano-playing reflects her feelings and her 'wealth of hair' (p. 125) exemplifies natural beauty. A 'ship child, a sea-girl' (p. 137), Freya is as at ease at sea as Jasper, a quality in keeping with the wide-ranging voyages of the English traders compared with Heemskirk's embodiment of Dutch protectionism.

Between these opposed traditions Nelson is caught in a liminal commercial and regulatory space,[70] fearful of the Dutch authorities for their vindictiveness and arbitrariness and yet obliged uncomfortably to sell his tobacco crop to English traders, the local 'rebellious' (p. 161) Rajah a potential threat should the Dutch choose to assume Nelson's bad influence over him. Nelson's only defence is his 'echoless irresponsiveness' (p. 185), his expression and social interaction thus controlled by colonial pressures in ways quite different from Freya and Jasper and the Rajah, who in response to the colonial imperatives embodied in Heemskirk assert resistance and independence. The narrator denies that Heemskirk is a typical Dutch naval officer, but the text strongly suggests that he represents common Dutch traits, at least in the East Indies: a lack of geniality, prejudice against the English, and abuse of justice. In his contempt for social inferiors and his inappropriate sexual advances to Freya, Heemskirk exhibits traits which suggest the possibility of patterns of behaviour by the Dutch towards their subject peoples.

[70] Nelson's unease about this anxious commercial situation is also suggested by his taking his account books to bed to read.

In its mingling of trade and love, the story portrays a variety of unrealized investments, both personal and commercial, echoing Almayer's history. In this colonial environment – in which such realization seems unlikely often to be achieved, in which colonial officials appear unfit to rule, and in which oppression rather than progress is characteristic – desire, ambition, and achievement are frozen: Nelson's investment is sold at a tenth of its value; Freya and Jasper's love is unfulfilled; the brig, symbol of purposeful endeavour, is stranded. When Freya regrets that she 'would never allow [Jasper] any power over me' (p. 188) it has been at least partly because of her concern over her father's worrying about the reaction of the Dutch, a concern traceable to this colonial power and to its will to regulate and control, a power which ultimately denies freedom of both action and movement.

CHAPTER 2

Competing for the Prizes of Commerce and Overlordship: An Outcast of the Islands

> The power of the European has substituted a sullen peace for the open war of the past. It has done so in the interest of trade, not of civilisation, however much we may disguise the fact.[1]

In his analysis of Conrad's Malay novels, McClure writes that 'the Lingard novels demolish several of the flattering myths of imperial domination' and that *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896) demolishes 'the image of the benign imperial father'.[2] McClure relates this to 'Conrad's fundamental opposition to imperialism',[3] and cites O. Mannoni's assertion that '"the colonial" is not looking for profit only; he is also greedy for certain other – psychological – satisfactions'.[4] Critics such as McClure and Krenn have rightly written of the various social costs to Sambir of Lingard's supposed benefits, and in *An Outcast* we again find Conrad writing through commerce as part of the expression of that exploitation, showing commerce as not only propelling the expansionist endeavour, but as also providing a means by which 'psychological' satisfactions are achieved.[5]

Commercial Impositions

It is significant that one of the primary tensions in the novel is competition for domination of a market. The cause of this rivalry between Lingard and

[1] From an anonymous review of *Almayer's Folly* in the *Straits Times*, 16 January 1896. Quoted in Hans van Marle, 'Jumble of Facts and Fiction: The First Singapore Reaction to *Almayer's Folly*', *Conradiana*, 10/2 (1978), 161–66 (p. 163).

[2] pp. 120, 121.

[3] Ibid., p. 94. For another analysis of Conrad's attitude to imperialism, see Donovan, '"Figures, facts, and theories"', in which Donovan argues that Conrad had some sympathies for British imperialism.

[4] *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, trans. Pamela Powesland (London: Methuen, 1956), p. 32.

[5] Heliéna M. Krenn, 'The "Beautiful" World of Women: Women as Reflections of Colonial Issues in Conrad's Malay Novels', in *Contexts for Conrad*, ed. Keith Carabine, Owen Knowles, and Wiesław Krajka, East European Monographs 370 (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1993), pp. 105–19.

Abdulla – a secret passage for a larger vessel into the River Pantai – reflects the historical reality of trading in some remote parts of the Outer Possessions and the possibility of deriving wealth from proprietary geographies, Lingard's original surveying of the estuary having been due to a mixture of 'adventure' and 'gain' (p. 200).[6] His success was not, however, dependent on Sambir: he had risen from 'commander of ships, then shipowner, then a man of much capital' (p. 198). Lingard's other trading was perhaps subject to competition, but in Sambir he is, revealingly, able to impose a colonialist's conditions: 'They had to trade with him – accept such goods as he would give – such credit as he would accord' (p. 116). Passage for smaller vessels would have been possible, however, and Lingard's stipulation is plainly monopolistic. In addition, his ability to limit the amount of money he is prepared to lend means that he will have been able to force down the prices of the jungle produce he buys if the credit he allows is inadequate or too short-term. That the produce he obtains is 'simply inexhaustible' (p. 43) no doubt partly reflects, ironically, the abundance enjoyed by a sole buyer. Furthermore, Lingard 'exacted payment every year' (p. 116), presumably as part of his control of credit, requiring all debts to be settled in full each year, but suggesting a departure from local terms of trade. 'Exacted' has a fitting colonial overtone, evoking tax, or even tribute.[7] Lingard has also dispensed with the trading intermediaries in Sambir, for as Sahamin complains: 'He trades with the Dyaks of the forest, who are no better than monkeys. He buys from them guttah and rattans – while we starve' (p. 116). The 'prosperity' (p. 200) brought by Lingard must therefore be seen as highly qualified. Lingard, stung by Babalatachi's criticisms, asks: 'Whom did I kill here? Where are my guns? What have I done? What have I eaten up?' (p. 226), but his conduct of trade renders these questions highly ironic.

[6] Sherry (*CEW,* p. 124) discusses the historical Lingard's discovery as recorded in Great Britain, Hydrographic Office, Admiralty, *Eastern Archipelago*, 1st edn, 4 vols (London: Admiralty, 1890–1927), II: *Eastern Archipelago, Part II (Western Part.)*, (1893), p. 340. Ron Visser provides a Dutch chart of 1918 which still recorded, some sixty years after Lingard's discovery, the *baak van Lingard* [Lingard's beacon] which marked one of the two points of his crossing on the river. 'An Out-of-the-Way Place Called Berau', *The Conradian*, 18/1 (Autumn 1993), 37–47 (p. 40).

[7] In a monopoly, which ironically mirrors Dutch East Indies economic policy, the possibility of smuggling is increased. See Tagliacozzo, p. 4. Presumably the threat of Lingard's response and the presence of Almayer as agent deterred smuggling in Sambir. Penalties for illicit trade in Dutch East Indies state monopolies such as opium could be catastrophic. For example, in the 'Contract and Deed of Recognition and Confirmation' with the Sultan of Djambi, the penalties for illicit opium trading were that the Indies Government 'will assume the control of navigation, and trade, and of the native Administration'. FOCP no. 6007, 'Conventions between the Government of Netherlands India and Native Princes in the East Indian Archipelago'. December 1890, pp. 5–12 (p. 9). National Archives, Kew. FO 881/6007. Crown copyright.

It is a further irony that Abdulla, instead of providing benefits that might be expected to flow from competition, will exacerbate the position: as Lingard remarks, 'He will squeeze them' (p. 173). At first sight it is difficult to see how Abdulla will be able to exert such commercial pressure, given that Lingard & Co. will continue to trade and that, if a normal market asserted itself, Lingard could buy at higher prices than Abdulla, albeit still profitably. However, Lingard's and Almayer's conviction that their trade will suffer suggests that Abdulla will make use of means other than price to exert pressure on the Sambir merchants. Given the reputation of Arabs at this time of being the harshest of traders, and untrustworthy – Lingard refers to 'their lies and their intrigues' (p. 45) – there may well be an implication of dishonesty. It is also possible that Abdulla will encourage the merchants to incur large, long-term borrowings from him, more generous in these respects than Lingard's, and when these cannot be repaid, exact harsh terms, including exclusive rights to trade, possibly threatening violence (as he does in directing his ship's broadside at the flagstaff). Certainly another would-be colonizer's monopoly looks likely to replace Lingard's. Sherry states that competition from the Arabs, especially their use of steam, caused an end to the 'hey-day of Borneo trading' enjoyed by the historical Lingard, with a likely decline in the profitability of his business 'in time';[8] however, the fact that Lingard and Almayer believe that the change will be sudden suggests other possible causes, which form part of Conrad's wider depiction of trading.[9]

Commerce Defining Relations

Alongside the struggle for market domination, commerce and markets increasingly dictate existence, with commerce defining relations and creating connections and networks. The novel abounds in traders, all involved in Willems' 'glorious uncertainty of a money hunt' (p. 334). Lingard is 'always in search of new markets for his cargoes' (p. 14). Abdulla, 'the great

[8] *CEW*, pp. 109, 129. In an 1882 report the *Assistent-Resident* of Kutai described seeing two steam vessels (one the *Vidar*) moving upstream on the river to Berau and Lingard 'laboriously tacking his way up'. The *Vidar* was towing a 'steam-yacht' destined for 'the Arab [Said] [*sic*] Abdullah, a trader established in Bulongan'. This Said Abdullah was 'a son of the owner of SS *Vidar*'. À Campo, 'A Profound Debt', pp. 112; 112, n. 89

[9] Chapter 6 examines the impact of shipping-lines in 'The End of the Tether' which, in addition to steam itself, hastened the demise of adventurer-captains such as Lingard. The name of Lingard's ship in *An Outcast of the Islands, Flash*, suggests his mode of operations, living on his commercial wits, whereas the *Kosmopoliet IV*, from which Willems deserts, suggests the regularity and large scale of the established, less adventurous, carrying trade between the East Indies and the Netherlands.

trader who does not know what the word failure means' (p. 136), is equally anxious to acquire new markets, and, although devout, commerce has become his essence: 'The envy of Lingard's political and commercial successes, and the wish to get the best of him in every way, became Abdulla's mania, the paramount interest of his life, the salt of his existence' (p. 111). Like the successful Hudig, Abdulla is envious of Lingard's secret, and the name of Abdulla's vessel, '*Lord of the Isles*' (p. 136), originally referring to Scottish isles, now ironically reflects his actual and desired status in the Archipelago. The description of his widespread family initially emphasizes family relationships but the connection is as much one of trade – 'An uncle here – a brother there [. . .] in every place where there was trade' (p. 110). Even though the influence of Abdulla and his family is such that 'they lent money to princes [and] influenced the council-rooms' (p. 110), Abdulla's existence turns on a competitive business relationship.[10]

When Hudig secures the marriage of Joanna to Willems, it is a commercial transaction to Hudig's benefit, the consideration for which is a house and a suggestion of increased security in Hudig's employment. Willems is at first Hudig's 'confidential clerk' (p. 4) and later his 'confidential agent' (p. 17), a progression from passive recorder to a degree of subjectivity and agency accorded by commerce. In marrying, Willems also acts in effect as Hudig's agent, and it is Willems' moving beyond the terms of his prescribed agency that later causes his downfall. When Willems leaves Joanna, the house is, appropriately, sold. Almayer is similarly commercially related, as Lingard's 'partner' (p. 43), and Willems' life with Almayer in Sambir can be argued as being unsatisfactory precisely because it is not underpinned by a commercial relationship, Almayer having refused his support. Almayer's marriage has been undertaken in remarkably similar circumstances to Willems', with Lingard seeking a husband of suitable race and standing and, like Hudig, prepared to pay for it. A house is again provided as the consideration as well as the enticement of further riches to come: 'He had sold himself to Lingard for these things – married the Malay girl of his adoption for the reward of these things and of the great wealth that must necessarily follow upon conscientious book-keeping' (p. 300). Accordingly, 'as the marriage was not a happy one from a domestic point of view, he

[10] Riddell (p. 117) notes of such Arabs that 'their influence as traders and authorities in the religious sphere should be seen as inextricably linked; it is likely that the authority accorded them in the religious domain at times served to provide them with preferential trading circumstances'. This accords with the devout image that Abdulla projects and which Conrad's portrayal undermines. Locher-Scholten records Arabs 'as regional diplomats', mediating 'between local rulers and the Dutch' (p. 139).

looked to Lingard's fortune for compensation in his matrimonial unhappiness' (p. 64). 'From a domestic point of view' appears superfluous, since it is self-evidently the usual point of view for describing a marriage, but it ironically confirms that this marriage offered happiness of a different, commercial, kind. Lingard's relationship with Sambir further illustrates the point: philanthropic in part, once the commercial consideration is removed, Lingard disappears to Europe.

Transgressive and Destabilizing Commerce

If in *An Outcast* Conrad works to 'repudiate colonialism' and to 'comment on the ultimate instability and ineffectuality of all human endeavour in the face of Nature',[11] commerce is a crucial means by which these aims are effected and, alongside human relationships, the most troublesome dimension of the novel. The surprising fact that the novel's characters include the most notable businessmen in the Archipelago – icons therefore of commercial endeavour – has not generally been noted: Abdulla, the 'great trader' (p. 136) and head of perhaps the greatest Arab business in the Archipelago; Hudig, 'the richest merchant in the islands' (p. 87); Lingard, 'a man of much capital, respected wherever he went' (p. 198); and Willems, 'the smartest business man in the islands' (p. 136). All are shown to be ineffectual, unstable, or guilty of colonial ambitions.[12] The largely matter-of-fact tone of the portrayal of transgressive commerce reinforces the sense of its pervasiveness: in the case of Hudig, Willems was 'employed in many a delicate affair' (p. 17) such as 'the quiet deal in opium; the illegal traffic in gunpowder; the great affair of smuggled firearms, the difficult business of the Rajah of Goak' (p. 8). Wrongful trading is also evident in Lingard's illegal possession of gunpowder, and when Willems asserts that he has led a more 'virtuous life' (p. 266) than either Lingard or Hudig, it is likely that he refers to business dealings. For all that Lingard is partly portrayed as well-intentioned, he, like Abdulla, has been ready to use violence: as well as having 'removed an enemy once or twice before', he had 'paid off some very heavy scores a good many times'. 'Unresisted and masterful', he has lived beyond 'civilized laws [. . .] evolving for himself some queer notions of justice' (p. 235). Abdulla, unlike Lingard, is prepared to use deceit, content to adopt Babalatchi's suggestion of poisoning Willems and telling Babalatchi that,

[11] J.H. Stape, 'Introduction' to Joseph Conrad, *An Outcast of the Islands*, rev. edn, ed. J.H. Stape (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. xi–xxiii (p. xvi).
[12] As Stape writes, Abdullah is 'as much a colonizer as Lingard'. Ibid., p. xv.

although he has 'promised everything' to Willems, he means 'to keep much' (p. 134). Even his ship suggests double standards, registered at Penang despite being condemned. Sahamin looks forward to the unwarranted erasing of all debts to Lingard at his downfall, and early in the novel Willems declares his moral standards in trade, standards which seem to speak for commerce more widely: 'He disapproved of the elementary dishonesty that dips the hand in the cash-box, but one could evade the laws and push the principles of trade to their furthest consequences. [. . .] The wise, the strong, the respected, have no scruples' (p. 8). There is an additional irony in the word 'principles', which may be read as referring both to the underlying notions of trade and to its right conduct. Representing three of the four ethnic commercial forces in late nineteenth-century south-east Asia (the other being Chinese), Lingard, Abdulla, Hudig, and Sahamin are all complicit in transgressive commerce, Conrad's critique of commerce embracing European and non-European, Muslim and non-Muslim.

Almayer personifies commerce's potential for the generation of instability. His vanity and greed are evident in his excessive office furniture – 'an office desk, a revolving chair, bookshelves, a safe' (p. 299) – and in his belief that he and Lingard 'were rich already; but not enough' (p. 294). Resembling other contracts in the novel, Almayer's marriage is an immoral financial transaction, in Almayer's case intruding into an inappropriate area of life and generating enslavement. Impressed by the apparatus of trade but deficient in its basic skills of buying and selling, Almayer's aptitude is merely recording: 'an empty-headed quill-driver' (p. 300), 'he could not guide Patalolo, control the irrepressible old Sahamin, or restrain the youthful vagaries of the fierce Bahassoen with pen, ink, and paper' (p. 300). Almayer's domestic and commercial failures are performed by his being sewn into his hammock as if in a shroud, in which he fittingly resembles both a 'corpse' and 'a bale of goods' (p. 183).[13]

In connection with Mannoni's 'other' satisfactions of colonialism, McClure refers to *Lord Jim* and to 'Jim's appropriation of all honor, respect, and responsibility, an appropriation supported by the Malays themselves as the price of security, [which] weakens the community and renders it vulnerable'.[14] Such satisfactions are evident in *An Outcast of the Islands*, particularly in the case of Lingard, who dreams of 'Arcadian happiness for

[13] Almayer also offends against the business principle that time is money, keeping his watch going only when Lingard is present. Otherwise 'he would let it run down and would measure his weariness by sunrises and sunsets in an apathetic indifference to mere hours' (p. 308), thus reverting to an ineffectual, because uncommercialized, time.

[14] p. 126.

that little corner of the world which he loved to think all his own' (p. 200), and for whom the co-presence of profit, ownership, and psychological satisfaction are summarized in his declaration: 'His river! By it he was not only rich – he was interesting' (p. 202). Superficially benign, his dreams are allied to a readiness to enforce his will – 'the fear of his heavy hand' (p. 200) – and to a naïve self-belief which ironically reflects colonialism's: 'his deep-seated and immovable conviction that only he [. . .] knew what was good for them' (p. 200). There is also a highly relevant and ironic echo of Dutch colonialism in Lingard's defence of his activities to Babalatchi which does not seem to have been noted: 'If I ever spoke to Patalolo, like an elder brother, it was for your good – for the good of all' (p. 226). The concept of cooperation expressed as the relation between elder and younger brothers was fundamental to Dutch colonial policy – appearing, for example, in *Max Havelaar*, which records the 'official instructions' on the relationship between a Regent and *Assistent-Resident*: 'the European functionary has to treat the native functionary, who aids him, as his younger brother'.[15] Trade may have 'brought prosperity to the young state' (p. 200), but, like colonial trade generally, the benefits are accompanied by high costs. McClure argues the similarity between Lingard and Willems:

> By making Willems so blatantly authoritarian, Lingard so apparently benevolent, and then by revealing their basic similarities, [Conrad] is able to dramatize the disjunction between imperial pretense and reality, and to explore the rationalizations by which imperialists convinced others and themselves of the rectitude of their project.[16]

Both men share in different ways a narrow vision, blind to the implications of their conduct, so that Lingard is deeply shocked to hear his vision expressed by Babalatchi as 'Obey me and be happy, or die!' (p. 226). As McClure argues, *An Outcast* 'challenges both the pretense of benevolent paternalism and the paternalistic program of relegating the colonized to an eternal dependence, a perpetual childhood',[17] a dependence seen in Lingard's impact on Sambir and in Willems' impact on the Da Souzas, who 'had lost the little aptitude and strength for work they might have had to put forth under the stress of extreme necessity' (p. 5). A similar strain of

[15] Multatuli (1868), p. 64. As J. Thomas Lindblad comments, 'in this model the Javanese regent (outside Java the Malay sultan) was expected to play the role of a "younger brother" to the Dutch civil servant, even if the former was much the senior in age and experience as well as a nobleman'. 'The Late Colonial State and Economic Expansion, 1900–1930s', in Dick, et al., *The Emergence of a National Economy*, pp. 111–52 (p. 115).

[16] p. 114.

[17] Ibid., p. 108.

dependence can be seen potentially developing in the related domination of Abdulla: Sahamin naïvely imagines that 'backed by Abdulla's capital, he would grow rich in a very few years' (p. 136).

Colonial and Commercial Assurances

Mannoni's 'other' satisfactions extend beyond Sambir as part of a wider pattern of gratification realized in terms which echo commerce and which suggest that what is not commercial can be made subject to commerce, with even language reflecting the encroachment of trade and economics. In Lingard's case, he employs his capital partly as a means of achieving wider influence, and when he persuades Hudig to ignore Willems' dishonesty – 'I have made it all right with Hudig. You owe him nothing now. Go back to your wife. She is a good woman' (p. 38) – his behaviour imitates the 'internal peace' (p. 200) he imposed on Sambir. This tendency 'to set right the lives of other people' (p. 199) is pointedly ironized by his 'interfering with his chief officer', something that was 'in defiance of nautical etiquette' (p. 199), a shortcoming which is more serious than 'etiquette' suggests, being the removal of responsibility in a seafaring tradition in which the taking of responsibility and the need to be able to rely on experienced individuals are essential.[18] Lingard also 'promised to guarantee Willems' good behaviour' (pp. 189–90) to Craig; Joanna 'broke with Hudig' on Lingard's 'assurance that all would be well' (p. 190); and Lingard assures Almayer that he will 'look after' Willems (p. 174). This terminology of guarantees, assurances, and undertakings suggests Lingard attempting to underwrite the contingency of life just as he had had insurance underwritten at Singapore for the *Flash*. Willems enjoys the 'perpetual assurance of unquestionable superiority' (p. 4) from his patronage of the Da Souzas, as Lingard does in a related fashion with the inhabitants of Sambir; the Da Souzas underwrite the quality of Willems' life. Similarly, Almayer's desire for compensation for his unhappy marriage ironically proposes an equation in which economics is both the justification and remedy for life.

Such misplaced reliance on commerce is suggested by the reactions of the inhabitants of Sambir to Almayer's valued books and office furnishings. These are perceived wonderingly but with puzzlement; the safe is ironically

[18] That this is a significant failing is plain from Frank T. Bullen, *The Men of the Merchant Service* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1900), p. 15: 'It is etiquette, however, for [the captain] to remain on the bridge while the vessel is in waters that may by any stretch of nautical terms be called narrow, although he does not interfere in any way, if he be a gentleman, with the handling of the ship.'

thought perhaps to contain gold, the symbol of success which Almayer will not achieve. The furnishings are to impose Western power in its most important, commercial manifestation onto a culture with different and incompatible methods of trade.[19] Western knowledge and its means of security – a safe for material security, and ledgers to secure the record of transactions, assets, and liabilities – have to be hauled into the uncomprehending settlement, this laborious effort indicating the inappropriateness of their introduction. The thoughts of the jurumudi about the 'books of magic' that give white men 'their wicked wisdom and their strength' (pp. 299–300) are also ironically apt for, as Ray has shown, double-entry bookkeeping, representative of the force of Western culture, is crucial to commercial success in the increasingly globalized world.[20] This incompatibility of cultures and Almayer's lack of success are performed later by the invasion of his office by other possessions and furnishings, those of Joanna and Louis. As casualties of another example of failed trading – Willems' – there is, ironically, room for them only in a non-functioning office. Just as the people of Sambir, with their loud exclamations, seemed to threaten to overwhelm the arriving manifestations of alien trade, Joanna and Louis impose changes which emphasize the hollowness of Almayer's aspirations and, by implication, of colonial trade. Lingard & Co.'s land may be owned – 'Private property, that; under a deed from Patalolo' (p. 176) – but Joanna 'took possession' (pp. 300–01) of the office as if by a counterclaim. The resistance of Joanna's temporary, disordered furnishings to business order merits extended quotation:

> When Lingard ordered him to receive Joanna into his house, he had a truckle bed put into the office – the only room he could spare. The big office desk was pushed on one side, and Joanna came with her little shabby trunk and with her child and took possession in her dreamy, slack, half-asleep way; took possession of the dust, dirt, and squalor, where she appeared naturally at home, where she dragged a melancholy and dull existence; an existence made up of sad remorse and frightened hope, amongst the hopeless disorder – the senseless and vain decay of all these emblems of civilized commerce. Bits of white stuff; rags yellow, pink, blue: rags limp, brilliant and soiled, trailed on the floor, lay on the desk amongst the sombre covers of books soiled, grimy,

[19] This incompatibility suggests the much more fundamental incompatibilities of Western commerce with Asia: 'The commercial creed [. . .] was centred upon belief in the market, the price mechanism, a money economy and free trade. While these axioms of a commercial policy were relevant in the West, they were not valid in the East. Their dogmatic application in unsuitable conditions was, therefore, a measure of sublime ignorance of eastern economic structures.' Francis E. Hyde, *Far Eastern Trade 1860–1914* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1973), p. 16.

[20] p. 481.

> but stiff-backed, in virtue, perhaps, of their European origin. The biggest set of bookshelves was partly hidden by a petticoat, the waistband of which was caught upon the back of a slender book pulled a little out of the row so as to make an improvised clothespeg. The folding canvas bedstead stood nearly in the middle of the room, stood anyhow, parallel to no wall, as if it had been, in the process of transportation to some remote place, dropped casually there by tired bearers. (pp. 300–01)

Impermanence and the natural disorder of the human condition are indicated by the furnishings (a temporary 'truckle bed') and by their disposition (draped, dropped, trailing, or arbitrarily positioned). European inflexibility and intolerance are mirrored in the 'stiff-backed' books; the exposed underclothes and soiled rags evoke the arrivals' distressed condition. Not just clothing, but unidentifiable pieces of cloth are present, which might be old trade stock or more of Joanna's clothing; the two possibilities, intimately mingling the uses of commerce with the needs of the body, mark a reciprocal disintegration, the book transformed into a clothes-peg, and both books and rags soiled. The distress is accentuated by the discarding of clothing which should be closest to the skin, as if the human condition has been bared by the hanging petticoat and Joanna's 'stockingless feet' (p. 301). In this 'temple of an exploded superstition' (p. 300) only camping is possible, and, as if in judgment on its incompatible business, the tropical sun 'cut at midday the big desk in two with its solid and clean-edged brilliance' (p. 301).

Racial Borders and Racial Difference

Joanna, her Eurasian status at a racial border, is placed, significantly, among 'these emblems of civilized commerce' which lie on a commercial border between East and West. The unmatched colours of the rags metaphorically suggest Joanna's mixed racial origins, portrayed in the novel as a social disadvantage and despised by Aïssa and Ali; Aïssa describes her as 'a Sirani woman. A woman of a people despised by all' (p. 358).[21] The whole Da Souza family is similarly disdained, and Willems, despite his claim of

[21] Agnes Yeow explains that the term 'Sirani' is derived from 'Nazarene', meaning 'a person of mixed European and Asian descent' and, in the cases of Joanna as well as of Tamb'Itam in *Lord Jim*, a Christian. Ali's description of her as 'a Sirani woman – and ugly' (p. 307) accords with the term being used in Conrad, as Yeow states, 'for members of the Eurasian community who are physically unattractive, boorish, and loathsome to both prejudiced Malays and whites'. '"Here Comes the Nazarene": Conrad's Treatment of the Serani and the Racial Politics of Empire', *Conradiana*, 39/3 (2007), 273–90 (pp. 273, 274).

'having no colour-prejudices and no racial antipathies' (p. 35), describes them as:

> a numerous and an unclean crowd, living in ruined bamboo houses, surrounded by neglected compounds, on the outskirts of Macassar. He kept them at arm's length and even further off, perhaps, having no illusions as to their worth. They were a half-caste, lazy lot, and he saw them as they were – ragged, lean, unwashed, undersized men of various ages, shuffling about aimlessly in slippers; motionless old women who looked like monstrous bags of pink calico stuffed with shapeless lumps of fat. (p. 4)

The vicious description of the old women puts a sharp edge to Willems' earlier disdainful references to his brother-in-law's 'pink neckties' and 'patent-leather boots' (p. 3) which imply that the choice of pink and of patent finish are more 'native' than European, as with the colours of the rags associated with Joanna.[22] Colour pervades Willems' description of the family, ironically contradicting his claim to lack colour-prejudice: 'pale yellow child', 'half-caste wife', 'dark-skinned brother-in-law', 'young women, slim and yellow', and 'white husband' (pp. 3–4), the Other defined by its variance from white.[23] The Da Souzas, 'those degenerate descendants of Portuguese conquerors' (p. 4), embody the pernicious racial consequences of the times of colonial commercial intrusion. Just as Joanna is later shown as literally and figuratively confined in the office by that commerce, Almayer is confined as he is sewn up, ironically recalling his view of the debased state of the old women like 'monstrous bags'.

Willems declares himself an outcast of 'mankind' (p. 30). The opening description of the Da Souzas portrays an entire ethnic group as outcasts: 'unclean' and 'on the outskirts', the men 'undersized' (p. 4). By the Da Souzas' occupation of secondary space they declare themselves as secondary, a 'shabby multitude' (p. 4) which keeps together because it would not be

[22] Dress was a sensitive indicator of racial status, a way of signalling membership of colonial superiority. Thomson (p. 20) writes, somewhat mockingly, of an encounter in Penang with a man of Portuguese descent: 'His dress presented a strange but characteristic compromise between that of the European, the Chinese, and the Malay; his head was surmounted by a chimney-pot beaver hat [. . .] he politely offered to introduce me to his circle of acquaintances, who, he said, were all Europeans like himself. I felt puzzled to determine what constituted him a European, and was forced to the conclusion that it was the beaver hat.' *The Straits Eurasian Advocate* recorded defensively: 'Then there are the Klings, Siamese, and Chinese who having adopted European clothes are called Eurasians.!!' 7 April 1888, p. 6.

[23] F.H.H. Guillemard records that Eurasian women were termed 'the chocolate ladies' in Dutch East Indies society in Macassar, remarking on the Dutchmen who would marry 'not perhaps a half-caste, but some one [*sic*] whose dark hair and rich warm colouring betray the presence of other than European blood', the word 'betray' suggestive of the racial consciousness. *The Cruise of the Marchesa*, II: 156.

accepted elsewhere. Regarded by the Dutch as lazy, ignorant, and untidy,[24] not only are so-called Indos racially suspect, but to the European commercialized community their economic failure, and that of poor Europeans, was a severe embarrassment.[25] As Paul W. van der Veur observes, 'a Eurasian in colonial Indonesia was not merely a biological but a socio-economic and cultural concept',[26] and the representativeness of the Da Souzas' plight can be seen in Dutch colonial literature.[27] Their racial standing was ambivalent, for although they were classified from 1854 with whites as 'Europeans',[28] full acceptance into European society as equals was unlikely because of the demanding qualifying requirements.[29] Indeed, discrimination in employment and education was commonplace.[30] Joanna's marriage to the white Willems is an advance in her social position, part of the family's struggle to be considered as white, evident in the 'dark-skinned brother-in-law' describing Willems as 'a savage' and himself as one of the 'whites'

[24] See G.H. von Faber, comp., *Oud Soerabaia: De geschiedenis van Indië's eerste koopstad van de oudste tijden tot de instelling van de gemeenteraad (1906)* [Old Surabaya: The History of the Indies' First City of Commerce from the Earliest Times until the Establishment of the City Council] (Soerabaia: De Gemeente Soerabaia, 1931), p. 62. Rob Nieuwenhuijs notes that these commonly-held opinions often lacked any sympathetic awareness of why these Eurasian characteristics had arisen. 'Over de Europese samenleving van "tempo doeloe" 1870–1900' [European Society in the 'Old Days', 1870–1900], *De Fakkel*, 1 (1940/41), 773–803 (pp. 779–80).

[25] Nieuwenhuijs writes of the considerable social problem of the so-called Indos: 'This group was crushed, scorned and ridiculed by the other Europeans on account of their manners and their bad Dutch.' Their being 'pariahs of European society', and the fact that many of them lived 'on the margin of society – on the edge of the kampong', reflect Conrad's portrayal of the Da Souzas. Ibid., p. 779; my translations. '*Ambachtscholen*' (schools for learning a trade) were established to address the problem of 'Indo-paupers' and poor Europeans. Von Faber, pp. 265–68.

[26] 'The Eurasians of Indonesia: A Problem and Challenge in Colonial History', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 9/2 (September 1968), 191–207 (p. 191).

[27] For example, in Melati van Java (pseudo. Marie Sloot), *The Resident's Daughter*, trans. Dutch (London: Henry & Co., 1893). Writing of the late-nineteenth-century East Indies, de Nijs states: 'About three-quarters of the European population [of the Dutch East Indies] was of mixed blood, from white with light eyes and blond hair to a type that was indistinguishable from the Indonesian. We do not know the number of Indonesians who were "mixed" in this way [. . .]. The estimates differ fairly widely: from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands.' E. Breton de Nijs (pseudo. [Robert Nieuwenhuys]), *Tempo Doeloe: Fotografische documenten uit het oude Indië 1870–1914* [The Old Days: Photographic Documents from the Old Indies, 1870–1914] (Amsterdam: Em. Querido, 1961), p. 130; my translation.

[28] Hans van Marle, 'Explanatory Notes', in Joseph Conrad, *An Outcast of the Islands*, rev. edn, ed. J.H. Stape (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 284–96 (p. 287).

[29] Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 99.

[30] See J.R. van Diessen and F.J. Ormeling, *Grote Atlas van Nederlands Oost-Indië* [Comprehensive Atlas of the Dutch East Indies], 2nd extended edn (Utrecht: Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap, 2004), p. 71, and J.J. van Klaveren, *The Dutch Colonial System in the East Indies* ([Rotterdam(?)]: [n.pub.], 1953), pp. 168–69.

(p. 28).[31] It is also evident in Joanna and Leonard's father. For Leonard, he is '"our beloved father," a man of official position, a government agent in Koti, where he died of cholera, alas! a victim to duty, like a good Catholic and a good man' (pp. 34–35), whose religion and participation in government, albeit in what sounds to be a subaltern position in an obscure outpost in eastern Borneo, ally the family with European superiority.[32] Willems, however, focuses on the father's 'hopelessly mixed descent' (p. 36), placing him further from white origin. Justus M. van der Kroef describes three levels of Eurasian society in the Indies, of which the middle was 'petty officials, clerks and subalterns' and the lowest 'paupers, usually living in the native quarters (*kampong*) of the cities. This group was virtually entirely Indonesianized, yet was always aware of its European blood and its European names.'[33] It is this lowest level to which the Da Souzas belong, and they admire Leonard at least partly because he had risen to the middle level.[34]

Commercial Failure

As McClure asserts, Conrad believes that ethnocentricity is 'incapable of elimination',[35] and in the novel it is the non-Malay characters – Lingard, Almayer, Willems, and the Da Souzas – who are ironically cast as Other to the colonial subjects and seen as failures. Willems' isolation is enforced by Lingard, the Da Souzas' by Indies European society, and Almayer's situation foreshadows his isolation in *Almayer's Folly*. Lingard's failure can be read in his desperate plan to return to gold-mining, the most speculative of

[31] In a stimulating essay on relationships between the races, Gail Fraser includes Joanna and the Da Souzas with the Malays and Aïssa of Sambir as collectively part of the 'defeated or "inferior" race' feared by Europeans as 'native'. Though justified in the context of her particular point, in general the differences between Eurasian and Malay are important. 'Empire of the Senses: Miscegenation in *An Outcast of the Islands*', in *Contexts for Conrad*, ed. Keith Carabine, Owen Knowles, and Wiesław Krajka, pp. 121–33 (p. 130).

[32] Koti (Kutai) is mentioned later in connection with Patalolo having 'shaken off his allegiance to the Sultan of Koti' (p. 50).

[33] 'The Indonesian Eurasian and His Culture', *Phylon*, 16/4 (1955), 448–62 (p. 454). The anxiety of so-called '*Indo-paupers*' at that time to retain a sense of their European origin can be seen in their often using as a family name a back-to-front version of the name of the fathers who had not legally recognized them. For example, 'Remrev instead of Vermeer, Kijdsmeir instead of Riemsdijk, Esreteip instead of Fieterse'. Nieuwenhuijs, 'Over de Europese samenleving', p. 779; my translation.

[34] For further discussion about the situation of Eurasians, and about the partly related issues of concubinage and marriage in the Dutch East Indies, see Chapter 4. The discussion in this chapter and in Chapters 1 and 4 is brought together in a slightly fuller version in Andrew Francis, '"You always leave us – for your own ends": Marriage and Concubinage in Joseph Conrad's Asian Fiction', *The Conradian*, 35/2 (Autumn 2010), 46–62.

[35] p. 113.

activities.[36] Having lost both his monopoly in Sambir and his ship – the symbolic advantages of the colonizer – Lingard becomes an appropriately tenuous presence before disappearing to Europe, a commercial failure. The fate of Abdulla is not revealed, but examination of the historically specific commercial context at the time of the book's setting reveals that Arab trading eminence in the Malay Archipelago was already waning, as discussed earlier, something of which the novel's original readers may well have been more aware than modern readers. Its decline was partly due to the increase in steamshipping after the opening of the Suez Canal, for even though some Arab traders such as Abdulla acquired steamships, their previous reliance on sailing ships meant that they 'were pushed out of the burgeoning trade to Singapore and the Archipelago'.[37]

There was another equally important reason for Abdulla's probable decline, to do with the telegraph – one which Conrad subtly indicates in his portrayal of trade in the novel. In addition to the Arabs' lack of certain financial skills noted previously, Ray also argues that 'marine experience of the sailing age [was not] by itself a guarantee for success in an age when steamships would carry a new type of international trade conducted largely through forward transactions'.[38] The telegraph was key to forward trading, which benefited in the East from the telegraph's rapid expansion, in particular the cable laid in 1871 which connected 'Madras to Penang, Singapore, Batavia, Hongkong and Shanghai' (and thus to Britain).[39] We have already seen that double-entry bookkeeping is essential for the control of such trading, a skill that the Arab traders in the Archipelago did not have.[40] (It is ironic that Almayer, who was himself unable to put to profitable use the bookkeeping so essential to Hudig, possesses a key to eventual success unavailable to Abdulla.)[41] But Abdulla also had 'an immense correspondence, enclosed in silk envelopes – a correspondence which had nothing to do with the infidels of colonial post-offices' (p. 111), his disdain

[36] Lingard's enthusiasm is naïve not least in his intentions to form 'a Company. In Batavia or in England. Yes, in England. Much better' (p. 194). À Campo notes that 'although the Dutch propagated, and to a large extent, pursued an open door policy, in practice foreign companies sometimes met with distrust, lack of co-operation or even surreptitious opposition'. 'The Rise of Corporate Enterprise', p. 77.

[37] Ray, p. 482.

[38] Ibid., p. 454.

[39] Ibid., p. 477.

[40] Ibid., pp. 481–82.

[41] William Foster observed that 'the connection between careful systematic book-keeping and Success in Life is not so readily admitted as it should be'. Foster's remark is in the context of the information to be gained from comparing one year's figures with another, but while this may have been relevant to Hudig, Almayer is incapable of generating sufficient trade to warrant the analysis. *Universal Book-Keeping, or Errors in Book-Keeping, and How to Avoid Them* (London: Groombridge, [1886(?)]), p. v.

for Western communication, including by implication the telegraph, rendering him unable to adapt to the new market conditions. 'Silk envelopes' containing communications such as that received by Lingard, 'calligraphed carefully on a large sheet of paper, nearly as stiff as cardboard',[42] denote a trading culture the traditional character of which is as inflexible as the stiffness of its communications (echoing Almayer's 'stiff-backed' books (p. 301)), an irony surrounding Abdulla's belief in his superiority which is evident from reading the text through commerce.[43] In a further irony, the extension of the telegraph to Penang occurs when Abdulla leaves his 'splendid house in Penang' (p. 111) to reside in Sambir so that he can be 'away from white men' (p. 364). This cultural retreat from the European colonizers, whom it had been his family's tradition to face intrepidly, is also an indication of his probable decline, for in Sambir he puts himself conclusively beyond the reach of the telegraph.[44]

The Primacy of Commerce

The thread of commerce in the novel therefore demonstrates not only the expansionist and psychological goals of colonialism, but also the profound and pervasive impact of trade on lives at every level.[45] Its enduring importance in comparison with even political concerns is conveyed by the portrayal of flags. While the Malays combine interests with Abdulla (a

[42] This quotation is from Joseph Conrad, *An Outcast of the Islands*, rev. edn, ed. J.H. Stape (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 156, an edition which takes as its copy text the first English edition, by T. Fisher Unwin (London: 1896). The Dent Uniform edition has only 'caligraphed [*sic*] carefully on a large sheet of flimsy paper' (p. 203), with no mention of cardboard.

[43] In connection with Dain in *Almayer's Folly*, Hampson argues that the text 'calls on a range of knowledges from the implied reader [and] assumes readers with a range of cultural knowledge [. . .]. Alternately, it might be argued that the text works to construct such readers.' *Cross-Cultural Encounters*, p. 103. Commercial knowledge can be argued as being another component of that cultural knowledge.

[44] It is interesting to note that in its obituary of 22 May 1894 of Syed Moshin, father of the historical Syed Abdullah on whom Conrad's Syed Abdulla is based, the *Singapore Free Press* records: 'In time he amassed a good deal of money and bought some steamers [including the *Vidar*], and was a rich man; but his business did not continue to prosper, for times changed and the old systems of thirty or forty years before were no longer successful after the many changes which the opening of the Suez Canal and speedy steamer communication to all the native countries round Singapore brought about. In 1891 he was compelled to place his affairs in the hands of trustees for his creditors'. Quoted in Gavin Young, *In Search of Conrad* (London: Hutchinson, 1991), pp. 278–79 (p. 278). Syed Abdullah was buried in Bulungan, having died in 1911. Ibid., pp. 282, 279.

[45] D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke surely underestimates the role of commerce in Conrad when he writes that 'An Outpost of Progress' 'is confined by the limits of petty trading' and that 'the perils of petty trading in an outpost constitute only a minor aspect' of 'Heart of Darkness'. *Developing Countries in British Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 100, 101.

British Arab) to invoke Dutch colonial protection for their own ends by raising the Dutch flag, Almayer (a Dutchman) successfully invokes the security of the Union Jack for Lingard & Co.'s property, the flag to which Jim-Eng (a British Chinese) is also loyal. Political allegiance is thus portrayed as fluid, ambivalent, and largely secondary to commercial interests, a view ironically reinforced by the fact that the weighty matter of Dutch protection can be expediently achieved merely by a flag 'made hurriedly, during the night, of cotton stuffs' (p. 179), lacking any enduring significance. That the flag 'being heavy, hung down the mast' (p. 179) meant presumably that the colours of the flag were barely evident, which can be read as emphasizing the irrelevance of any particular nation's colonial power and asserting a common colonial complicity regardless of nationality. When 'many years afterwards Almayer was telling the story of the great revolution in Sambir' (p. 360), the term 'revolution', denoting fundamental political change, is heavily ironized, for no such change has occurred: one colonizer has merely been substituted for another in a commercial takeover. As the impetuous Bahassoen says, 'Trading was very good. But was the change that would make them happy effected yet? The white man should be despoiled with a strong hand!' (p. 137). Another white man's protection has been invoked to support a replacement for Lingard, a replacement who will provide even less commercial freedom. Sahamin looks forward to the revolution simply as a commercial benefit with its erasure of debts, albeit those debts will soon be replaced by new ones to Abdulla; the valour remembered by Bahassoen is an anachronism in this commercialized world.

It is entirely appropriate that Almayer's concluding view of the world as 'a swindle!' (p. 367) expresses a financial outcome to existence, in which Willems' 'glorious uncertainty of a money hunt' (p. 334) appears paramount. It is also fitting that, the foundation of his beliefs having been shaken, Almayer, in using 'Father' as a form of address for his father-in-law Lingard, should deny him in terms that suggest a biblical despair at having been forsaken: 'Father was wrong – wrong!' (p. 368). It is a despair that, while declaring the merely commercial ambitions of many of the participants in the colonial endeavour, marks the failure even of these within a wider cultural failure.

CHAPTER 3

Standing Out against the Irresistibility of Progress: The Rescue

> Conrad's particular attitude toward the region, its affairs, and its people was manifested many times in the way he ignored the 'official' picture and institutions. For example, he avoided the very name 'Dutch Indies,' and seemed disinterested [*sic*] in the predatory colonial centers, distrusted the Dutch version of the history of the region, preferring to concentrate on the real, specific cares of the aboriginal inhabitants, their traditions, their myths, and their scale of values.[1]

The Rescue (1920), written in two phases, derives from both Conrad's early and late writing. While concentrating on one short-lived and local event – the consequences of the stranding of a yacht in an uncertain location against the background of an internal Malay struggle for power – this novel invokes the widest spread of geography and history of all Conrad's Asian fiction. The geographical, historical, and cultural contexts enable Conrad to articulate powerfully – and more negatively and trenchantly than in any other work of his Asian fiction – the wider significance of this minor event as representative of a turning-point in global history in both commercial and political terms.

Eloise Knapp Hay supports Moser's negative opinion about Conrad's later fiction for Conrad's '"surrender"' that manifested itself not only in his 'lapse into the uncongenial subject of romantic love but also surrender to belief [*sic*] that it is history that shapes individual lives rather than men who shape history'.[2] Arguing that 'Lingard's conflicting loyalties to a Malayan political cause and to the Western intruders who foil it bring, perhaps force, Conrad for the first time to unleash certain bitter reflections on modern politics', Hay finds the characterization of both Lingard and Edith Travers weak. She writes that Lingard 'was to be from beginning to end a perfectly

[1] Andrzej Braun, 'The Myth-Like Kingdom of Conrad', *Conradiana*, 10/1 (1978), 3–16 (pp. 13–14).
[2] *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad: A Critical Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 84.

disinterested sailor, admirable for unschooled virtues and a kind of virility, which – because Conrad denied to it any intellectual force – unhappily came to nothing more than a frustrated and frustrating sex appeal'.[3] Hay has related reservations of Edith Travers: 'The best Conrad could do [. . .] was to develop the lady as a *femme fatale*'.[4] However, instead of restricting our view of the relationship and the two characters to such somewhat narrow terms, they can be seen as occupying a central position in Conrad's portrayal of the broader historical and political significance of the story, as well as a more successful depiction of romantic and sexual love than some critics have allowed and which Thomas Moser felt was 'not congenial to Conrad's creativity'.[5]

Colonialism's Antecedents, and Commerce

While, as Hay argues, *The Rescue* enables Conrad to reflect on 'modern politics', its political and social scope is considerably wider than this suggests. Rather, it realizes the history of European colonialism and commerce and the advent of modern globalization, and interrogates their consequences. This scope is apparent in the very first paragraph: the geography is defined as that of 'the Malay Archipelago' (p. 3); the national scope is declared to be that of 'the Portuguese, the Spaniards, the Dutch, and the English', the whole 'western race', as well as the Malays; and the topic is the 'long struggle' in the face of 'advancing civilization' (p. 3). In a passage shortly afterwards, which praises a thinly disguised James Brooke, the reader's attention is drawn away from the violence of the history to the 'purity of his motives', 'high mind', and 'pure heart' (p. 4), linking him with adventurers who shared 'his sympathy with the people of forests and sea' (p. 4). His being claimed on such grounds as an exception to the general experience of colonialism sits uncomfortably beside the previous observations about colonial progress, this discomfort only increased by the statement that 'he recognized chivalrously the claims of the *conquered*' (p. 4, emphasis added), a statement which can be read at least partly ironically. It is a tension which persists throughout the novel.

The action of the novel centres on an undefined and potentially violent geography, 'that deserted part of the coast' (p. 54), 'known for ages to the

[3] Ibid., pp. 88, 96.
[4] Ibid., p. 105.
[5] Thomas Moser, '"The Rescuer" Manuscript: A Key to Conrad's Development – and Decline', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 10/3 (Autumn 1956), 325–55 (p. 330).

armed wanderers of these seas as "The Shore of Refuge"' (p. 63). Located probably in Dutch south-west Borneo, the setting, comparable to that of eastern Borneo in *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*, is also politically remote. Comprehensive mapping of Dutch Borneo was not achieved until the twentieth century, and, to the European at least, could indeed qualify as deserted, a description which is also part of the novel's portrayal.[6] It is, above all, location defined by indefinition, a place suitable for a fresh examination of the impact of 'civilization', for whereas the colonial Other is defined by absence, this coast posits a prior state of emptiness, before the determination of Other, an experimental location for that examination, albeit the stranded travellers imply the eventual inescapability of colonial intrusion and Western commerce. Two cultures are thereby set against each other, the first represented by Lingard, the Malay-speaking adventurer whose 'sympathy' (p. 4) for the Malay race is lauded at the novel's opening, but which is revealed as vulnerable to the second culture, European civilization, with its yacht and tourists.[7] The inevitable outcome, while suggesting the impossibility of one culture entirely overcoming another, condemns the colonial endeavour, regardless of good intentions.

Lingard's supremely confident project for the restoration of Hassim and Immada to their Wajo kingdom can only be unachievable, for, despite Lingard's view that this part of the coast is 'as quiet and retired as the heart of man could wish' (pp. 37–38), Lingard is aware of the threat of interference from colonial gunboats, in addition to which the encroachment of Western civilization makes itself felt, at least partly through the commercial context. Places where 'European trade had not penetrated' are enumerated, to which by long-established tradition 'the younger sons and relations of many a native ruler' (p. 68) still traded: Aru, near New Guinea; Aceh, the sultanate in northern Sumatra still independent of the Dutch; Sumbawa, east of Java and not yet having acknowledged Dutch sovereignty; and Palawan in the Spanish Philippines. The enumeration only serves, however, to emphasize the extensiveness of colonial domination over the vast remainder. The scale of European influence is further accentuated by the Malay Archipelago being linked to a wider sphere of Western and globalized reference,

[6] The north-east coast of Borneo, for example, is described as '*côtes désertes*' ['uninhabited coasts'] on 'L'Asie divisée en ses principaux états' ['Asia divided into its principal States'], a map, by 'A. Janvier' (Paris: Lattré, [1780(?)]) which can be seen in the Muzium Negara [National Museum], Kuala Lumpur. It is in fact probably by Jean Denis [Robert] Janvier. See Josephine French et al., eds., *Tooley's Dictionary of Mapmakers*, rev. edn, 4 vols (1999–2004), II, ed. Josephine French (Riverside, CT: Early World, 2001), 430–31.

[7] Lingard's intercultural sympathies, like Jörgenson's relationship with 'the girl' (p. 91), are also evident in the 'Indian tablecloth' and curtains of 'Chinese silk' on the *Flash* (pp. 31, 32).

evidenced by Lingard being in harbours 'from Rangoon to Hongkong' (p. 99). Rangoon lies to the west of the Archipelago and, as capital of British Lower Burma, was one of the most recent colonial encroachments in Asia; Hong Kong evokes British ambitions in China. Further indications are provided by global trade in Malay waters: a 'big New York ship, loaded with oil in cases for Japan' and 'a London tea-clipper' (p. 92) pass Lingard, their purposeful movement along a stretch of sea which can now qualify as a 'fair-way' (p. 92) because of the amount of traffic; oil conveys Japan's growing Westernization and its own imperial ambitions, and the New York ship the commercial influence of the United States. The New York ship's skipper and first mate notice Lingard's brig as being 'very smart' (p. 92), as if in these modern times it is only quaintly ornamental, especially as it is inexplicably motionless. Burgeoning European economic activity is also evident in references to Batavia and particularly Singapore, with its 'Harbour Office' and 'Occidental Bank' (p. 97), where the administrative and commercial powers implied by those institutions are quite at odds with Lingard's independent ways of working.[8] The Occidental Bank, in the modern way, collects many depositors' funds in order to make money available to others, whereas Lingard acquired the *Lightning* from 'a run of luck on the Victorian goldfields' (p. 10).[9] An agent for a 'Dutch crockery house' has 'flooded the market' (p. 95) with his wares, and the remark that 'there isn't a mangy cannibal left in the whole of New Guinea that hasn't got a cup and saucer of your providing' (p. 95) is sharply ironic, signifying the exposure of the remotest places to the surpluses of European production, their sale transforming human geography into economic geography and indirectly imposing European cultural values. The arms-dealer who sells to Lingard connects 'one of the secret places of the earth' (p. 285) with the heart of American manufacturing and the sale of Western arms, regardless of their intended use.

Colonialism's Antecedents, and Politics

In addition to these commercial pressures, which compress the dwindling geography available to Lingard for his free-ranging independence, political pressures are equally at work. As we have seen, the varied colonial interests

[8] Although not mentioned by name, Singapore is evidently the location of the particular one of 'the Settlements' visited by Lingard, given the existence there of these two institutions and 'the Esplanade' (p. 97).

[9] Lingard's independent character and his participation in an older generation of seafaring are suggested by Carter addressing him as 'captain' and Lingard replying that he is the 'master' (p. 30).

of Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, and Britain are stated at the beginning of the novel; they are nations against whom the Malay race '*had* fought' (p. 3, emphasis added).[10] Ironically, Shaw's comment that his father had been at the Battle of Navarino (1827) recalls Britain and her allies fighting the Turks in order to secure the independence of Greece from another, earlier, imperial power. There are frequent indications of more recent struggles against the colonizers in relation to the action of the book, set in 1859–60.[11] Jörgenson's support of Malay resistance goes back to when 'the white-clad Padris preached and fought all over Sumatra till the Dutch shook in their shoes' (p. 92). He also 'advised the chiefs of Manangkabo' and was at 'the taking of Singal', the site of a remarkable resistance during the Padri Wars,[12] when he 'ranged the coast – and laughed at the [Dutch] cruisers' (p. 102). In north Sumatra he 'saw every battle fought in the Battak country', and 'knew Sentot when he was King of the South Shore of Java and the Dutch offered a price for his head – enough to make any man's fortune' (p. 102). Jörgenson's question 'Whom did I not know?' (p. 102) underlines the breadth of his involvement in resisting Dutch expansion and hence his being qualified to present an account of its long and bitter history in the East Indies. Dutch power is now implicit in the Wajo unrest of which Lingard's project is part.[13] Although the Dutch are not presently involved directly, Jörgenson suspiciously remarks 'And suppose the Dutch want the things just so' (p. 101), a reference no doubt to the 'chronic state of disturbance' (p. 78) there which may serve, as it often did, as a pretext for Dutch intervention, frequently followed by political control or annexation.[14] Belarab's recollection of his youth, fighting for his father (with whom Jörgenson escaped), includes the memory of 'their women and children killed in the stockade before the besieged sallied forth to die'

[10] Christopher GoGwilt notes that the Malay race first struggles against these four nations, and then is described as being conquered by 'the western race'. *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 72.

[11] This dating is from Hampson, *Cross-Cultural Encounters*, p. 17.

[12] Singkil was occupied in 1840, and Minangkabau was conquered 1821–38. Cribb, *Historical Atlas*, p. 115, Map 4.3.

[13] For a detailed account of Wajo politics, including Dutch involvement, see Braun, 3–16.

[14] Robert Caserio writes that 'however uneasy the Malay diversity makes its components, the natives do not seek to dominate each other as the whites seek to dominate them'. '*The Rescue* and the Ring of Meaning', in *Conrad Revisited: Essays for the Eighties*, ed. Ross C. Murfin (Alabama: Alabama University Press, 1985), pp. 125–49 (p. 131). However, the history of Malay rivalries, such as the Wajo unrest and the rivalries within Bali and between Bali and Lombok, makes it plain that a desire by Malays to dominate Malays was not uncommon and was not infrequently achieved, a tendency that is suggested by the jealousies between the different factions in The Shore of Refuge. When Conrad was in the Archipelago in 1888 there was significant unrest among the indigenous population in Wajo (as well as fighting against the Dutch in other parts of southern Celebes).

(p. 111), reminiscent of the later struggle in Bali where the fierceness and sacrifice of the opposition to the Dutch were notable.[15] Unsuccessful though these struggles ultimately were, they are part of the background to the remarkable declaration at the beginning of the novel that 'the race of men who had fought against the Portuguese, the Spaniards, the Dutch and the English, has not been changed by the unavoidable defeat', keeping 'to this day their love of liberty' (p. 3). Furthermore, the Dutch achievement is portrayed as insecure, perhaps provisional, succeeding in imposing only a 'comparative peace', 'at the cost of much blood and gold' (p. 68).

Nevertheless, 'tomorrow the advancing civilization will obliterate the marks of a long struggle in the accomplishment of its inevitable victory' (p. 3). D'Alcacer's uncle being the Governor-General of the Philippines further deepens the impression of European incursion, in which d'Alcacer, 'more of a European than of a Spaniard' (p. 309), echoes Kurtz's representative Europeanness in 'Heart of Darkness';[16] similarly, Shaw remarks on the possibility of war between Britain and China. Travers, noting that the coast 'has been placed under the sole protection of Holland by the Treaty of 1820' (p. 147), is no doubt referring to the 1824 treaty between Britain and the Netherlands, which shaped colonial and post-colonial polities in the region and which indicates the awareness of the legacy of colonial history in the novel. It is at the same time an ironic observation, for 'under the sole protection of' recalls the concomitant dilution of indigenous rights and the benefits to the colonial power.

[15] There were two mass suicides in particular: one in Badung ('the king, his wives, his children, and his entourage') in 1906, and one in Klungkung in 1908. Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 11. In Klungkung, 'the Balinese kings, queens, princesses and their followers armed themselves with swords and spears to face the Dutch forces. Dressed in ceremonial white, they marched into a barrage of Dutch bullets and cannons where death was bloody, brutal and certain. A total of over 1,300 of the ruling class and their servants died in these actions that the Balinese still speak about today.' Vickers, p. 14. Another case, in Lombok in 1894, was described by Capt. Cool (pp. 355–56):

> all the remaining members of the reigning family with their suite [. . .] men, women and children [. . .] were ready to seek death and had arrayed themselves in their most elegant dresses, adorned themselves with jewelry, armed themselves with the sacred kris or spear and, thus prepared, they hurried themselves with all their strength on our soldiers. This was the famous 'poepotan!' [a 'last desperate struggle' (p. 104)] Our soldiers did not hesitate for a moment; the enemy was quickly decimated; few came within reach of our bayonets, those who were not immediately shot down took their own lives rather than fall into our hands. Amongst those killed in this last struggle were [. . .] all the daughters of the Rajah [. . .]. Twelve men occupying the highest positions and fifty of the most noted women died like heroes.

[16] The Spanish had conducted a long and harsh campaign against the Sulu people from the mid-nineteenth century, whose territory they had designs upon and whose trade they envied, a campaign of which Conrad would have been aware.

'The Lagoon'

Another example of white support for Malays (whether against the Dutch or other Malays is not stated) occurs in 'The Lagoon' (1898), an early story in which the unidentified 'white man' (p. 155) has fought alongside Arsat 'in a far country' (p. 158). Arsat's declaration, that 'we are of a people who take what they want – like you whites' (p. 161), disturbingly identifies one aspect of both colonial and indigenous ambition, a complexity in Conrad's portrayal which is apparent in others of his works. While European support can inspire fidelity and loyalty, it is revealed as essentially short-lived (as Arsat says, 'you went away from my country in the pursuit of your desires which we, men of the islands, can not understand' (p. 160)) and, perhaps, ultimately merely meddlesome (like Lingard's in *The Rescue*), Arsat's brother having received a gun from the white man for which now there is 'only a handful of powder' (p. 164), the lack of powder itself resembling those brief European 'desires'.

Cultural Competition

In the stillness of the apparently deserted Malay coast in *The Rescue*, as if at some anticipatory defining moment of history, Malay and European cultures are ranged against each other, suspended, like the stranded yacht, in time and space. The underlying equality of the two races, and the helplessness of Europeans when not supported by the products of their culture, are suggested by the hands of Travers' watch, which he says are 'broken off short. It keeps on ticking but I can't tell the time' (p. 337), whereas Malays, as if having overcome time, are 'people to whom time is nothing and whose life and activities are not ruled by the clock' (p. 415). Any suggestion of the superiority of European culture is additionally undermined by the party's being tourists, for whom, in contrast to the earnest activities of the Malays, mobility has become movement lacking serious purpose; Travers' lack of courtesy contrasts with 'the well-bred air of discreet courtesy' (p. 74) of the Malays. The European presence represents two different forms of cultural intervention in the Archipelago, as conveyed by the ships' names: Lingard's *Lightning* suggesting rapidity and intermittence, and the tourists' *Hermit*, isolation, plainly visible in Travers' unwillingness to engage with Malay culture and people. Selfish, hypocritical, and 'ignorant of human passion', his discourse on 'commerce, administration, and politics' comprises merely 'monologues' (p. 123). Travers stands for the unthinking approach to progress, based on violent

supremacy: 'And if the inferior race must perish, it is a gain, a step toward the perfecting of society which is the aim of progress' (p. 148). Travers is eager – ironically, given his own oppressive views – to expose the Dutch colonial system, possibly because of the Compulsory Cultivation System which at the time of the action was controversial in the Netherlands and abroad, his apparent devotion to a just cause no doubt in fact due to his desire to extract 'the greatest possible amount of personal advantage from human institutions' (p. 123).

Lingard, as we have seen, stands for an arguably more sympathetic European involvement, one, like Jörgenson, of 'the common crowd of seamen-traders of the Archipelago', who 'if they emerged from their obscurity it was only to be condemned as law-breakers' (p. 4). This illegality, apparently the result of resistance to colonial expansion and regulation, is significant: 'Their lives were thrown away for a cause that had no right to exist in the face of an irresistible and orderly progress' (p. 4). Linked with the model of the 'disinterested adventurer' (p. 4) Brooke, whose establishment in Borneo frustrated the Dutch colonial vision there, the suggestion is of participation in political change not aligned with the policies of the colonial powers. Lingard's independent behaviour, together with his strength and sense of purpose, cast him as heroic. 'There is real greatness in that man' (p. 399) concludes Mrs Travers, and d'Alcacer believes that Lingard's 'was the most masculinely good-looking face he had ever seen in his life' (p. 409). Lingard's pose is likened to those 'on the sculptures of ancient tombs' (p. 411). The heroic impression is heightened by the brig being powerfully armed, by Lingard's 'romantic' and 'chivalrous' nature (p. 74), and by his reputation among his crew for his invincibility in the face of enemies and at sea ('I have heard him often cry magic words that make all safe' (p. 47), says the *kassab*), Lingard's confidence such that, if unarmed, 'I can make shift to kill a man with my fist' (p. 70).[17] Lingard's desire to help in Malay affairs, however, is as untenable in the new age as it was earlier in the case of Jörgenson, 'an evident failure' (p. 91), who remarks: 'I came to them from the other side of the earth and they took me and – see what they made of me' (p. 104). Just as Lingard's posture links him to a tomb, the inscription

[17] Lingard's supreme confidence in the novel is not only reminiscent of his attitude in *An Outcast of the Islands*, but of the historical William Lingard: à Campo quotes, from a Dutch Lieutenant-Commander's report of 1867, Lingard's saying in connection with his rescuing the *SS Reteh* that he '"was so seen and feared in those parts that he could be a guarantee for everything"'. 'A Profound Debt', p. 96. It was for this rescue that Lingard eventually received the rank of Knight in the Order of the Dutch Lion (p. 98).

on Jörgenson's presentation sextant case, 'like an inscription on a tomb' (p. 90), provides a similar link for Jörgenson.

The Irresistibility of Progress

The Rescue proposes and then confounds resistance to 'an irresistible and orderly progress' (p. 4), a progress that includes the ideology of colonialism: the relationship between Lingard and Edith Travers offers the promise of such resistance before performing the irresistibility of that progress and its impact on even personal relationships. Having 'nothing to hope for now' (p. 152), following her marriage, Edith Travers longs 'to know the naked truth of things; the naked truth of life and passion buried under the growth of centuries' (p. 153). Lingard, to whom she is attracted because he is, revealingly, 'a man who concealed nothing' (p. 165), potentially offers such knowledge. Whereas the *femme fatale* to whom Hay likens Edith Travers suggests a woman's influence on a man, Edith Travers is in fact as much affected by Lingard as he is by her. '*Femme fatale*' also hardly does justice to her attempted resistance to her society's severe limitations on her role – 'Don't you see that I have no kingdoms to conquer?' (p. 215) – a resistance which manifests itself in the novel largely in terms of sight and the body, her distinctive 'violet eyes' (p. 144) emblematic of unusual vision. In language which evokes the sexual body and which merges its desires and nakedness with a desire for a finer knowledge than that available to so-called progress, lack of concealment and 'naked truth' are epitomized by the image of Lingard stripping her – of 'her position, of her wealth, of her rank, of her past' (p. 167). Her resistance is similarly expressed through images of hair, posture, and dress, all with sexual implications and performing what the constraints of her society will not permit to be articulated. On the *Emma*, during the long and disagreeable conversation with her husband, her hair, clothes, and posture have changed. Her hair is 'all loose over the back of the chair' (p. 263), a 'great mass of honey-coloured hair' (p. 264), such undressed hair representing a sexual and social challenge to him. Similarly, she twice 'clasped her hands behind her head' (pp. 264, 268), and she has put on some of the clothes intended for Immada, clothes which slip and bare her skin: 'The wide sleeves slipping back bared her arms to her shoulders. She was wearing a Malay thin cotton jacket, cut low in the neck without a collar [. . .] . She had replaced her yachting skirt by a blue check *sarong* embroidered with threads of gold' (pp. 264–65). The combination of her hair, posture, and exposure constitute a powerful sexual assertion to her husband. Although his 'eyes travelling slowly down attached themselves to

the gleaming instep of an agitated foot from which hung a light leather sandal' (p. 265), this departure from expectations of dress and decorum does not result in any attraction – indeed, he is merely 'satisfied with her beauty' (p. 152) – but instead, impotently, in accusations of her not being in 'possession of feelings appropriate to your origin, social position, and the ideas of the class to which you belong' (p. 267).

Edith Travers was previously wearing a 'yachting skirt' (p. 265). R. Turner Wilcox describes a lady's yachting costume as usually consisting of a 'white flannel or heavy linen skirt worn with shirtwaist with stiff collar and bow tie. [. . .] A mannish peaked cap completed the outfit.'[18] This mimics Britain's maritime tradition, and, resembling a uniform, standardizes and restricts the feminine into an image of the male. In abandoning her yachting skirt, a fashionable item denoting a pastime, Edith Travers has substituted clothes 'fit for a princess' (p. 274) which were to have been presented to Immada, denoting an active, meaningful role: her sandals 'forced her to alter her usual gait' (p. 284). Travers is unable to understand why she 'should be carried away suddenly by a feeling toward the mere man' (p. 268), and, while this is a reference to Lingard as being of an inferior class, it reveals Travers' inability to relate to what is entirely ('mere') man – that is to say, male. Thinking 'that this discussion was perfectly useless', she appropriately 'finished putting up her hair' (p. 273). Calling her 'primitive' (p. 270) and 'heathenish in this costume' (p. 275), he accuses her of potential sexual immorality: 'It's my belief, Edith, that if you had been a man you would have led a most irregular life. You would have been a frank adventurer. I mean morally' (p. 268). For Edith Travers, however, her previous clothes were merely a 'European [. . .] disguise' (p. 303). The 'muslin cage' (p. 304) in which the Travers and d'Alcacer live on the *Emma* both traps and protects – 'an enchanted cobweb' (p. 278) – an apt image for their constrained civilization, unable to engage with other cultures and vulnerable without even this flimsy protection.[19] After the conversation with her husband, Edith Travers turned 'her back on the Cage' (p. 285), a renunciation both literal and figurative, if temporary.

The contrast between Travers' and Lingard's responses to Edith Travers is marked. Whereas Travers says 'I would rather be anywhere than here looking on at you' (p. 353), Lingard looks at her so intensely that she says

[18] *The Dictionary of Costume* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1970), p. 401. A shirtwaist was 'the feminine adaptation of the masculine shirt'. Ibid., p. 318.

[19] Susan Jones rightly refers to the cage acting as 'a gauze which obscures clear vision and meaning'. *Conrad and Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 188.

'I can't stand being looked at like this. No woman could stand it. No woman has ever been looked at like this' (p. 325). In a passage which turns on the allure of a fallen sandal following Lingard's pulling Edith Travers through a narrow hole into the stockade, an act suggestive of penetrating defences, Lingard and Edith Travers perform a virtual sexual union:

> his helpful and irresistible grip had changed into a close clasp, a crushing embrace, the violent taking possession by an embodied force that had broken loose and was not to be controlled any longer. [. . .] Every time she tried instinctively to stiffen herself against its might, it reacted, affirming its fierce will, its uplifting power. Several times she lost the feeling of the ground and had a sensation of helplessness without fear, of triumph without exultation. (pp. 394–95)

> As if something imperative had been satisfied she had a moment of inward serenity, a period of peace without thought while, holding to that arm that trembled no more than an arm of iron, she felt stealthily over the ground for one of the sandals which she had lost. Oh, yes, there was no doubt of it, she had been carried off the earth, without shame, without regret. But she would not have let him know of that dropped sandal for anything in the world. That lost sandal was as symbolic as a dropped veil. [. . .] When she stood up, still holding his arm, they confronted each other, he rigid in an effort of self-command but feeling as if the surges of the heaviest sea that he could remember in his life were running through his heart; and the woman as if emptied of all feeling by her experience. (pp. 395–96)

These passages suggest the possibility of an outcome that, for Lingard and Edith Travers at least, is capable of resisting the restraining forces to which she has been subject, as well as Conrad's success in portraying the culmination of their relationship. Such resistance is also suggested by the wider possibilities for women in Wajo culture, which contrasts with Travers' low opinion of both his wife and of Malays, and with the 'civilized' d'Alcacer's cynical view of women 'that strictly speaking they had only one resource but, generally, it served' (p. 408). For Travers, his wife is under his protection in as limiting a fashion as the coast is under the Netherlands', the body and the body politic controlled alike. As Edith Travers informs her husband, there is 'a far-distant land where I am informed women rule as much as the men' (p. 274), and the Wajo Jaffir 'did not regard women as untrustworthy or unequal to a task requiring courage and judgment' (p. 384) – qualities which Edith Travers has amply demonstrated, with Carter describing her as 'the best man of them all on board' (p. 182). Dressed in a princess's clothes and acting incisively, she seems to possess the characteristics necessary for escape from her social entrapment. Her failure

to do so, communicated on the sandbank with Lingard, takes place suitably on a liminal, tenuous site, suggesting the insubstantiality of the life to which her decision will condemn her as well as the ultimate impossibility of resistance, for her as for the Malays.[20] Significantly, although briefly transformed by wearing clothes intended for Immada, Edith Travers could see them only as costume – like her yachting skirt, which brings no responsibility for the vessel – as if in an 'exotic opera' (p. 295).[21]

Relations between the Races

In the historical background to Conrad's Asian fiction is an uneasy relationship between white men and indigenous women, in which the indigenous woman, often as concubine, occupied an insecure position both legally and financially, often fearing the European man's departure.[22] While Edith Travers' position is legally and financially secure, it is similarly entirely dependent on a man and can be read as suggesting profound ironies in relation to such dependent relationships – reminiscent of concubinage – in European culture and to the dramatically different possibilities offered by Wajo culture. In a significant commentary on relationships between European men and indigenous women, a model of selfless and oddly victorious love is seen in Jörgenson and his native wife. Jörgenson, now dependent on her rather than she on him, acknowledges that 'if it hadn't been for the girl, I would have died in a ditch ten years ago' (p. 103). The fact that Jörgenson had given 'three hundred dollars and several brass guns' (p. 105) for her marks her out as having been a young woman of high standing. It is significant too that they have recently been married, for, while this might at first sight suggest the tenacity of the Christian 'missionary from Bukit Timah' (p. 105), the fact that the obstinate Jörgenson had consented to the marriage suggests an enduring commitment, as does his making provision for her – 'remember the girl must eat' (p. 104) – should he die.[23] Although their relationship is only briefly portrayed, there is

[20] This interpretation of Lingard and Edith Travers' relationship thus differs from Benita Parry's, who sees it as part of 'diverting attention from the inscribed political perspective'. *Conrad and Imperialism: Ideological Boundaries and Visionary Frontiers* (London: Macmillan, 1983), p. 43.

[21] See Hampson, *Cross-Cultural Encounters*, pp. 178–81 for further discussion of 'cultural cross-dressing' (p. 179) in *The Rescue*.

[22] Uneasy relationships between European men and indigenous women are reflected in Jewel's family history in *Lord Jim* and are discussed more fully in Chapter 4. Conrad does not use the term 'concubine' in his Asian fiction.

[23] Bukit Timah, at that time a small settlement in an area of plantations and jungle several miles north of the commercial and political heart of Singapore around its port, and now part of its suburbs, was an

perhaps a tenderness implicit in Jörgenson's still referring to her as 'girl', and the relationship does succeed in resisting the political and commercial imperatives of the novel: it is a marriage of West and East, but, like the adventurer who contracted it, it remains obscure, part of the culture of a former age, detached from the colonial core (as Jörgenson and his wife's linking with Bukit Timah also suggests). For the present, those men, such as the politician Travers, who are most representative of their nations and of progress demonstrate the completeness of that progress's intrusion; adventurousness has become Travers' merely 'respectable ideals' (p. 152). Travers, whose habits fittingly 'are the outcome of strict method' (p. 337), is a man so well regulated that his feelings are something which he is not in the habit of 'compromising' (p. 271).

An arresting image appears twice which contrasts Edith Travers with Immada: Edith Travers 'asserted herself before the girl of olive face and raven locks with the maturity of perfection, with the superiority of the flower over the leaf, of the phrase that contains a thought over the cry that can only express an emotion' (p. 140); it recurs as 'the beginning and the end, the flower and the leaf, the phrase and the cry' (p. 148). These comparisons lead the reader to consider their aptness in describing the two civilizations. While 'the beginning and the end' may seem a judgement critical of the backwardness of Malay culture and an assertion of the achievements of the European, there is a sense of promise and freshness about that 'beginning', against which 'the end' sounds not an achievement but a closing down, in keeping with Edith Travers' feeling of 'standing alone, at the end of time, on the brink of days' (p. 151). Again, 'flower' can be read as superior to 'leaf', but the flower is short-lived, the leaf sustaining growth. 'The phrase that contains a thought' seems possibly superior to the inarticulate 'cry that can only express an emotion', but 'phrase' also conveys an incompleteness, its 'thought' disembodied compared with 'emotion'. These oppositions prompt the reader to reflect on the implications of their terms, which work to undermine European civilization's claims, not least because of the irony implicit in their being the views of the representative

area that saw missionary activities, particularly to the oppressed Chinese coolies working on the plantations. St. Joseph's Church was established there by French Jesuits in 1846. Wallace 'lived for several weeks at a time with the missionary'. Alfred Russel Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1869), I: 34. The linking of Jörgenson and his wife, who live in 'the native quarter' (p. 90), with Bukit Timah further suggests, in its distance from the commercial and political centre of colonial Singapore, the part-European, part-indigenous state of Jörgenson's relationship with his wife.

European, d'Alcacer.[24] The oppositions suggest the conflict and irreconcilability of the colonial endeavour with other cultures, and the way in which colonial culture seeks to diminish the apparently more grounded Malay culture.

The Rescue, for all its historical, cultural, and geographical reach, embracing both cosmopolitan and indigenous elements, is not, however, a success. Unlike, for example, *Lord Jim* or *Victory*, or, beyond the Asian fiction, *Nostromo*, *The Rescue* lacks the detailed investigation of character and motive which support its ideas. The other works also provide, in varying ways, a sensitive treatment of the challenges, satisfactions, disappointments, and wider consequences of commerce which lie behind the colonial endeavour, a feature which is lacking from *The Rescue*: had Conrad written through commerce as he does in his other Asian fiction, he would perhaps have been provided with an additional and effective means by which the complexity of the relations in the region could be expressed. The obscurity of Almayer, for example, becomes meaningful in the material and social context of *Almayer's Folly*. In *The Rescue*, however, obscurity is isolation in a setting which is neither at sea nor on land, a setting which, in not entering into the land and its people, equally does not allow the full significance of relations there to emerge.

At the end of the novel the concept of rescue reasserts itself: as Lingard and Edith Travers part, the civilized Europeans have been rescued from having gone aground, yet have not been – nor can they be – rescued from progress itself. As Edith Travers says, 'I couldn't change even if I wanted to' (p. 463), a failing in which she ironically resembles her husband, their cultural sterility exposed. No character in the book is rescued in any wider sense, and only Travers, whose imagination and sympathies are so narrow, could consider his departure from the Shore of Refuge a rescue. Nevertheless, the future is not entirely without hope. Jörgenson twice refers in similar terms to the Travers party as being 'the sort of people that left no footprints' (p. 388; see also p. 384),[25] and although this remark looks forward to the insubstantiality of Lingard's and Edith Travers' presence on the sandbank at the end of the novel, Jörgenson's scorn also seems to be looking forward and asserting the inevitability of the ending of the form of European presence which they represent, faced by the race which 'has not been changed' (p. 3).

[24] As Hampson notes, d'Alcacer's views and 'way of seeing' are significant in this chapter. *Cross-Cultural Encounters*, p. 174.

[25] Footprints in the sand also feature in the ending of *Almayer's Folly*.

'Karain: A Memory'

In 'Karain' (1898), published not long after the first two novels of the Lingard Trilogy, colonial and commercial intrusion are again central to a tragic story. A Malay woman promised to a Malay goes to live with a Dutch trader. Although she goes of her free will, the presence of Dutch warships, Dutch scheming, and the treaties with the Dutch can all be read as forces which unsettle the Malay community and, even if they do not directly encourage her betrayal, create the circumstances which make it possible, and perhaps, for her, desirable. The woman transfers from an ordered community, previously ruled by a woman, to a colonial culture which, as evidenced by the trader, is discourteous and aggressive: 'He was a big, scornful man, who looked into women's faces and put his hand on the shoulders of free men as though he had been a noble-born chief' (pp. 30–31).

Karain and his brother's travels over many years to achieve justice provide an explicit critique of colonialism which differs from the generally more implicit approach of the Lingard Trilogy and which explain the causes of the news of native uprisings with which the story both begins and ends. Of Java, the centre of Dutch power, Karain asks: 'Is there anything good in that country? The paths run straight and hard and dusty. Stone campongs, full of white faces, are surrounded by fertile fields, but every man you meet is a slave. The rulers live under the edge of a foreign sword' (p. 32). Space has been altered and commercialized with the straight roads, and in Sumatra, where there are 'many white men [. . .] planting tobacco on conquered plains' (p. 35), Karain finds 'the rice-fields so vast, that, as I looked around, my head swam with the fear of space' (p. 37). Subsequently Karain fights in the Aceh war, that powerful symbol of resistance to Dutch rule. Resorting to pearling or sweeping the decks of big ships, the brothers' experience of whites is cursing and rough treatment.

As with Karain's plans to resist the Spanish, however, colonial forces and 'the strong life of white men' (p. 28) are 'irresistible' (pp. 23, 28). With such pervasive change, and with Malay pride evident in the Wajo conflicts, it is all the more ironic that Karain's conquered lands appear to the English traders as 'without memories, regrets and hopes' (p. 14). The story can be read as working to locate – in a world threatened by colonialism that annexes land and people's cultural inheritance (as in the case of Pata Matara's sister) – the many causes of the memories, regrets, and hopes that are present in Karain's people. As Malay culture is increasingly invaded, memory is the preservation of culture. From the title of the story, 'Karain: A Memory', to its end – 'But the memory remains' (p. 47) – a mournful

recollection asserts what was, what might have been, and the integrity and value of what is passing, however much Karain might try to prevent it (though that value is subject to nuanced representations that do not allow for any simple valuing of one culture above another). That Karain can obtain protection from the Jubilee sixpence does not indicate Malay 'nerves' (p. 43), as Hollis describes it, but rather Malays' interaction with a dimension that Western culture has lost, typified in the 'invisible voices' (p. 27) heard by Karain and in the 'words and charms' of the 'wise old man' (p. 28).[26] It is a further irony that compared with the so-called 'protection' (p. 30) offered by the Dutch, the protection of the sixpence has far more profound implications.

Alongside Dutch and Spanish colonialism, British imperialism is given only a lukewarm endorsement: 'a masterful, conscientious, unscrupulous, unconquerable devil . . . that does a lot of good – incidentally . . . a lot of good . . . at times' (p. 44). Despite the fact that it 'does a lot of good', these qualities include no virtues and are characterized as either pernicious ('unscrupulous') or ambivalent ('masterful', 'unconquerable'); even 'conscientious' lacks any ethical recommendation. Such terms hardly bear comparison with the apparent spirit of Karain or his people. The chance meeting in London places the memory of Karain among the dirt and busy activity of the home country, the centre of colonial and commercial intrusion. For the narrator, London – its colours jumbled and strident, the 'helmeted' policeman's 'rigid arm' (p. 49) only too certain and unaware, automatic and unthinking in its rigidity – has already put the memory of Karain into a different, diminished, perspective. Only Jackson holds on, weakly, to the memory and to the reality it affirms. What remains is the story itself, and the faint hope seen in Jackson's uncertainty about which culture is in fact more real, an uncertainty reflected in the ellipsis, in his 'Ye-e-e-s' (p. 48) and his declaration: 'I'll be hanged if it is yet as real to me as . . . as the other thing . . . say, Karain's story' (p. 49).

[26] For a fuller discussion, see Andrew Francis, 'Postcolonial Conrad', in *The New Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) (forthcoming). The sense of Malay connection with a spiritual, hidden dimension is powerfully expressed in the well-known novel by Louis Couperus, *De Stille Kracht* [The Hidden Force], 2 vols (Amsterdam: Veen, 1900).

CHAPTER 4

Negotiating the Nets of Commerce and Duty: Lord Jim

> But do you notice how, three hundred miles beyond the end of telegraph cables and mail-boat lines, the haggard utilitarian lies of our civilisation wither and die to be replaced by pure exercises of imagination, that have the futility, often the charm and sometimes the deep hidden truthfulness, of works of art? (*LJ*, p.212)

Space and Location

Much of *Lord Jim: A Tale* (1900) is concerned with the varied dimensions of space and time, and in particular, of distance. Jim's final refuge, Patusan, as seen through the eyes of Marlow, is somewhere which renders him invisible and inaudible to the wider world, denying him a broader public context: 'to Jim's successes there were no externals. Thirty miles of forest shut it off' (p. 172). 'One of the lost, forgotten, unknown places of the earth' (p. 243), 'far from the beaten tracks of the sea and from the ends of submarine cables' (p. 269), 'the stream of civilisation' has passed it by (p. 172), its location is suggested as being more in space than geography.[1]

Yet Jim's flight through colonial physical geography does not enable him to escape the implications of human geography. His failure to find

[1] Jacques Berthoud notes that the case for Patusan being in north-west Sumatra instead of in eastern Borneo was first made by Richard Curle in 1923 and that it is clear that topographically Patusan reflects the Sambir in eastern Borneo of Conrad's first two novels. 'A Note on Sources', in *Lord Jim*, ed. Jacques Berthoud, new edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 307–14 (pp. 310–11). In support of the link between Patusan and eastern Borneo is the historical reality of the transport situation, which apparently has not been noted. By 1888 there was already a mail-boat serving the north-west coast of Sumatra, whereas eastern Borneo was not to be included until much later (although Tanjung Redeb, the site of the fictional Sambir, was on a steamer route), and therefore a north-west Sumatra location cannot adequately reflect the requirement for Patusan to be 'three hundred miles beyond the end of telegraph cables and mail-boat lines' as Marlow implies (p. 212). *CEI*, IX: Gerrit J. Knaap, *Transport 1819–1940* (1989), 118, Map 1B 'Development of the network of routes of the packet-boat services 1888'; ibid., 119, Map 1C 'Development of the network of routes of the packet-boat services 1891'; Cribb, *Historical Atlas*, p. 141, Map 4.63 for 1891.

somewhere where 'nothing can touch me' (p. 252) represents the failure of his quest for escape, and ultimately for a form of redemption, as well as the impossibility of achieving obscurity in the modern world; the region's networks are always insisting on connection.[2] His quest implies the possibility of space which has not yet become location, and it is through commerce in particular that the impossibility of such a project is made evident.

In his study of the KPM, à Campo investigates the company in its political, corporate, and geographical contexts as an example of colonial 'maritime, administrative and economic expansion'. À Campo refers to 'the interplay of [political] power, market and space',[3] dimensions which are useful for interrogating commerce in *Lord Jim* and Jim's relation to the pervasive economic context, for Jim's desire is to exist in a space where Western power and markets do not operate, although ironically the existence of different but related power and markets in Patusan quickly make themselves felt. His jobs as water-clerk, 'successively in Bombay, in Calcutta, in Rangoon, in Penang, in Batavia' (p. 10), reflect the region's network of colonial powers' trading connections; against this background the achievement of an 'incognito' (p. 10) is unlikely.[4] The region is now subject to 'all the Canal traffic' (p. 97) and to the regularity of steam; smoke, not sail, is what the *Patna*'s officers see, and many of the vessels in the novel are steam-powered. The effect of this steam revolution was such that the word 'belt' was not uncommon in the nineteenth century to describe the new encompassing of the world by steam, the earth now capable of encirclement.[5] As Donovan has shown, the growth in organized tourism similarly encompassed the earth: it is the era of 'hundred pound

[2] In an impressive study making extensive use of Dutch colonial records in Indonesia and the Netherlands, Singgih Tri Sulistiyono argues for the process of economic integration in the region, driven by the growing shipping network, as being evident from the late nineteenth century. 'The Java Sea Network: Patterns in the Development of Interregional Shipping and Trade in the Process of National Economic Integration in Indonesia, 1870s–1970s' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leiden, 2003).

[3] *Engines of Empire*, p. 34.

[4] That these places constituted a network is evident from a memorandum of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce, concerning the collection of trade statistics for various trading places, in which the list includes British India, the Malay Peninsula, British Borneo, Netherlands India, the Philippines, and the Sulu Islands. *Reports, 1890* (1891), I: 'Appendix C. Import and Export Statistics', 14–20 ('Memorandum of Committee', pp. 14–17 (p. 16)).

[5] 'To belt the world with steam' is the aim of Thomas Waghorn. *Letter to the Rt. Hon. The Earl Grey, Secretary of State for the Colonies, On the Extension of Steam Navigation from Singapore to Port Jackson, Australia* (London: Smith, Elder, 1847), p. 13.

round-the-world tickets' (p. 63).[6] In Patusan trade has already given rise to one European incursion, the 'seventeenth-century traders' (p. 172), and it is still part of a Western trading network, Stein's 'large inter-island business, with a lot of trading posts established in the most out-of-the-way places' (p. 153). The design of these trading posts, each of four buildings, denotes the commercial standardization of the European incursion which figuratively and literally creates both trading space and location. The extensiveness of the incursion is apparent too in Chester's highly speculative guano business proposition and in the proposal by the 'fellow fresh from Madagascar' (p. 130), conveying the energy of commerce up to, and beyond, the bounds of good sense and legality. Marlow's own trading includes the Dutch East Indies, Sydney, and Hong Kong, and Jim's fellow-patient being 'a kind of railway contractor' (p. 15) suggests the intended permanence of the incursion.

Jim's engagement with the region's commerce contrasts with its essential nature: commerce entails direction, whereas Jim's movements are spasmodic – 'he would leave suddenly the seaport where he happened to be at the time' (p. 10) – as if his 'Ability in the abstract' (pp. 9–10) can gain no traction on the world of endeavour, commercial or otherwise. His jumpiness and hesitancy are enacted through jumping or failing to jump at three crucial points: on the training-ship, from the *Patna*, and in Patusan. Berthoud has written of Jim's 'ultimately hopeless struggle to overcome what is, in the largest perspective, an opposition between the inner and the outer, or the private and the public', and his erratic movement performs this struggle between two competing states and the uncertainty of his intentions, 'a jump into the unknown' (p. 174).[7] Commerce's direction, defined by markets, is to destinations; Jim's motion, always away, is movement related to departure instead of destination, 'generally farther east' (p. 10). Jim is the antithesis of the network, wanting only to escape that economic metaphor and to sever connection; indeed, to get out from under that net. One of the most frequent descriptions of Jim is of his being 'under a cloud' (e.g. p. 311), which not only denotes his misfortune, but also places him by reference to a system – meteorology – whose features of cloud, rain, and wind resist location, just as Jim wishes to do, because they constantly change. In the same way, remote Patusan resists location and yet is clearly on the map.

[6] See the chapter on tourism in Stephen Donovan, *Joseph Conrad and Popular Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), pp. 63–111.

[7] Jacques Berthoud, *Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978; repr. 1993), p. 78.

In Touch with Space

Jim's attempts to escape the metaphorical network are reflected in his frequent articulation and performance of being apart, and in his relation to touch and contact. The early description of him as 'gentlemanly' (p. 14) foreshadows his view of himself as essentially apart: 'The quality of these men did not matter; he rubbed shoulders with them, but they could not touch him; he shared the air they breathed, but he was different . . .' (p. 24), an ironic view for, as he is to discover, men are equal before the requirements of conduct. Marlow later concludes that Jim 'meant that the unexpected couldn't touch him' (p. 76), and among Jim's final words is his ironic assertion that 'Nothing can touch me' (p. 310), his whole life since the *Patna* entailing 'for ever holding up my end, to feel sure that nothing can touch me' (p. 252). For Jim, to be 'incognito' (p. 10) is to become metaphorically untouched. The first paragraph of the novel describes him as 'spotlessly neat, apparelled in immaculate white from shoes to hat' (p. 9), the biblical echoes of 'spotless', 'apparelled', and 'immaculate' emphasizing his separation. In particular, 'apparelled' suggests donning a heavenly garment to cover his liability to life. When Jim swallows some mud after his jump in Patusan, and it tastes 'as if I had bitten something rotten' (p. 190), we see performed the implications of his earlier jump from the *Patna*: Jim's body is realigned to a prone position of maximum touch and contact, a metaphorical 'burying himself alive' (p. 192) in the foul and dirty. The reader is reminded of Brierly's exclamation 'why eat all that dirt!' (p. 55), and of Brown's judgement that Jim speaks 'as if you were one of those people that should have wings so as to go about without touching the dirty earth. Well – it is dirty' (p. 288). In the slime, where Jim performs his moral downfall, he yearns to begin again, to be back at home in the courtyard 'mending the clock' (p. 192), as if, the clock once mended, he could re-enter time with the clock re-set and re-enter space from the safety of the courtyard. The image recurs when Jim is brought the Rajah's clock to mend when he is first in Patusan and in 'a small tumbledown shed' where 'the effluvia of filth and rotten matter incommoded him greatly'.[8] Significantly, he tries 'to get the alarum to work' (p. 191), as if he might be awakened into another existence.

[8] Noel Denison had similar feelings when visiting a Dayak village in Sarawak, using the same term as Marlow: 'The effluvium arising from the accumulation of dirt and refuse in this village was really fearful. The houses being built on level ground, there is no natural drainage, and the Dyaks have made none for themselves.' *Jottings Made During a Tour amongst the Land Dyaks of Upper Sarawak, Borneo. During the Year 1874* (Singapore: Mission Press, 1879), [n.pag.], Chap. VIII, [p. 6]. In Denison, as in Conrad, the suggestion includes excrement, underlining the nature of the situation in which Jim finds himself.

However, any re-setting of time is never going to be possible, especially in a world running to Greenwich Mean Time, this averaged temporal construct which is part of the net within which Jim is caught.

Regulation and Supervision

In the same way that trade confines and defines Jim's world, political power has created systems designed to maintain order, through regulation and supervision, as part of its promotion and underwriting of that trade. At many points Jim is touched by this regime which inscribes in its procedures the failure which Jim feels in his soul. Although critics have noted the historical inquiry on which Jim's was based, the overall legal and regulatory colonial context has received little attention, and the Inquiry in the novel can be read as a representation of the regulatory structure which pervades existence. This structure is extensive, as is evident, for example, in the long list of varied matters considered by the Singapore Chamber of Commerce in 1887, which included, among twenty-two items: Bankruptcy Law; Scale of Boat Hire; Proposed British Dollar; Rates of Commissions at Singapore; Course of Exchange; Falsification of Accounts Act; and Status of Foreign Mail Steamers.[9]

Jim's involvement in commercial standards begins at the 'training-ship for officers of the mercantile marine' (p. 11). Here he learns the skills of navigation and ship-handling necessary to his profession, but the additional qualities of gentlemanly, officer-like conduct are crucial. As James Lees remarked in a book which was to continue through numbers of editions: 'You are [as a shipmaster] in the situation of gentlemen, and, therefore, it is only reasonable to expect that you will have the manners of gentlemen.'[10] Charles Lorimer referred to courage as a quality required in a shipmaster in terms singularly apt for Jim: 'The greatest proof of courage I esteem to be, the power of acting calmly and deliberately in situations the most appalling. [. . .] The courage I mean may be termed self-possession, which should be acquired and strengthened by every means in your power.'[11] This bears a close similarity to Marlow's discourse: 'I don't mean military courage or civil courage, or any special kind of courage. I mean [. . .] an unthinking and blessed stiffness before the

[9] *Reports, 1887* (1888), I: 'Contents' (n.pag.).

[10] *A Manual for Shipmasters; in a Series of Letters addressed to them, on their Qualifications, Duties, Powers, Responsibilities, &c. arising from the Different Situations in which they may be placed during the Course of a Voyage* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1845), p. 2.

[11] *Letters to a Young Master Mariner on Some Subjects Connected with His Calling*, 3rd edn (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843), p. 16.

outward and inward terrors, before the might of nature and the seductive corruption of men' (p. 38) – courage evident in the lives of the French lieutenant and Stein. Lorimer also reminds the young master mariner of his 'charge of life, and, I may add, of property',[12] responsibilities which are reflected in the words of the Inquiry: 'abandoning in the moment of danger the lives and property confided to their charge' (p. 123). 'Confided' encapsulates Jim's failure as a breaking of faith: 'He stood there for all the parentage of his kind, [. . .] whose very existence is based upon honest faith and upon the instinct of courage' (p. 38).

The regulations regarding abandoning ship were strict. Summarizing the legal position, the popular *Lees' Laws of British Shipping and of Marine Assurance*, sets out the reasons for which 'The Local Marine Board, Magistrate, Naval Court, Admiralty Court, or other court or tribunal by which the case is investigated or tried, can suspend or cancel the certificate, – either of competency or service – of any master or mate', including 'the loss, or abandonment of, or serious damage to, any ship, or loss of life, [. . .] caused by his wrongful act or default'.[13] As the *Patna* pilgrims cross the liminal space of the 'wooden jetty' (p. 17) into the care of the ship's captain, contractual legal obligations, supported by an expectation of standards of conduct contained in the Merchant Shipping Act 1854, are created, connecting the pilgrims to the other contracting parties, who are specifically enumerated: owner, charterer, and commander (*LJ*, pp. 16–17). Describing the pilgrims as 'human cargo' (p. 18) might seem to recall the captain's pejorative remark 'Look at dese cattle' (p. 17), but the description also comprehends the rights and obligations connected with the payment of their passage-money, by which, ironically, they 'surrendered to the wisdom of white men and to their courage' (p. 19). Robert Ducharme refers to 'the deceptive equation of goods and people'.[14] However, the Act allows for justified abandonment whether the cargo be pilgrims or sugar; if the cargo consists of passengers, then clearly the duty of care is different from that which would apply to sugar. The term 'human cargo' does not imply that people are diminished by equation to sugar, but locates both in contractual responsibility, a responsibility which should then be underwritten by

[12] Ibid.

[13] John C. Bigham, ed., 10th edn (London: George Philip & Son, 1877), pp. 64, 50. Bigham also recorded the requirement for passenger steamers to have certificates regarding the soundness of their hulls and the maximum number of passengers that could be carried, a requirement particularly relevant to the *Patna* (p. 173; see also p. 175 regarding British possessions).

[14] 'The Power of Culture in *Lord Jim*', *Conradiana*, 22/1 (1990), 3–24 (p. 6).

seafaring's 'certain standard of conduct' (p. 43); as Brierley says, 'I don't care a snap for all the pilgrims that ever came out of Asia, but a decent man would not have behaved like this to a full cargo of old rags in bales' (p. 56), a statement which insists on the duty of care applying to the two, differing, cargoes.[15] In Conrad's heterogeneous view of commerce, Ducharme's argument about 'a cultural ideology that reifies the individual into an agent for the economy' seems too limited a reading.[16] Although being within an economy is part of the human condition, Conrad's view of the individual is not merely as an agent of an economy, derived or not from a particular 'cultural ideology'.

The ambivalence surrounding the embodiment in regulation of political power and business conduct is articulated by Marlow: 'the doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct' (p. 43). In a world that is predominantly commercial, the focus of such a standard needs to be on the 'facts' often referred to ironically in the novel. Such a focus involves an accommodation of truth to facts, or to what, in the terms of the novel, might be described as 'externals' (p. 172), which denote the readily or normally observable – that which is unconnected to 'the true essence of life' (pp. 74–75). For Marlow, Jim's situation is one 'beyond the competency of a court of inquiry: it was a subtle and momentous quarrel as to the true essence of life and did not want a judge' (pp. 74–75). What is lacking is not so much something in the court itself, as in the body of law which defines its mode of seeing. Regulations such as the Merchant Shipping Acts provide for a proxy for truth, a fact-based modus operandi to define responsibilities between contracting parties so that risk and liabilities may be understood. The growing length and frequency of publications recording legal cases and proposing solutions to merchant shipping legal queries are part of the professional

[15] Risks were increased when the Suez Canal opened in 1869, following which 'it became feasible for small lightly-built ships that could never have weathered the stormy voyage round the Cape' to reach the Indies, and 'the result was that a lot of cheap and old ships were sold East in order to traffic in the quiet tropical seas of the Archipelago in the employ of some adventurous owner'. W. H. van Helsdingen and H. Hoogenberk, eds., abg'd English edn, *Mission Interrupted: The Dutch in the East Indies and their Work in the XXth Century*, trans. J.J.L. Duyvendak (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1945), p. 119. The combination of mercantile marine law and the need at the time for better standards on pilgrim ships are likely to have made for a sensitive regulatory situation, and it is probable that both play a part in the thinking of Jim's Inquiry. The Singapore Chamber of Commerce, in considering a Pilgrims' Ships Ordinance in 1897, refers obliquely to problems in the past similar to those portrayed in *Lord Jim* with regard to unseaworthy vessels and overcrowding: 'experience of the past several years has shewn that previous abuses relative to the carrying Trade to Jeddah have been removed', and that each pilgrim has been required to have an allowance of '9 superficial and 54 cubic feet'. *Reports, 1896* (1897), I: Appendix P, 90–95 (pp. 92, 94).

[16] Ducharme, p. 7.

knowledge production which creates the 'fixed standard'.[17] Marlow sees 'the convention that lurks in all truth' (p. 75) and its dependence upon facts which are 'open to the senses, occupying their place in space and time' (p. 29), with space and time wrongly assumed to be fixed and simple concepts. In such a regime it is possible to make of the situation 'a complicated aspect that could be remembered by the eye', but it is a partial vision which excludes insight and which is limited by the externals visible to the eye alone, whereas the whole should allow for 'something else besides, something invisible' (p. 29).

Commercialized Time and Space

The control and regulation of trade is achieved in the dimensions of commercialized time and space, with 'mail-boats moving on their appointed routes' (p. 268). The predictability of steam has overcome Nature: these ships now merely move, in contrast with the efforts demanded by sail, a sense of man over-reaching conveyed by the biblical overtones of 'appointed'. As one writer remarked, 'the restrictions on trade, due to time and space, have been reduced to a marvellous extent'.[18] Equally remarkable was the revolution in workloads, whereby 'one steam ton [. . .] does four times the amount of work of one sailing ton'.[19] The expansion of mail-boat services illustrates both this dual commercialization and steam's serving the ends of power and markets. As à Campo observes, KPM policy was to 'divert [. . .] transport via the ports in the East Indies instead of via Singapore and Penang', but its rationale was also political, in the greater efficiency of transporting troops and the effect of 'cutting off independent links of native rulers and interest groups with the outside world'.[20] Officially regulated, the mail-boat asserts the importance of the West's written word.[21]

[17] For example, the long-running *Maritime Notes and Queries*, of which an edition in three volumes was published, ed. Sir William Mitchell (London: [Shipping and Mercantile Gazette Daily Newspaper], 1874–76).

[18] Edward Pulsford, *Commerce and the Empire* (London: Cassell, 1903), p. 19.

[19] Whereas between 1836 and 1886 the total tonnage of shipping on the register of British ships increased from 2,792,646 tons to 9,323,615 tons, adjusting for the difference between sailing and steam tons in both figures produces an increase from 2,996,553 effective tons to 22,202,960 effective tons. Thomas Gray, '1836–1886. Fifty Years of Legislation in relation to the Shipping Trade and the Safety of Ships and Seamen', in *Worshipful Company of Shipwrights. Lectures* (London: Marchant Singer, [1887]), pp. 143–98 (p. 146).

[20] *Engines of Empire*, pp. 578, 577.

[21] These services had also to be punctual. The 1888 contract between Her Majesty's Postmaster-General and the P. & O. Company for 'East India and China Mails' stipulated precise speeds and journey times, with financial penalties for 'every 12 hours late'. The service was to operate 'at an average rate of speed of 12.54 knots per hour between Brindisi and Bombay, and at an average rate of speed of 12.54

The telegraph contributed similarly to this commercialization. By 1903 links to west and north Sumatra had been established by private firms, though none had reached eastern Borneo.[22] The *Bangkok Times* declared that 'the electric telegraph [. . .] is to-day almost as much a part of our life, as food, or clothing, or any other elementary discovery of the human mind, and it is becoming so popular in Siam that our merchants can as little think of doing without it as they can think of doing without its sister institution, the Post Office'.[23] At the time of *Lord Jim* telegraph links were limited to main towns and cities, and their high cost restricted use largely to official and commercial business.[24] The inscribing of both mail-boat and telegraph lines on maps overlaid the political geography of both homeland and colonial possession onto the mapping of physical geography.[25]

Navigation depended on chronometry, which is echoed in the Inquiry's establishment of 'twenty-seven minutes by the watch' (p. 29) and in the 'patent log on the taffrail' which 'periodically rang a single tinkling stroke for every mile traversed' (p. 20).[26] Maps often included information about time-balls by which ships set their chronometers, both

knots per hour between Brindisi and the Suez Canal, and of 11.20 knots per hour between the Suez Canal and Shanghai', and 'the entire voyage from Brindisi to Bombay shall be completed in 344 hours [. . .], and the said period of 344 hours shall include 30 hours for the conveyance of such mails through the Suez Canal and three hours for the stoppage at Aden'. *Reports, 1887* (1888), I: Appendix J ('Mail Contract with P. & O. Company. 1888'), 88–110 (pp. 88, 104, 88, 91).

[22] Cribb, *Historical Atlas*, p. 141, Map 4.64. This is another reason not previously noted in support of the location of Conrad's Patusan in eastern Borneo.

[23] 6 June 1888, p. 2. Progress was often rapid as well as revolutionary. The *Bangkok Times* added that since the telegraph had been introduced to Siam five years before '3230 kilometres of wire have been erected, whilst 1846 miles more are in course of construction'. In the previous four years 'the relative proportions between letters and telegrams [had] altered in the most astonishing way', with one telegram sent for every 321 letters four years previously compared with one for every 126 at present, despite letter volumes having increased 'from 60,000 in 1885 to more than 250,000'. Ibid.

[24] The high costs were the subject of representation to government, as in 1890 when the Singapore Chamber of Commerce provided examples of recent reductions in telegraph rates between London and various places and complained that reductions had not been seen in the tariff between London and 'Penang, Malacca, Singapore, and Java, respectively 5s. 7d., 6s. 3d., 6s. 5d., and 6s. 10d. [. . .] These rates are higher than that charged to Cochin-China, and proportionately higher than those to most Eastern stations.' *Reports, 1890* (1891), I: 'Appendix G. Telegraph Reform', 28–36 (Letter, 29 March 1890, from A.J. Gunn, Acting Secretary of Chamber of Commerce, Singapore to The Colonial Secretary, S.S. [Straits Settlements], pp. 29–30 (p. 30)).

[25] The growth in such communication is suggested by the hand-written addition of several dashes marked 'Telegraph kabel' across the southern end of the straits between Borneo and Laoet on a map held at the National Library, Singapore. Numerous lighthouses and beacons are printed on the map, illustrating the literal and figurative illumination of this area once remote to Europeans. The Netherlands. Ministerie van Marine. 'Zuidoostkust Borneo: Straat Laoet' [South-east Coast of Borneo: Laut Strait] ('s-Gravenhage, Holland: Ministerie van Marine. Afdeeling Hydrographie, 1902) [1:100,000], sheet 121.

[26] A ship's log, activated by a screw revolving in the water.

space and time thereby achieving cartographic representation.[27] The Singapore port rules included a section on time-balls, in which the precise latitude and longitude of the Observatory at Fort Fullerton were given, together with the information that 'when the ball drops at 1 P.M. local mean time, the corresponding Greenwich mean time is 6h. 4m. $34.95^{\text{SEC A.M.}}$'.[28] Taking leave of regulated time and having set the log thoroughly so that 'there can be no mistake. [. . .] No use losing any distance' (p. 51) – as if to underwrite the reliability of time and to manipulate distance – Brierly has fittingly hung his 'gold chronometer watch [. . .] under the rail by its chain' (p. 52), thereby relinquishing his part in man's disposition of time. His vessel continues, appropriately, to be chained to such measurement. Optical and navigational instruments parallel the cartographic definition of space and time, the binoculars and chronometer awarded to Brierly being both the tools, and fitting symbols of, his special vision. Similarly, on the *Patna*'s chart the 'parallel rulers with a pair of dividers' (p. 21) symbolize the ability of man to rule and divide space.

Jim's experience problematizes regulated and commercialized transformations of space and time, his doubt about his act of jumping from the *Patna* undermining the apparent facts of motion and the official definition of space, the 'chart pegged out with four drawing-pins' symbolizing the pinning down of space (p. 21). Optical distortion – the 'damaged kaleidoscope' (p. 121), the 'small end of a telescope' (p. 46), and an 'optical toy' (p. 133) – vies with what we might think of as optical facts such as might be the product of the binoculars presented to Captain Brierly, the man who 'had never in his life made a mistake' (p. 49). Such distortion produces a different reality, in which vision can be emotion – 'clear sunshine, [with] a brilliance too passionate to be consoling' – or colour – 'streets full of jumbled bits of colour like a damaged kaleidoscope' – and in which colour takes a distorting ascendancy: 'yellow, green, blue, dazzling white, the brown nudity of an undraped shoulder, a bullock-cart with a red canopy, a company of native infantry in a drab body with dark heads marching in

[27] A time-ball was a large ball mounted on a tall post in a high position easily visible from sea, and the beginning of the ball's descent from the top of the post precisely marked an advertised time, usually 1 p.m., enabling ships to check their chronometers. After the invention of telegraphy the time for the ball's descent could be relayed remotely from an observatory.

[28] *Port Rules and Other Information and Instructions for the Guidance of Masters of Vessels Frequenting the Port of Singapore* (Singapore: Printed at the Government Printing Office, 1893), p. 70. The equivalent in Greenwich Mean Time to 1 p.m. local time was frequently printed on the maps. The significance of Greenwich Mean Time to empire and trade is also evident in *The Secret Agent*.

dusty laced boots, a native policeman in a sombre uniform of scanty cut and belted in patent leather' (p. 121).[29] Chester and Robinson strangely materialize on Marlow's page of writing; they manifest themselves by 'dodg[ing] into view with stride and gestures as if reproduced in the field of some optical toy' (p. 133), their movements separated from their purpose; the focus and field of view of the viewer are narrowed to the confines of a toy.[30] Similarly, 'a dresser [. . .] showed himself in the vista of the ward, as if seen in the small end of a telescope' (p. 46), and 'the villagers connected with the assault case [who] sat in a picturesque group' are described as 'looking like a chromolithograph of a camp in a book of Eastern travels' (p. 121), removed from normal vision to the questionable likeness of a modern form of colour reproduction.[31]

The accident case, the 'jumbled bits of colour' lacking any organizing principle, and the episode of Chester and Robinson, resist the Inquiry's fact-based constitution, the visual and aural terms of the Inquiry's portrayal vying disturbingly for relevance with its factual proceedings:

> a cool lofty room; the big framework of punkahs moved gently to and fro high above his head, and from below many eyes were looking at him out of dark faces, out of white faces, out of red faces [. . .] as if all these people sitting in orderly rows upon narrow benches had been enslaved by the fascination of his voice. It was very loud, it rang startling in his own ears, it was the only sound audible in the world. (p. 27)

The narrator becomes 'aware of the magistrate's voice as a sound merely' (p. 122), not its import; sight and sound dominate at the expense of comprehension. The magistrate's inkstand, for the prosaic purpose of recording documentary evidence, is opposed by 'a few flowers in a glass vase' (p. 28) at its side which intrude into both its formality and the symbolism of Western bureaucratic process. Jim is 'made to answer another question so much to the point and so useless' (p. 29), and, as if to visualize this uselessness, the magistrate's face appears, not in connection with the

[29] It is worth noting in this context that Conrad owned a copy of F.W. Edridge-Green, *The Physiology of Vision, with Special Reference to Colour Blindness* (London: Bell, 1920).

[30] Donovan (*Joseph Conrad*, pp. 22–23) usefully discusses the occurrence of the optical toys in *Lord Jim* but does not deal with the resistance to Jim's fact-based Inquiry of the images obtained through such instruments, although he does argue that Conrad's references to 'specific visual entertainments [. . .] are integral components of a literary project' (p. 23).

[31] Invented in 1821, chromo-lithography, in which a succession of impressions in different colours was taken from engraved stones in order to build up a single coloured print, revolutionized printing. Marlow's reference to the technique here seems to emphasize the artificiality of the process and perhaps to imply the shortcomings of its representation of normal vision. This recalls similar reservations regarding the oleograph in *Under Western Eyes*.

court but in relation to the flowers, near which 'his pale face hovered'. The 'court peons' are seen as colour and movement: 'while gliding along the walls [. . .] buttoned tight in long white coats, [they] flitted rapidly to and fro, running on bare toes, red-sashed, red turban on head' (p. 30). At the moment of judgement it is the colours of the flowers and of the paper which dominate: 'He moved aside the vase of flowers – a bunch of purple with a few pink blossoms on long stalks – and seiz[ed] in both hands a long sheet of bluish paper'. Beside the flowers the colourless magistrate resembles 'a hopeless invalid' (p. 121), his person distractingly in contrast with the regulatory power of his office, in which there is perhaps also perceptible a play on the word 'invalid' as 'not valid'.[32]

The Inquiry utilizes a language which, in accordance with the tenor of the regulations, is to dispel doubt; Jim is made 'to answer by yes or no' (p. 29), a mode of questioning appropriate to the pursuit of facts. Jim comes, ironically, 'to the view that only a meticulous precision of statement would bring out the true horror behind the appalling face of things' (p. 29), but the horror would have to include inarticulate sound: 'he could have reproduced like an echo the moaning of the engineer for the better information of these men who wanted facts' (pp. 28–29). The language of the Inquiry, however, cannot accommodate sound. Jim's speech is characteristically fragmented; later Marlow is able 'to understand the pauses between the words' (p. 84). By comparison, the voice of regulation heard from the magistrate is 'even, distinct and careless' (p. 121), for this voice admits of no gaps, nor of the 'meticulous precision' which Jim believes might explain his complex motivation. Jim's thoughts on abandoning ship as recounted to Marlow foreshadow the silence and inadequacies of language he experiences during the Inquiry: 'There are no words for the sort of things I wanted to say. If I had opened my lips just then I would have simply howled like an animal' (p. 97).

Political Space

Trade networks resist Jim's efforts to assert a new connection with mankind on his own terms; political power works to extend its and trade's influence spatially, and the case of Patusan demonstrates changing Dutch colonial

[32] Jim's experience may not have been unique. Bullen (p. 87) wrote of 'the most severe punishment that can fall upon a Merchant officer – suspension or cancelling of his certificate – if any leather-headed court of inquiry choose to bring him to blame in any way. [. . .] the proceedings of some of these courts, abroad especially, are sufficient to make angels weep'.

policy in the Indies. In the 1880s, when the main action occurs, the policy of non-interference was being increasingly set aside.[33] When Marlow remarks that 'the country, for all its rotten state, was not judged ripe for interference' (p. 176), this no doubt refers to that policy. The use of 'rotten' and 'ripe' reflects the fact that troublesomely inadequate government – from the Dutch point of view – in a native state could be a pretext for intervention.[34] Far from being literally 'one of the lost, forgotten, unknown places of the earth' (p. 243), Patusan 'was referred to knowingly in the inner government circles in Batavia, especially as to its irregularities and aberrations' (p. 166).[35] During the Aceh War, ports in northern Sumatra, the accepted fictional location of Patusan (the native state of Tenom),[36] frequently assented to Dutch rule while continuing to support the rebels inland.[37] Such factors may suggest why the word 'knowingly' is used in connection with a native state where 'irregularities and aberrations' might apply not only to trading matters (e.g. smuggling) or to troublesome native government, but to matters connected with the War. The area including Tenom was brought under direct Dutch rule in 1899–1901[38] – this threat evident in Rajah Allang's question 'Were the Dutch coming to take the country?' (p. 191) – and it is clear from the awareness of the 'third-class deputy-assistant resident' who is '230 miles south' (p. 210) that the Dutch are keeping Patusan under surveillance.[39] In the eyes of this official Jim appears

[33] See the Introduction for a discussion of this policy.

[34] Locher-Scholten examines such intervention in Jambi in *Sumatran Sultanate*.

[35] This is reminiscent of Dutch awareness of the native state in Borneo which is the location for Sambir, where slavery, slave-trading, and arms-smuggling were among the topics of official reports.

[36] Hans van Marle, 'The Location of Jim's Patusan', *Notes and Queries*, NS 15/8 (August 1968), 289–91, in which he argues the possibility of Conrad's having read W. Bradley, *The Wreck of the Nisero, and Our Captivity in Sumatra* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1884) in the Raffles Library. This book is by a survivor of a British shipwreck off Tenom, the sailors from which were held for ransom by the Rajah. Bradley (p. 46) records the hatred of the Sumatrans for the Dutch.

[37] Ricklefs, *A History*, 3rd edn, p. 187, and *Reports, 1890* (1891), II: 'Appendix F. Acheen Detention of Pepper by Dutch', 17–22 (p. 21).

[38] Historically, numbers of native states in Aceh sided with the Dutch. For a discussion and map, see Cribb, *Historical Atlas*, pp. 116, 122.

[39] Berthoud remarks that 'the status of this particular official [. . .] could scarcely be lower' ('Explanatory Notes' to *Lord Jim*, p. 325), but the post below that of an *assistent-resident* was a *controleur*, an important official with wide-ranging powers, even though this one is third-class (as can be seen in Dutch East Indies newspapers of the time, third-class *controleur* posts were not uncommon, and some other Dutch colonial posts extended to fifth class). Although some *controleurs* worked alongside their *resident*, others were based elsewhere, sometimes far away, as was the case with the *Controleur* for Berau, some 320 miles by river and sea (keeping to the coast) north of the *Assistent-Resident* in Samarinda. (Further details about these two posts are given in the Introduction and in Chapter 1.) If Conrad had a *controleur*'s position in mind, he may have avoided using the term because it would

to have entered illegally: 'some sort of white vagabond had got in there, I hear [. . .] one of these *verdomde* [damned] [. . .] Found his way in, the rascal' (p. 210), a reference to adventurers such as Murray, King, and Brooke. Dutch treaties with native states forbade Europeans from residing in Indies states without permission, these treaties also reserving rights to mineral extraction to the Dutch, and so the official has perhaps two reasons for writing an official report. Stein's being 'as full of information about native States as an official report' (p. 173) also indicates the degree of colonial surveillance. Such reports were central to colonial control, and the annual Dutch *Koloniale Verslagen* [colonial reports] were comparable to the British colonial Blue Books. The frequency of occasional Dutch reports also suggests the close watch that was kept on many aspects of local affairs.

That northern Sumatra was not as remote as Marlow claims for the fictional Patusan is also evident in the historical reality of its trading relations with the region. The Consul-General for the Netherlands in Penang wrote to the British Resident Councillor there warning of danger to vessels trading to 'the West Coast of Acheen, owing to the present state of insecurity'.[40] Tenom is even specified in a letter to the Colonial Secretary's Office in Singapore about import and export returns, in which the Secretary to the Penang Chamber writes:

> In view of the immense importance to Penang of the Acheen Trade, the Chamber thinks, that an additional heading should be devoted to Acheen, Edie on the East Coast, to Tenom on the West Coast. Had this been done in former years, it would have shown the immense fluctuations and serious falling off of trade, resulting from the unsatisfactory state of affairs in Acheen.[41]

The 'native states', which Stein traded with 'so many' of, are at the edge of Dutch political power, and potentially liable to unrest and even to foreign interference. Stein has therefore had to have a 'special permit from the Dutch authorities' – 'the Government trusted his discretion' – for his sole agency in Patusan as well as a permit for other districts and '*had* to know'

have been unfamiliar to British readers. 'Deputy-assistant resident' also helps to convey that the area was not as important a location for Dutch administration as some others.

As a further indication of the association between east Borneo and Patusan, 230 miles is approximately the distance of the shortest route by sea (not keeping to the coast) from the estuary downriver from Tanjung Redeb (Berau) to the estuary east of Samarinda, where the nearest Dutch civil servant to Berau was then based, albeit historically this civil servant was an *assistent-resident* rather than a *controleur*.

[40] 9 February 1887, *Reports, 1887* (1888), II: 'Appendix D', p. 26.

[41] 12 April 1890, *Reports, 1890* (1891), II: 'Appendix B. Import and Export Returns,' 10–13 (p. 10).

(p. 173) about such territories.[42] Given the unrest caused by the Aceh hostilities and the consequent ban on arms imports, the 'special authorization to export five hundred kegs of [gunpowder] to Patusan' (p. 272) is a mark of the extreme confidence that the government has in his integrity.

As well as marking out the political space of a colonial possession, maps often suggest the cultural division between the colonial power and its colonies which resists the political assertion. Settlements may be denoted by a miniature Dutch flag, as if struggling to assert presence in the immensity of the unmarked surroundings. In one such example, the presence of a flagpole, also a navigational aid, is denoted on a nautical chart by a flag with the note '*Vlaggestok Tandjoeng Batoe*' [Tandjoeng Batoe flagpole]. Although charts required landmarks for navigational purposes, the flag symbol on this chart reinforces the impression of culturally imposed reference on a landscape which to the colonizer is otherwise featureless. Near the flagpole a '*hooge boom met witte stam*' [tall tree with white trunk] is noted,[43] the natural feature painted in order to assist alien mariners lacking the indigenous people's recognition of the natural features in their own space. Flagpoles, frequently two-stage, were often of great height, built to increase their visibility, but also emphasizing Dutch dominance, as did that which towered above the Palace in the Sultan's Palace garden in Ternate.[44]

[42] Berthoud notes that the prohibition on the 'unauthorized movement of gunpowder [. . .] was strictly enforced'. 'Explanatory Notes' to *Lord Jim*, p. 328. In practice enforcement was very difficult given the shortage of Dutch naval resources, which is why Stein's authorization is all the more significant. In the 1888 report about arms-smuggling discussed in Chapter 1, from the Dutch vice-consul in Singapore to the Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs in The Hague, three places in Sumatra are cited as destinations for arms. Tagliacozzo, p. 275.

[43] Netherlands. Ministerie van Marine. Afdeeling Hydrographie, 'Vaarwaters en Ankerplaatsen op de Oostkust van Borneo' [Waterways and Anchorages on the East Coast of Borneo] ('s-Gravenhage: Ministerie van Marine. Afdeeling Hydrographie, 1896; Groote Correctien, 1903) (various scales), Blad II. Six maps on one sheet. Inset map no. 4, 'Kloempang-Baai' (1892) [1:100,000].

[44] F.H.H. Guillemard, Photographs of south-east Asia, 1882–83 (taken by a professional photographer on Guillemard's tour of south-east Asia): Cambridge University Library, Box XI 'East Indies', photograph no. 30. Such assertions of possession and of location are not unique to the Dutch East Indies. Guillemard recorded them, for example, in the British colonies of Labuan and British North Borneo (Ibid., Box VII 'Labuan and Borneo', photograph nos. 9, 44), and a similar trait is evident in the United States' treaty with the Sultan of Sulu as part of their colonization of the Philippines and related islands: Article II of the 1899 treaty stipulates that 'The United States flag will be used in the Archipelago of Jolo and its dependencies, on land and sea.' United States. *Treaty with the Sultan of Sulu* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, [1900(?)]), p. 26. Nieuwenhuys recalls that after the First World War one of the features of former times in more remote parts of the Dutch East Indies which, significantly, could always still be seen by old guesthouses ('*passanggrahan*') was the flagpole, i.e. with flag flying. De Nijs, p. 192.

The Divisions and Regulation of Race; Concubinage and Marriage

The ambiguities of human existence in *Lord Jim* include those of racial difference present throughout the Dutch East Indies. The title of Figure 4, 'A brownie of that enchanted garden that men call Java' (1900), taken from a book of travels in Java, conveys what for the author is apparently Java's supreme quality – its enchantment – but to such an extent that it attempts to transform the pictured woman into a 'brownie', an asexual member of European – not Javanese – fairy folk in an Edenic land. Java is made strange and distanced by the phrase 'that men call', suggesting the inadequacy of a name used by mortals to denote a land the essence of which is beyond their language. Simultaneously, the word 'brownie' attempts playfully to turn – but to us belittlingly and distastefully – on the subject's colour. In contrast, her facial expression and body language are independent, possibly resentful, and make no concessions to the fanciful image of happiness promoted by the title, in addition to which the term 'garden' is problematized by our knowledge that, although it is green and fruitful, Java is more plantation than garden of delight, a location not of magic but, for many of its indigenous people, a place of onerous labour.

Innocently intended though it may have been, this author's vision cannot be felt but to be in contrast to – even (perhaps deliberately) in contradiction of – other colonial gazes, for whom such a woman was not asexual. Concubinage, and the scale on which it was practised in the Dutch East Indies, represents a quite different engagement with the colonial body from that of this photograph and its title.

Jim's failure to keep faith with his calling echoes doubts surrounding the keeping of faith between European men and indigenous women in relationships which arise from colonization and trade.[45] This is evident particularly in Jewel's family history, which can be read partly through the historical background of concubinage, a major social issue in the Dutch East Indies. Tineke Hellwig has described Indies concubinage as follows:

> In the Indies the Dutch used the term '*nyai*' for an Asian woman who cohabited with a European man and looked after his needs, including his

[45] See Francis, '"You always leave us – for your own ends"' for a slightly fuller version of the following account of concubinage and marriage.

A brownie of that enchanted garden that men call Java.

Fig. 4. 'A brownie of that enchanted garden that men call Java'. Photograph facing title-page, in Augusta de Wit, *Facts and Fancies about Java*, 2nd edn (The Hague: W.P. van Stockum, 1900). (Actual size 14 by 8.5 cm). Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

> sexual desires. The European man would live with his *nyai* in concubinage (Dutch: *concubinaat*). *Nyai* in Sundanese and Balinese means '(young) woman'. Dutch translations were *bijzit*, *huishoudster*, *menagère*.[46]

'*Bijzit*' means concubine, but '*huishoudster*' and '*menagère*' mean, somewhat euphemistically, 'housekeeper' and 'housewife' and do not convey the sense of '*nyai*' in its original languages as a specifically young, and by implication unattached, female.

As Cribb and Kahin have noted of the days of the Dutch East India Company, 'formal marriage between Europeans and Indonesians was always strongly discouraged and sometimes prohibited, but concubinage was common'; 'because few Dutch women migrated to the colony before the 19th century, most Dutch men had permanent or semipermanent liaisons with Indonesian or other Asian women and gave European status to their children even if not to their consorts. Dutch colonial society, therefore, especially in Batavia, was mestizo in character'.[47] Concubinage continued during the nineteenth century. Stoler writes of concubinage that:

> if glossed as companionship or cohabitation outside marriage, it suggests more social privileges than most women who were involved in such relations would have enjoyed. They could be dismissed without reason, notice, or severance pay. They might be exchanged among Europeans and 'passed on' when men left for leave or retirement in Europe. The Indies Civil Code of 1848 made their position poignantly clear: native women 'had no rights over children recognized by a white man'.[48]

From early on, concubinage had a primarily commercial rationale:

> For the middling colonial staff, the East Indies Company firmly discouraged Euro-Asian marriages. Households based on Euro-Asian *unions*, by contrast, were seen to bear distinct advantages. Individual employees would bear the costs of dependents, mixed unions would produce healthier children, and Asian women would make fewer financial and affective demands. Finally, men would be more likely to remain if they established families with local roots.
>
> Concubinage served colonial interests in other ways. It permitted permanent settlement and rapid growth by a cheaper means than the importation of European women. Salaries of European recruits to the colonial armies, bureaucracies, plantation companies, and trading enterprises were carefully calibrated and kept artificially low. [. . .] by the nineteenth century

[46] 'Asian Women in the Lives of Dutch Tea Planters: Two Narratives from West Java', *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 29/85 (November 2001), 161–79 (p. 176, n. 3).
[47] Cribb and Kahin, *Historical Dictionary*, pp. 260, 121.
[48] p. 49. I am indebted to Stoler for this and other information.

> concubinage was the most prevalent living arrangement for European men. Nearly half of the Indies' European male population in the 1880s were unmarried and living with Asian women.[49]

Concubinage (including 'barracks-concubinage' for other ranks in the colonial army) was considered preferable to prostitution because healthier;[50] it was regarded as 'a necessary evil' (my translation).[51] One former *resident* felt that every young Indies internal civil servant should first take a concubine in order to learn the language and customs of the indigenous people.[52] The consequence of these mixed-race unions – the Eurasian, or Indo-European – was in an ambivalent situation, as *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* make plain.

The decade of Conrad's visits to the region was a time of great economic and social change in the Dutch East Indies, and also a time of changing expectations about inter-racial relationships. Concubinage, although encouraged in the Sumatran plantations, became less tolerated elsewhere.[53] The arrival of ever more Dutch women after the opening of the Suez Canal, together with the practice of men going to the Indies for a period before returning home – the so-called *trekkers*, as opposed to the *blijvers*, the 'stayers' (who wished to retire in the colony) – saw new social conventions established by senior officials and their wives which reflected Dutch bourgeois morality in Europe and which frowned upon inter-racial unions.[54] Another result of the redefinition imported from the motherland was a changed attitude towards another category of Indo-European: Europeans

[49] Ibid., p. 48.
[50] Ibid., pp. 48, 52.
[51] Nieuwenhuijs, 'Over de Europese samenleving', p. 778.
[52] Ibid. As one British writer described it: 'Every raw young Dutchman who comes to Java is considered as an "upstart" if he doesn't settle down and take a Javanese woman as his "dictionary" – a term for the native wife of convenience'. W. N. Willis, *Western Men with Eastern Morals* (London: Stanley Paul & Co., 1913), p. 162.
[53] Hanneke Ming writes of the 'more puritanical views' arising in the Netherlands 'in the last quarter of the nineteenth century' that had an impact on the attitudes to concubinage in the Dutch East Indies. 'Barracks-Concubinage in the Indies, 1887–1920', trans. Benedict Anderson and Audrey Kahin, *Indonesia*, 35 (April 1983), 65–93 (p. 92). Ronald Hyam notes the 1880s as the turning point in the British Empire to a more restrictive morality. *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990; repr. 1992), p. 201.
[54] Taylor, pp. 127–28, 134; Cribb and Kahin, *Historical Dictionary*, pp. 121–22. The resultant social unease is evident in much Dutch colonial literature of the time, including Melati van Java, *The Resident's Daughter*, noted in Chapter 2, and Couperus, *De Stille Kracht*. Women's writing about the Indies at this time is not surprisingly often about concubinage and the complications of relations between the Dutch bride, her husband's former *nyai*, and the children he had had with her. Taylor, pp. 144–58. Ming (p. 70) records that the number of European men living with a *nyai* only declined after 1890 and that prostitution increased.

born in the Indies who were entirely of European origin and Dutch nationality who were also known as Indo-Europeans, and who gradually came to be considered too Indonesian, as it seems does Almayer to the Dutch naval officers, as noted in Chapter 1.[55]

Jewel's grandfather had been 'a white; a high official' (p. 208); we do not know whether he was married to Jewel's grandmother, but the possibility arises that she was his *nyai*.[56] Significantly, it is not suggested that this union ended in desertion by the European man. The union produced Jewel's mother, a 'very good-looking Dutch-Malay girl' (p. 167), demonstrating that Jewel's grandmother was Malay. The probability is that Jewel's grandfather had sought to ensure that Jewel's mother had been Europeanized – that is, that he had legally recognized her so that she might qualify for the legal category of 'equal status' with Europeans.[57] This is suggested by the fact that Jewel's mother was 'educated' (p. 167), an accomplishment at that time (the 1860s) almost only available in schools for Europeans or through private tutors.[58] Consequently she had been able to teach Jewel 'to read and write' (p. 212). Furthermore, the fact that 'she was no ordinary woman' (p. 208) also perhaps suggests that she might have been able to bridge the European-Malay divide. Jewel's mother's cultural inheritance – that is to say, Eurasian, and possibly legally European – would also have contributed to her isolation once among the communities of Patusan, where, significantly, she 'had no other companion, confidant, and friend but her daughter' (p. 208).

Jewel's mother had separated from Jewel's father, though, as with Jewel's grandfather, we are not told whether they had been married. Again, there is the possibility that Jewel's mother was his *nyai*, and the fact that there was said to have been a 'separation' (p. 208) between them, and that Jewel's

[55] Stoler, p. 106. Vickers (p. 27) writes that in the early twentieth century Dutchmen 'who were "too Indies" received lesser wages'; he also records a case in Sumatra when a Dutchman of entirely European origin was forced to stay in a separate, downmarket, hotel from his teammates in a football team when playing away simply because he was a *blijver*.

[56] Jewel's grandfather's departure for not being 'dull enough to nurse a success' (p. 208) is reminiscent of the brilliant Dutch government official Max Havelaar's downfall in Multatuli's *Max Havelaar*.

[57] For a useful summary of the Indies government's racial classifications and of the qualifications relating to each, see *CEI*, XI: P. Boomgaard and A.J. Gooszen, *Population Trends 1795–1942* (1991), 67–69.

[58] Kees Groeneboer, *Gateway to the West: The Dutch Language in Colonial Indonesia 1600–1950: A History of Language Policy*, trans. Myra Scholz (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), p. 78. Groeneboer also records how, 'explicitly rejecting a language and education policy such as pursued by the English in British India, the Dutch decided against Western education on a large scale', (p. 1). Jewel's mother's situation is therefore all the more remarkable. The divisiveness of this policy meant 'that less than two percent of the population could communicate in Dutch at the end of the colonial period' (ibid., p. 1).

mother then married Cornelius, possibly suggests that she was indeed his *nyai*, for separation has a less formal ring than divorce and could refer to the parting of European man and indigenous partner, which required no legal process, leaving Jewel's mother free to marry. Although we are not told the race of Jewel's father, we can infer that he was white, for 'the merciless pressure of conventions' (p. 208) to which he and Jewel's mother are subject can only be read as referring to the growing disapproval of inter-racial sexual relationships. His being white is further suggested by the scene of Jewel's mother's grave in which she is described as 'the melancholy figure of a woman, the shadow of a cruel wisdom buried in a lonely grave' (p. 208) in which 'a cruel wisdom' relates to the same conventions, considered wise by the Dutch establishment but the cause of much separation.

As a Eurasian, and as, perhaps, a former concubine of a European, Jewel's mother's position was weak once she had left European circles. Van der Veur records that 'the colonial status hierarchy granted such high prestige to being a "European" that most Eurasians tried to approximate the model as closely as possible. This expressed itself in "ignoring" the "Indonesian grandmother" and "marrying up" [. . .]', as the phrase was, with '"whites"' if they possibly could.[59] Jewel's mother was not by then a marriageable young Eurasian girl with no former relationships, and her marriage to another Eurasian, Cornelius, is down in terms of the colonial social scale, something which is partly conveyed by the terms in which Marlow describes Cornelius: 'the awful little Malacca Portuguese' (p. 208), whose 'slow laborious walk resembled the creeping of a repulsive beetle, the legs alone moving with horrid industry while the body glided evenly' (p. 214). He has also, appropriately for the history of the period, been 'clerk in some commercial house in the Dutch colonies' (p. 167). Cornelius' being specifically a Malacca Portuguese is revealing. Malacca on the Malay Peninsula had a large mestizo population, having been an important Portuguese settlement until superseded by the Dutch in 1641 and then, in 1824, by the British. Marlow's distaste seems to be both for Cornelius himself and for his being a Malacca Portuguese. This group of Eurasians was regarded as being particularly remote from the European element of their roots,[60] and in this respect Marlow's contempt, ironically, indicates a reaction allied to that towards those Dutch who became 'too Indies'. As Myrna Braga-Blake and Ann Ebert-Oehlers describe, in contrast to Eurasians of British and Dutch descent,

[59] p. 201. An example is Joanna's marriage to Willems in *An Outcast of the Islands*.

[60] Cornelius claims to Brown that 'I am an Englishman too. From Malacca' (p. 277). Albeit a Malacca Portuguese, his claim derives from Malacca being a British possession.

> the Portuguese-Eurasian from Malacca is dark. In these Eurasians, the original Portuguese blood, if any, is extremely remote and lost in distant history. However, descendants of 'proper Portuguese' – by which is meant a Portuguese recently from Portugal – who can trace Portuguese origin to a specific ancestor, would be fair and could rank as upper ten. These are not known as 'Portuguese-Eurasians,' a term reserved for those from Malacca, who are more commonly known as 'Malacca-Portuguese'.[61]

Jewel's mother's marriage appears to be one of convenience. Perhaps Jewel's mother had no other means of support, and perhaps the marriage was organized by her partner on their separation, as a way of providing for her – Cornelius tells Marlow that 'every gentleman made a provision when the time came to go home' (p. 247).

Jewel says to Marlow 'He has left me [. . .] you always leave us – for your own ends' (p. 262). Jones refers to 'the habitual betrayal of the women of indigenous or mixed race by the white man',[62] and Padmini Mongia writes of 'the need for repetition in the history of mother and daughter' and that 'Jewel takes her place in a generational drama which allows the colonized woman no role other than abandonment by the colonizing white man'.[63] However, Conrad's complex portrayal of Jewel's family history, and the historical reality, enable us to reappraise these views. The historical specificity of the Dutch East Indies, with its long tradition of extensive and officially encouraged concubinage, reinforces the text's suggestion that the family's 'generational drama' is not in fact necessarily homogeneously one of 'habitual betrayal'. Just as many European men's relationships with *nyai*'s or indigenous wives were long-lasting, and some saw the European man and *nyai* marry, we should bear in mind too the example of Stein and his Malay princess wife, which powerfully suggests the possibility both of an enduring relationship and of a different role for an indigenous woman than simply 'colonized woman'. The same might be said of Jörgenson's long relationship with 'the girl' (p. 91) in *The Rescue*, discussed in Chapter 3, which ends in

[61] Myrna Braga-Blake, ed., with Ann Ebert-Oehlers, *Singapore Eurasians: Memories and Hopes* (Singapore: Times Editions, 1992), p. 120. I am grateful to Agnes Yeow's essay '"Here Comes the Nazarene"' for bringing this book to my attention. In a curious suggestion of historical reality regarding the name 'Cornelius', Braga-Blake and Ebert-Oehlers record (p. 43): 'The Cornelius Family. Some Dutch-Eurasian families of Malacca sometimes considered themselves to be "Portuguese-Eurasians." This was due to the frequency of intermarriages with mestizo descendants of the Portuguese. In fact in the early 1800s and earlier, members of these old Dutch families from Malacca, such as the Cornelius, had Portuguese given names.'

[62] p. 14.

[63] '"Ghosts of the Gothic": Spectral Women and Colonized Spaces in *Lord Jim*', *The Conradian*, 17/2 (Spring 1993), 1–16 (pp. 1, 10).

marriage. Further, as another element in the complexity, the changing and increasingly restrictive Dutch colonial morality is itself critiqued, as in the juxtaposition of 'death, which can sometimes be merciful', and the 'merciless pressure of conventions', which ironizes those conventions and their 'cruel wisdom' (p. 208).

Jewel's statement, 'you always leave us – for your own ends' includes Jim's departure in all those other departures of European men from indigenous or mixed-race partners, generally for a Dutch wife or to return home. But there is a bitter irony in that Jim's departure is his death, and is for different reasons not arising from the often reductively supposed patterns of Indies inter-racial relationships, but from other obligations; his is not 'a story very much like the others' (p. 208) as Marlow describes Jewel's mother's. Jewel's words, surely emblematic of the ultimately wider failure of colonialism, evoke a great sadness, increased by her awareness of her own family's troubled history. However, recovering the historical context, together with close reading, reveals a complexity and ambivalence about that family history and the conventions that affected it, and suggests possibilities of fidelity in inter-racial relationships, possibilities and complexities that resist simple conclusions; for Conrad, if not for Marlow, there is no 'story very much like the others'.

Exile, and the Mobility of Home

Home is a disturbed concept in *Lord Jim*, as it often is in the Asian fiction, a location frequently the creation of trade, generally somewhere adopted or somewhere to which there can be no return. Even Jim's family home in England falls short of being a strong base from which life might be engaged, the family there never being 'called upon to grapple with fate' (p. 258). Lacking homeliness, home is often more a mere refuge or acculturation of space. Jim, who 'could never go home now' (p. 64), lives in a fort in Patusan, a fitting symbol of his uneasy residence where he is surrounded by various groups who are also out of place. The Bugis immigrant community from Celebes was, characteristically, attracted to Patusan by trading opportunities. Here they quarrel with the Rajah over trade and act as intermediaries between the native collectors of jungle produce, several of whom have been 'driven over the cliffs by a party of the Rajah's spearmen, on suspicion of having been collecting edible birds' nests for a Celebes trader' (p. 194), and those traders, like Stein, who transport such produce to centres of distribution. The Chinese, economic migrants themselves, are in evidence with their shops. The Arabs, also economic migrants, married

Indies women and produced descendants such as the 'Arab half-breed' Sherif Ali whose home too is a 'fortified camp' (p. 195). Sherif Ali's religious zealotry reflects the Arab Muslim influence in the Indies, which was of concern to the Dutch. Whatever Sherif Ali's motives in inciting 'the tribes in the interior [. . .] to rise' (p. 195), his action symbolizes the attempt to impose one culturally exported home upon others. Rajah Allang and his subjects, who may appear to have long-established cultural roots, are probably the successors of those outsiders who conquered the coastal and riverine peoples.[64] Patusan is not one home but many, all of them more or less temporary or relatively recently established. For the Arabs, Chinese, Bugis, and Europeans, home and its beliefs were cultural exports from their homelands. What is portrayed is not simply opposition between European and indigenous, but a more extensive range of transience and uncertainty driven by economic forces, where home is seen to be a vulnerable cultural as well as physical construct. The distinctions between the various parties in Patusan are important. As Hampson writes: 'neither European culture nor indigenous culture is simple and homogenous, and the differences between Europeans and between different indigenous groups are as important for the outcome as the differences between Europeans and non-Europeans'.[65] Jim's desire to impose what he regards as a self-evidently just order on the cultural complexity of Patusan is in this light another example of a desire for influence by outsiders. Fictional Patusan and the historical reality, both with rival trading and political interests, are difficult to align with Donovan's description of it as an 'idealized space of romance out of the sight of tourists and sailors alike'.[66]

After first leaving the family home, Jim's home at sea is with a community without fixed location; Marlow's sense that Jim is 'one of us' (p. 38) reflects the theoretical bond of the sea defined in terms of 'toil' and 'conduct' (p. 43). Jim's third home is its antithesis, a succession of temporary employments in what are merely 'halting-places' (p. 10), five of which are as a water-clerk, an occupation phenomenologically performing his simultaneous separation from homes both on land and at sea. De Jongh aptly calls Jim 'my representative afloat' (p. 115), 'afloat' capturing Jim's figurative condition, for having gone to sea he is now idiomatically at sea, 'afloat' but making no way. In Patusan, Jim becomes the most influential

[64] This would certainly be the case if the cultural setting of the novel is eastern Borneo, where Malay settlers displaced the indigenous peoples as part of a long history of trade-inspired incursions.

[65] *Cross-Cultural Encounters*, p. 144. Berthoud's use of the term 'Patusanians' – a term which does not occur in the novel itself – is in this sense unhelpful. *The Major Phase*, p. 90.

[66] *Joseph Conrad*, p. 89.

man in the settlement, his influence affecting Chinese, Malays, Bugis immigrants from the Celebes, and Arabs (whose leader he even expels), these four ethnic groupings reflecting, significantly, the cross-section of the ethnic groups also dominated by the Dutch in the East Indies. Ironically, Jim wishes to impose that form of order from which he has fled, his urge to control described in terms of regulation: Marlow describes Jim in a way that evokes the inescapable colonial stamp of the European's leadership in overseas territories, however well-intentioned perhaps the motives: 'He had regulated so many things in Patusan!' (p. 168) – the term 'regulated' also being pointedly reminiscent of the activities of the White Rajahs in the region, such as Brooke, who sought to establish European justice and free trade under his personal dominion. When looking with Jim at the moonlit sky, Marlow feels even as if Jim 'had had a hand in regulating that unique spectacle' (p. 168), and Jim looks about him with what Marlow describes as 'an owner's eye' (p. 188).

The botanical context, as discussed in Chapter 1 in connection with Almayer's family, deserves emphasis. A botanical remark by Marlow places Jim firmly in the colonial context, even though at first sight his words may seem innocent enough:

> the few big trees had been felled, the undergrowth had been cut down and the grass fired. He had a mind to try a coffee-plantation there. The big hill, rearing its double summit coal-black in the clear yellow glow of the rising moon, seemed to cast its shadow upon the ground prepared for that experiment. (p. 242)

Jim's 'owner's eye' is evident in this fundamental change he is contemplating in Patusan's trade and agriculture, such a plantation changing the landscape and reflecting, as Boo Eung Koh has observed, a 'colonial economic policy'.[67] It is possible to consider Stein's business as relatively unintrusive: the exchange of goods for jungle and sea produce, a dipping into the abundance that the representation of the jungle in Figure 1 discloses. A coffee-plantation, however, is a quite different agriculture from one that satisfies local needs, in which indigenous inhabitants cultivate land for food largely for themselves and perhaps local sale. A plantation requires organized labour, the exchange of labour for cash, and represents a development towards a second level of globalized trade, where large-scale and low-cost production satisfies world markets.[68] Jim's idea of a coffee-plantation

[67] 'Contradictions in Colonial History in *Lord Jim*', *Conradiana*, 28/3 (Autumn 1996), 163–81 (p. 171).
[68] See Dick, 'Introduction' to Dick, et al., *The Emergence of a National Economy*, pp. 1–8 (p. 5).

does not offer an opportunity for unintrusive improvement of the lot of the people of Patusan.

Indeed, the word 'experiment' suggests a reiteration of the experiments at Buitenzorg, and the choice of coffee as a crop powerfully recalls its unhappy history as one of the crops under the Compulsory Cultivation System in Java, which was introduced as the 'Forced Delivery System' into other regions of the Archipelago, including Sumatra.[69] Forced Delivery production of coffee had been introduced to west Sumatra in 1847,[70] and in this context – that is, reflecting on what we believe to be the location of Patusan in north-west Sumatra – Jim's experiment can only be read all the more uncomfortably. Marlow admired Jim's 'energy, his enterprise and his shrewdness' (p. 242), but the historical context of the Forced Delivery System further problematizes the very foundation of Western notions of business enterprise. As Berthoud notes, the novel is 'anchored in historical reality'[71] and that reality, once understood, complicates further any simple notion of Jim's desire to do good, for he becomes immediately implicated in the ambivalences of colonial exploitation.

Stein: Commerce, Intellect, and Humanity

Stein appeals as a point of balance in the commercial and personal challenges witnessed in the novel. Validated by the faith and endurance he has shown in the face of loss, he is a model for how a life of engagement, at the same time resilient and just, might be lived. As Tony Tanner remarks, 'This man turns out to exist at the real middle of the novel in more ways than one'.[72] His scientific studies and reflective character, as in his 'student's face' (p. 153), communicate a lifetime's attending to people and to things by which his sensibility and sympathy have been enlarged. Stein's attention to life is remarked on with unusual insight by Jim in connection with Stein's claim that his saving of Doramin's life was an accident: 'Mr. Stein was just

[69] For discussion of the System, see Chapter 1. Multatuli's novel, *Max Havelaar*, concerns itself with, among other things, coffee and agricultural exploitation, and although Multatuli believed in the rightness of the colonial mission, his book had a powerful political impact and contributed to the slow liberalization of Dutch colonial practice in accordance with the *Assistent-Resident*'s oath to 'protect the native population against oppression, ill-treatment, and extortion'. *Max Havelaar* (1868), p. 112.

[70] Cribb and Kahin, *Historical Dictionary*, p. 100.

[71] 'Explanatory Notes' to *Lord Jim*, ed. Jacques Berthoud, p. 326.

[72] *Conrad: 'Lord Jim'* (London: Edward Arnold, 1963), p. 40.

the man to look out for such accidents' (p. 177), as if Stein's capabilities embraced both the foreseeable and the unforeseeable. He has also apparently achieved a harmony between his trading and scientific activities – both, interestingly, focused on collection. Unlike manufacturing or agriculture, the touch of this trade, like Stein's deeply sympathetic patting of Jewel's hand, is seemingly light.

Stein's character is apparent phenomenologically in his house, with its calm 'empty dark rooms' and 'waxed floors', its room for reflection, and light thrown upon darkness. As Marlow and Stein move through the house it is the reflections of light which are most apparent: 'the polished surface of a table', the 'flash[ing] perpendicularly in and out of distant mirrors' (p. 163), the 'crystalline void' (p. 164). Illumination follows them from its 'strongly lighted' source in, significantly, Stein's study, which is a 'vast room' (p. 155) appropriate to the scale of Stein's life, commercial, intellectual, and humane. The 'two immense reception-rooms [are] uninhabited and uninhabitable, clean, full of solitude and of shining things' (p. 261), perhaps partly because they reflect the refinement of Stein's life, which has enabled things to shine out through his insight and attention to them, as if he has drawn forth into vision the essential qualities of objects. He has put himself beyond what elsewhere in the novel are the limitations of home and he exists in a beneficent building, albeit one which, ironically, is 'uninhabited and uninhabitable', the presence of not only 'servants' but 'dependants' (p. 157) an acknowledgement of mutual responsibility. Marlow 'respected the intense, almost passionate, absorption with which he looked at a butterfly as though [. . .] 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' (p. 157). As an intrepid participant in the challenges of the human condition, and with his imagination added to a naturalist's reflection on the material world, Stein has become a curator both of materials and of wisdom, his home both a space for rendering assistance (to Jim and to Jewel) and a taxonomical embodiment of ordered conservation and investigation.[73]

In Marlow's disquisition on returning home, he emphasizes the necessity of returning with 'a clear conscience', and Stein apparently satisfies Marlow's test of being able to 'touch [his] reward with clean

[73] In a stimulating essay on the organization of knowledge and links to bookkeeping, Anke te Hesen draws attention to the fact that cabinets of curiosities could operate as 'spatialized indexes', an observation which prompts further links between collecting and the control of space. 'Accounting for the Natural World: Double-Entry Bookkeeping in the Field', in Schiebinger and Swan, *Colonial Botany*, pp. 237–51 (p. 248).

hands' (p. 169).[74] Jim, Marlow recognizes, 'will never go home' (p. 247) 'to render an account' (p. 168); his letter home is similarly unfinished. Rendering an account not only evokes the commercial parallel from bookkeeping, by which business is faithfully recorded, but also echoes Cornelius' failure to render a (commercial) account to Stein ('his books were all torn, and some were missing' (p. 215)). Stein once had 'no home to go to' (p. 156), his return barred by political activity, but he, in contrast to Jim, respects the 'secular right to our fidelity' (p. 169) of his 'native town' in his intention, despite his long absence, to bequeath his collection to it. It is as if Stein will settle his own account by returning 'something of me. The best' (p. 155), a decision that reflects order and connectedness.

Stein is Conrad's supreme portrait of the possibility of the productive presence of business in a rounded, imaginative life. His ability to embrace and reconcile the extremes of life is mirrored in the objects he collects. The gorgeousness and wayward flight of the butterflies is contrasted with the beetles as 'horrible miniature monsters, looking malevolent' (p. 153). The beetles remain monstrous in death; the butterflies have metamorphosed into 'splendour unmarred by death' (p. 157), as if to declare triumphant change and the overcoming of contingency. The scene in which Stein catches the butterfly encompasses the same benevolent and malevolent forces, and unites his practical, intellectual, and humane qualities. On being ambushed, he copes characteristically by 'a little management', in contrast with Jim, whose response to problems is always defensive. As Stein looks 'for some sign of life' (p. 159) in the face of one of the men he has shot, he perceives the butterfly, which he pursues with one hand holding his revolver and the other his felt hat, his hands performing functions for both the practical and the intellectual.

While acknowledging Stein's humanity, Jacques Berthoud points out that Stein is also a 'trader-imperialist', but this seems too simple a description of Conrad's subtle portrayal of Stein in relation to trade.[75] Although Stein has 'inherited the Scotchman's privileged position and all his stock-in-trade' (p. 156), this was in the Wajo States and we must assume that this privilege was lost when Stein left as a result of the deaths of his wife and child

[74] The biblical resonance of 'clean hands' (Psalm 24) adds a sanctified element to Marlow's belief that 'you must touch your reward with clean hands lest it turn to dead leaves, to thorns, in your grasp' (p. 169).

[75] 'A Note on Sources', in *Lord Jim*, ed. Jacques Berthoud, new edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 307–14 (p. 310).

and Mohammed Bonso. Starting 'life afresh' with 'a little money' (p. 157), he will have been in competition with Arab, Bugis, and Chinese interests. Stein's virtual statelessness also serves to distance him from overtly colonial interests. His authorization from the Indies government is not a privilege for a European but is owing to his integrity, and far from receiving assistance from the Dutch, 'it was understood that he took all the risks' (p. 173). From the commercial historical context it seems clear that he occupies a position as more an 'adventurer' (p. 153), relying on his skills alone to further his commercial interests. Conrad specifically narrates the history of his trading in a way which lessens the impression that he has gained advantages from colonial opportunity: Stein 'made his way' from a 'poor republican watch-maker in Trieste [. . .] to Tripoli with a stock of cheap watches to hawk about' (p. 156), selling such goods in another continent being the most challenging of commercial beginnings. Critics have tended to concentrate on Stein as philosopher, collector, or intrepid survivor, but it is only by interrogating the nature and range of information which Conrad provides about Stein's commercial interests that our response to him can be fully informed. For example, Tanner draws attention to Stein as 'a brave and capable man of action' as well as a romantic, someone who, like the French lieutenant, 'know[s] fear but hold[s] on to efficiency',[76] but his capabilities go beyond efficiency and are illuminated as much as anything by his commercial record, which demonstrates the relevance of matters of conduct in the field of economic endeavour which connects humanity.

Stein, however, is not altogether unconnected to colonial interests. His role in the Wajo States is reminiscent, like Jim's in Patusan, of White Rajah intervention. In Patusan Jim might have allied himself to any of the communities, for each has a claim to occupation and dominance. His alliance with the Bugis party stems not so much from any superior rights they might claim as from the claims of friendship inherited from Stein's time with Doramin in the Wajo States. Rajah Allang's right to rule – derived from the Sultan, his uncle – is at least as strong as Doramin's. In the Wajo States Stein sides with one of the parties to the disputed throne, for reasons which are not clear. Mohammed Bonso is a younger son which may suggest that his claim is not pre-eminent. Marlow's narrative conveys the sense of adventure in this stage of Stein's life, but it is important to identify from it the likely cause of Stein's involvement in the conflict. Since Stein has no independent means, and the most valuable element of his inheritance from the Scotsman is his 'privileged position'(p. 156) (i.e. his exclusive trading

[76] *Conrad: 'Lord Jim'*, pp. 41, 59.

rights), his part in the prosecution of Mohamed Bonso's claim during 'eight years' (p. 157) of struggle can be read as an attempt to protect those valuable trading rights. There is, however, no suggestion that Stein desires power for himself, and his business interests in the Wajo States succumb to political risk.

Although at the time *Lord Jim* is set Stein's position is that he 'took all the risks' (p. 173), they are now more widely spread. First, Stein has a partner, whose capital will have been an additional resource. Secondly, as Stein says, this partner 'looked after the Moluccas', the more distant region of the East Indies, thus reducing the risk inherent in only one individual having to understand and manage an otherwise too geographically extensive market. Thirdly, the firm has 'a lot of trading posts' (p. 153), so the impact of any one failing is minimized. Stein has also avoided more speculative capital-intensive activity such as mining and agriculture, and has concentrated on activities which depend for their success not on substantial initial capital resources, but on the cultivation of long-term relationships with intermediaries who buy the produce from the indigenous gatherers, thus capitalizing instead on his trustworthiness (Marlow remarks that 'he was one of the most trustworthy men I had ever known' (p. 153)), discretion, and understanding of the market, including his knowledge of native states. Stein has therefore continued the same successful business model inherited from the Scotsman (the buying and selling of collected produce), but has removed its main risks of dependency on a single political structure and sole proprietorship. Read from this commercial perspective, Stein's achievements and qualities are both enhanced and given perspective.

Transgressive Business

Stein's qualities are further emphasized by their contrast with the instances of business not able to show clean hands. The most striking is Chester's guano enterprise. As Jimmy M. Skaggs shows, the guano trade was known for its highly speculative nature, rapacity, and appalling conditions.[77] The rewards could be very high – Chester claims his islet could be 'the making of Queensland!' (p. 126). Obtaining labour was extremely difficult due to the conditions, resulting in blackbirding and other forms of duress and deceit.[78]

[77] *The Great Guano Rush: Entrepreneurs and American Overseas Expansion* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), e.g. pp. 159–61.

[78] Blackbirding was the kidnapping of native men for use as labour.

Chinese, wanting to leave the poverty and danger of China, were often used, but many committed suicide.[79] When Chester says 'I'm going to dump forty coolies there – if I've to steal 'em' (p. 127), and expects Jim to be armed to enforce work and order, this may be read as reflecting historical reality.[80] Lacking any capital, Chester believes he can obtain credit in Hobart by 'my bill at six months for the materials' (p. 127) – distant Hobart, though an important shipbuilding and whaling town, suggesting the lengths necessary to obtain funds. The planned business has no vessel, capital, or labour, and the risk is uninsurable, factors which require Chester to offer 'half of the first cargo' (p. 125) for the possibility of a ship. An additional risk is that Chester's island will prove to have guano of poor quality. The island in the 'Walpole Reefs' may be off Australia, given Chester's reference to Hobart, and J.C. Nesbit observes that 'some guanos have been imported from the islets and rocky coasts of Australia. They have proved of very inferior quality, and great loss has been sustained by the parties who have shipped them. The analyses appended show that the freight must frequently be more than the value of the guano'.[81] Tanner describes Chester as one of 'the four most important beetles' in *Lord Jim*, creatures that are 'completely at home in the dirt';[82] it is all the more appropriate that Chester's enterprise is working excrement.

Brown is another transgressive trader, believing that 'the smuggling of a few guns was no great crime' (p. 290). Brown's intentions on Patusan are ironically described in commercial terms: 'He had done that kind of thing before – in the way of business' (p. 269), a remark which highlights the ambivalence of commerce in the novel. His attitude – 'the land already seemed to be his to tear to pieces, squeeze and throw away' – mirrors the colonial rapacity observed in 'Heart of Darkness' and 'An Outpost of Progress'. Brown – who 'was not averse to begin fighting on that Rajah's account' (p. 278) and 'planned treacherous alliances' (p. 279), and who even thinks of 'stealing the whole country' (p. 276) – problematizes Western

[79] Skaggs, pp. 162–63.

[80] Indeed, 'only after Peru and China had negotiated a treaty in 1874 to end the traffic did the British government take firm steps to prevent its citizens from engaging in the [coolie] trade – and then only after the number of Orientals in Australia had increased to a level sufficient to frighten local residents'. Ibid., p. 165.

[81] *The History and Properties of the Different Varieties of Natural Guanos* (London: Rogerson and Tuxford, 1859), pp. 47, 37. Nesbit's work provided the first reliable means of assessing the monetary value of guano from its chemical composition. FOCP no. 4887, January 1880, 'Return of existing Guano Licenses [*sic*], 1879, corrected to 1st January, 1880' gives a sense of this trade. Of the eleven licensees, at least five have connections with Australia. National Archives, Kew. FO 881/4887. Crown copyright.

[82] *Conrad: 'Lord Jim'*, pp. 42, 21.

involvement in indigenous affairs by uncomfortably recalling the alliances of Stein and Jim, and, indeed, Brooke's personal dominion.

Stein's Fidelity, His Gardens, and the Transgressions of Colonial Botany

As in the case of Jim, part of Stein's character and colonial context is provided indirectly by botanical reference, his garden a context which links him to a wider colonial endeavour, for Stein is also a collector of plants, so that not only his house but also his garden are given over to contain what he has been able to 'annex' (p. 157):

> these famous gardens of Stein, in which you can find every plant and tree of tropical lowlands. I followed the course of the canalised stream and sat for a long time on a shaded bench near the ornamental pond, where some waterfowl with clipped wings were diving and splashing noisily. The branches of casuarina trees behind me swayed slightly, incessantly, reminding me of the soughing of fir trees at home. (p. 263)

Marlow earlier relates how, ironically, 'Stein never failed to annex on his own account every butterfly or beetle he could lay hands on' (p. 157), the word 'annex' echoing the term for colonial appropriation. There is a related irony in the phrase 'on his own account': its commercial overtones suggest in the context a private appropriation of material which was either unallocated or previously others', echoing colonial appropriation of resources without exchange.[83] This suggestion is reinforced by the reader's attention being drawn to the value of the insects: when the butterfly is put back into the display case, 'the automatic lock clicked sharply' (p. 162), an audible reminder of private ownership.[84] The scale of Stein's botanical collection is striking, for not just a garden but 'gardens' are required to contain it. Furthermore 'every plant and tree of tropical lowlands' has been assembled in an enterprise that resembles an institutional botanical garden, all the more so when a little later we read: 'They disappeared beyond that spinney

[83] Stein's trading, however, is consistently portrayed as exchange-based: watches in Tripoli; 'stock-in-trade' (p. 156) in the Wajo States; 'goods' in Patusan (p. 217).

[84] It is difficult not to associate Stein's collecting with one of the main zoological collections in the East, the Raffles Museum in Singapore, which Conrad may well have visited during his two stays in Singapore. The catalogue of the exhibits published c. 1884, a date between Conrad's two visits to the colony, mentions specifically 'Lepidoptera', 'Coleoptera', and 'Longicorns', three of the four insect types collected by Stein. Raffles Library and Museum, *Catalogue of Exhibits in the Raffles Museum, Singapore* (Singapore: [Raffles Museum and Library], [1884(?)]), pp. 74, 98, 98. Hanitsch's catalogue of 1908 mentions the fourth type – 'Buprestidae'. R. Hanitsch, comp., *Guide to the Zoological Collections of the Raffles Museum, Singapore* (Singapore: 'printed at the Straits Times Press', 1908), p. 59.

(you may remember) where sixteen different kinds of bamboo grow together, all distinguishable to the learned eye' (p. 264).

The encompassing of a whole region's flora in a series of gardens, effectively the botanical capture of the region, can be read as a metaphor for colonial domination and its power to alter scale, relocate, artificially reconstruct, and literally to change the face of the earth through colonial botanical expertise and agricultural exploitation, precisely as it occurred in the Dutch East Indies where large-scale plantations often displaced indigenous land-holdings. Such colonial control is also mirrored in the stream being canalized, in the waterfowl having wings that are 'clipped', and in the sixteen types of bamboo being in unnatural, controlled, conjunction. Stein's 'famous' gardens in Semarang, in aiming to gather 'every plant and tree of tropical lowlands' (p. 263) – a task that, despite the assertion in the text, was likely to have been too great for one individual to achieve – strongly evoke the renowned gardens at Buitenzorg.[85]

The reader is prompted, in the face of these various botanical indicators of colonial exploitation in *Lord Jim*, to consider at what point economic botany becomes colonial botany, and whether its rewards can be touched 'with clean hands' (p. 169). Under the Compulsory Cultivation System political will was

[85] Berthoud enumerates various 'specific debts' in *Lord Jim* to Wallace's *The Malay Archipelago*, including 'the Buitenzorg Botanical Gardens, for Stein's garden and his bamboo grove'. 'A Note on Sources', in *Lord Jim*, pp. 309–10. Wallace, however, does not mention waterfowl, canalized stream, ornamental pond, or bamboo grove, all of which may be based on actual features of the Gardens, and his brief, 'somewhat disappointed' account (I: pp. 173, 173–74) also mentions with regard to bamboo merely 'clumps of bamboos of perhaps fifty different kinds' (I: 174). A grove of bamboos existed: 'A grove consisting for the most part of bamboos is found on the left of the Canarian avenue, called on that account "the bamboogrove [*sic*]"'. Smith, *Illustrated Guide*, p. 52. This suggests that a grove as such was noteworthy, and Smith provides a photograph (p. 53). Chailley-Bert's description suggests the canalized stream: 'Une eau vive et abondante coule tout au travers; ici, c'est un mince filet qui gazouille; là, c'est un ruisseau qui, s'échappant d'une écluse court [. . .] se distribuer parmi les canaux et rigoles d'irrigation' [A plentiful supply of fresh water flows throughout; in one place it is a narrow babbling rivulet; in another it is a stream which escapes a sluice to flow along the irrigation canals and channels] (p. 336). Such streams are represented, and the Gardens' irrigation described, in W. Burck, *Wandelingen door den botanischen tuin te Buitenzorg* [Walks in the Botanical Gardens at Buitenzorg] (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1893), p. 3, map, p. 1. Waterfowl, not surprisingly for a palace designed on European lines, are evident on the lake behind the Governor-General's Palace amid the Botanical Gardens in two paintings: Willem Troost (1812–93), 'Rear side view of Buitenzorg Palace, before the Earthquake of October 10th, 1834', and Raden Saleh (1811–80), 'View of Kanari Avenue and the rear side of Buitenzorg Palace' (1871). Marie-Odette Scalliet, et al., *Pictures from the Tropics: Paintings by Western Artists during the Dutch Colonial Period in Indonesia*, trans. Karin Beks (Wijk en Aalburg: Pictures Publishers; Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1999), pp. 53, 64. For these reasons it is possible that at least some of Conrad's description of Stein's gardens was based on sources in addition to Wallace, either written or provided by people with whom he spoke while in the Archipelago. Buitenzorg was largely a centre of research and collection for the tropical lowlands, the focus of Stein's gardens.

used to commercialize space for agriculture, using often coerced labour, which Chester's plans echo. Stein's gardens have an almost fairy-tale quality, at least partly because in them the radical changes – both agricultural and social – caused by colonial botany cannot be imagined. The recovery of the context of economic botany shows us one of the ways in which Conrad portrayed what Berthoud has called the 'unnegotiable' nature of imperialism and thus the nature of the work of the hands involved in it.[86]

Stein himself would not have had such exploitation in mind for his gardens, but they evoke the connection between scientific research and subsequent agricultural exploitation. The scientific context of museums could be similarly translated to the commercial. A director of the Raffles Museum in Singapore, who was also the Government Economic Botanist for the Straits Settlements, stated in a lecture: 'Unfortunately from various causes, the fact that Museums should be powerful aids to Commerce is lost sight of', adding that 'First and foremost amongst raw products we should endeavour to have as perfect a collection of Vegetable Products, the various products which are or possibly may be utilized to the service of man and the study of which constitutes the science of Economic Botany.'[87] The colonized world is seen as comprising objects which have an economic value, either latent or extant, and the museum a store of economic value, a sister institution of potential exploitation to the botanic garden. Ultimately the aim is to create value for the colonizer both from the sale of products from the colony and from the increased purchasing power of the colonized and, if necessary, to change the economic character of the indigenous people in order to achieve these aims and to redefine the subject space as a market which both produces and consumes more.

Although Stein lives in the Dutch East Indies and, as 'the welcome guest at afternoon receptions' (p. 164), participates in colonial life, his studiousness, apparently 'clean hands' (p. 169), and the mode of his engagement with life all distance him from full complicity in Dutch colonial rule; his riches are emphasized as lying 'in generous enthusiasms, in friendship, love, war – in all the exalted elements of romance' (p. 164). Although, as Berthoud rightly argues, Stein's 'prescription' for living is 'less reliable' than his 'diagnosis',[88] his own life has balanced and transcended the ambiguities of existence. Whereas Jim dreams of trying to repair a clock – suggesting

[86] 'A Note on Sources', in *Lord Jim*, p. 312.
[87] James Collins, *Museums: Their Commercial and Scientific Uses*. Raffles Library & Museum, Singapore, S.S. [Straits Settlements] Occasional Papers No.1 (Singapore: [Raffles Library & Museum], [1874]), p. 5.
[88] *The Major Phase*, p. 88.

a desire to correct the past – and is given one to repair, Stein's steadfastness and preparedness can, in contrast, be seen as linked to his early life with the watchmaker in Trieste, whose work in creating regulators of time places him metaphorically in control of that dimension.

It is the performance of Stein's hands which as much as anything indicates his goodness, hands which sense and reach but which do not grasp; Marlow recounts how Stein laid his hand 'gently on my shoulder' (p. 162), and, with Jewel in the garden, 'patted her hand' (p. 264). Stein's 'pale big hands had rare deliberate gestures of a pointing out, demonstrating kind' (p. 153), suggesting the sensitivity of someone whose hands express the process of understanding. Stein, who had been married to a Malay, immerses himself in the fate of another Malay, Jewel; he had also involved himself in the fate of Jewel's mother, just as he later intervened in Jim's destiny, and that participation suggests a fidelity and understanding which can offer consolation. Whereas Jim declares an intention – 'I shall be faithful' (p. 252) – Stein has shown practical fidelity from the time early in his life in the 'revolutionary movement' (p. 156). Stein's understanding creates a space in which Jim's failure can be accepted, and is for Jim the closest he can approach to a 'clean slate' (p. 141), a space in which there can begin to be an end to being 'a seaman in exile' (p. 10), an exile which is not just from the sea. As Berthoud writes, Stein realizes, as Marlow 'is persuaded' of Jim, 'that there is more to a man than the sum of his deeds'.[89]

'The Language of Facts'

In a novel in which words signally fail, as shown in the Inquiry, Jim's death, which 'crowns the ambiguity of a tormented career',[90] signals the impossibility of finding words to express that ambiguity. An understanding of commercial historical reality shows Conrad writing through commerce as one of the means by which ambiguity is both articulated and performed. Commerce is not only a common experience of most of mankind, but also offers a metaphorical framework in which people's lives are lived in the everyday dimensions of time and space, as well as providing examples of what Tanner refers to as 'efficiency', which he describes as 'a key value word in the book'.[91] Stein's career, from hawking cheap watches to becoming a respected, established citizen, is a story of endeavour and of keeping to a

[89] Ibid., p. 82.
[90] Ibid., p. 93.
[91] *Conrad: 'Lord Jim'*, p. 38.

code of conduct quite as much as it is one of 'management' (p. 159) on being ambushed, or his stated beliefs; articulation may fail him – 'his voice [. . .] was no longer incisive' (p. 162) – but the facts of his commercial life, in which the ethical and the economic are linked, speak for themselves, perhaps more so than his memorable utterances.

The unresolved ambiguity of Jim's nature is conveyed through his and others' inability to describe it. Marlow can only write at the end 'We ought to know' (p. 313) and, in a crucial statement which embodies this failure of language, he declares:

> And besides, the last word is not said – probably shall never be said. Are not our lives too short for that full utterance which through all our stammerings is of course our only and abiding intention? I have given up expecting those last words, whose ring, if they could only be pronounced, would shake both heaven and earth. (p. 171)

The book's conclusion signifies this ambiguity and inexpressibility not through any statement of the inadequacy of articulation, but through a metaphor of performance: Jim dies 'with his hand over his lips' (p. 312). Denoting silence, Jim's gesture performs the obstruction of utterance, an obstruction which recalls his experience at the Inquiry – the impossibility of 'that full utterance'.[92] Marlow had stated earlier the implications of language unfitted to such ambiguities: 'there shall be no message unless such as each of us can interpret for himself from the language of facts' (p. 256). Caught by commerce's networks, it is the language of facts, of which the language of colonialism and commerce is part, that finally renders Jim unable to articulate his life and his fate.

[92] Andrea de Jorio comments on this gesture: *Gesture in Naples and Gesture in Classical Antiquity*, trans. Adam Kendon (1832; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 373.

CHAPTER 5

Imperialism, Commerce, and the Individual: Appetites and Responsibilities in 'Falk'

> The profitable portion of the carcase.[1]

'Falk: A Reminiscence' (1903) and *The Shadow-Line: A Confession* (1917) both, in different ways, have to do with the Conradian virtues of fidelity and fortitude. They are set against a background of trial during a captain's first command, and an informing, changing, commercial context, with uncolonized Siam setting in relief a range of Western and colonial assumptions in a way which both disturbs these assumptions and acknowledges them as the powerful forces they were.

Civilization and the Primeval

The initial note sounded in 'Falk' is the change from old to new. The 'small river-hostelry' exudes 'mustiness' (p. 145), its fabric, furniture, crockery, food, and waiter all of the past. The diners, accepting that 'the sea never changes', nevertheless 'agreed that the times were changed', evidenced by the less rigorous seafaring suggested by the P. & O. vessel's being 'a beautiful model of a ship', seafaring diminished by association both with this ideal embodiment remote from the struggle with the sea where now 'one gets jolly good dinners' and with the woman knitting on a wooden barque. The P. & O. ship's name, *Arcadia*, evoking an idyllic existence ironically based on dining, sits awkwardly alongside the diners' recollections 'of old ships, of sea-accidents, of break-downs, dismastings' (p. 146).

Increasing domestication at sea, and the liner's luxury, are part of the extension of Western civilization. As White writes: 'By the 1880s, civilization's nets were so extensive and imperialistic civilization's arms so long

[1] FOCP no. 5237, Part I. 'Correspondence respecting British Influence and Policy in the Malay Peninsula. 1885', April 1886, p. 9. National Archives, Kew. FO 881/5237. Crown copyright.

that, as Heyst would discover in *Victory*, no place was outside history';[2] similarly nowhere was outside civilization's technological progress, delivered by a flourishing commerce. In contrast to encroaching civilization, the narrator feels that their meal evokes primeval man's existence: cooking, and tales 'of hunger and hunt – and of women, perhaps!' (p. 146), powerful sexual appetite suggested by the close succession of the words 'hunger', 'hunt', and 'women'. Primeval existence is seen as the satisfaction of appetite, foreshadowing Falk's desperate hunger for food and for a wife; the tales of the diners are about 'heroism at sea' but nevertheless 'quite different from the heroism of primitive times' (p. 146). Asked whether Hermann was a hero, the narrator replies 'not at all' (p. 147); nor does Hermann resemble 'an adventurer of the sea' (p. 148).[3] In keeping with this unheroic theme, Hermann's 'rustic and homely' (p. 148) ship humorously exemplifies extreme domestication. Like 'a miller's waggon', its windows are like those 'of a cottage in the country' and its equipment includes a homely 'watering-pot' (p. 148) as if for a garden. The wind which fills its sails mundanely dries the washing, and its suggestions 'of drowned, mutilated and flattened humanity' (p. 149) can be read as reflecting the transition from a robust, primitive humanity to the diminished civilization at the time of the story.[4]

This transition is also evident in the commercial context, trading having become less adventurous, a situation described by Hobsbawm as 'notably different from the free-trading and freely competing liberal world of the mid-century',[5] occasioned, in White's words, by the 'almost total partition of the world into territories under the formal rule or informal political domination of a few countries'.[6] By the time of the action of 'Falk' – most likely the time of Conrad's own visit to Bangkok in 1888 – attention seems focused on financial outcomes and the comparatively unremarkable activities which produce them. After describing the extent of Hermann's voyages, the narrator comments not on the experience, but that 'the profits had

[2] p. 193.
[3] Hermann, though German, is curiously twice referred to as Dutch. However, 'any seaman who hails from any port between Holland and the Baltic is called a Dutchman'. 'Dutchmen v. British Seamen', *Nautical Magazine*, n.s. 51/11 (November 1882), 839–46 (p. 839).
[4] In his striking essay, Tony Tanner justifiably emphasizes the relation to cannibalism of the clothing suggesting 'drowned, mutilated and flattened humanity' (*F*, p. 149). '"Gnawed Bones" and "Artless Tales": Eating and Narrative in Conrad', in *Joseph Conrad: A Commemoration*, ed. Norman Sherry (London: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 17–36 (p. 29).
[5] p. 59, quoted in White, p. 183.
[6] p. 183.

been moderate'. Hermann, although 'his ship was well known in all the ports from Vladivostok to Singapore' (p. 159), is likened to 'a small shopkeeper' (p. 148), and the narrator rather sarcastically describes Hermann's feelings about returning to Europe 'as on the eve of a venturesome enterprise' (p. 184).

Bangkok: Western Intrusion and Commerce

Bangkok might seem, especially to present-day readers, to have presented an opportunity for making substantial profits, its remoteness and political independence suggesting a less developed and hence less competitive market.[7] However, the historical reality was quite otherwise.[8] Even twenty-five years before Conrad's visit, the view of Bangkok as a ship approaches by the River Meinam had an international flavour:

> The first important objects seen, in approaching the city, are the American consulate on the west, Puddycombe's ship-building yard, and Russell and Co.'s godowns on the east. Above these are some handsome temples, the French consulate and cathedral, the custom-house, British and Portuguese consulates, and the godowns of some British merchants, all on the east bank; the only conspicuous object on the other side being a fort nearly opposite the British consulate. [. . .] in the opposite suburb are some European stores and lodging-houses, the palaces of the Pra-klang and Kalahome, the old British factory, palace of the Kromma Luang, several European merchants' residences, and some temples.[9]

This view was little changed by the time of Conrad's voyage to Bangkok,[10] and Western progress was developing rapidly. The 1890 *Directory for Bangkok and Siam* records that:

> Little more than ten years ago there was no proper so-called upper and lower town, and no road. Then came a great change, the New Road was laid out and built by that indefatigable adviser to His Majesty, the late much regretted Alabaster. Then came the omnibuses; then came the tramway – which was

[7] This impression is reinforced by Siam's being a place of last resort in Conrad's Asian fiction. For example, it is where Brown ends his days in squalor in *Lord Jim*, and where Johnson is ending his days in 'Falk'.

[8] Following the failure of James Brooke's trade mission to Siam, 'the Bowring Treaty with Britain in 1855 opened the country to British trade'. Hyde, p. 10. Trading treaties with other Western powers followed.

[9] Great Britain, Admiralty, Hydrographic Office, *The Gulf of Siam Pilot*, 2nd edn (London: Hydrographic Office, Admiralty, 1863), p. 31.

[10] See Great Britain, Admiralty, Hydrographic Office, *The China Sea Directory*, 3rd edn (London: Admiralty, 1867–1906), 4 vols, III (1889): 411–12.

> thought a tremendous undertaking – and soon we are to have the Electric light and railways. Nothing is impossible in these days.[11]

Indeed, the *Directory* records, in terms which tellingly translate Bangkok into London, that 'the old town and the new have to-day as much in common as Fleet Street in London and the noble thoroughfares around Courtfield Road, South Kensington'. In 1885 Siam had joined the Universal Postal Union.[12] By 1873 there were already nine European nations with consulates in Bangkok, and it routinely appeared in the *Straits Directory*;[13] the narrator would have found many similarities with, say, Singapore, Bangkok having European clubs, schools, and businesses, in addition to which trading links between Britain, its colonies, and Siam were particularly strong. Such was the city's trading importance to Britain that commercial reports were presented to Parliament, which recorded 'the great preponderance of British commercial interests in Siam as compared with the interests of other Treaty Powers'.[14] *The 1894 Directory for Bangkok and Siam* records that 'there are about a thousand Europeans in the country. Of these, according to the last registration, 187 are British, while since the year 1887, 7,000 certificates of registration have been granted to Asiatic British subjects of whom it may be stated approximately that there are in Siam a total of 12,000'.[15] Their rights were protected under provisions of extraterritoriality in the treaty which begins with the quasi-colonial assertion: 'Whereas Her Majesty the Queen has power and jurisdiction within the dominions of the Kings of Siam'.[16]

Siam and Bangkok, therefore, far from being remote and unexploited commercially, strikingly exemplify the advance, by means of trade, of Western aims and ideals, even in an uncolonized country. As such they are all the more appropriate as the setting for a story which bears out the growing

[11] *The Directory for Bangkok and Siam for 1890* (Bangkok: 'Bangkok Times', [1890]), p. 4.

[12] Ibid, pp. 5, 174.

[13] For example, *The Colonial Directory of the Straits Settlements, including Sarawak, Labuan, Bangkok and Saigon* (Singapore: Mission Press, 1873), pp. 1N–5N.

[14] Great Britain, Houses of Parliament, *Commercial Reports by Her Majesty's Minister Resident and Consul-General, &c., in Siam for the Year 1884* (London: 1885), p. 1. These Reports recorded Britain's commercial interests in Siam compared with the rest of the world's as: 'In fixed capital, as 2 to 1; in steamers, as 8 to 1; in exports, as 9 to 2; in imports, as 2 to 1' (p. 2). 'According to the latest information in our possession, 87 per cent. of the whole shipping trade at Bangkok as regards tonnage, or 93 per cent. as regards the value of cargoes, is British.' FOCP no. 6479, 'Part III. Further Correspondence respecting the Affairs of Siam. 1893' (April 1894), p. 52. National Archives, Kew. FO 881/6479. Crown copyright.

[15] *The 1894 Directory for Bangkok and Siam* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1996) (first publ. as *The Directory for Bangkok and Siam for 1894*) (Bangkok: Bangkok Times, [1894]), p. 12.

[16] FOCP no. 5248*, '[Consular Jurisdiction in Siam]' (May, 1886), p. 1. National Archives, Kew. FO 881/5248X. Crown copyright.

global commercialization of life in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, Bangkok has become a city which has embraced trade wholeheartedly:

> The present King's father, when on the throne, had a broad carriage road made across the city and this road was made to extend several miles beyond the walled city, the part without the city wall, designed especially for the convenience of foreign business men, and foreign officials connected particularly with commerce. The King began a new era, the era of treaties, influx of foreigners, and commercial interests with foreign nations.[17]

By 1889, to assist with this progress, there were seventy-seven Europeans and Americans employed by the Siamese government.[18] Conrad suggests something of this virtual colonization through commerce by portraying in 'Falk' the extent of Western involvement in Bangkok: the European firm of Siegers has probably financed the sole tug and has carried out a business trip to Australia; Fred Vanlo has had an engineering shop in Bangkok, and it is a worthwhile destination for his sister seeking marriage to a European; Schomberg is Alsatian, and Hermann German; Falk is either Norwegian or Danish; the British consulate presides over British expansion.

The Economy of Civilization

Reflecting the transition from earlier times is the attention given to money and business activities, to cost and price. Indeed, we are given the assets, liabilities, and trading position of several characters. Tanner points to 'the inter-relationship in the story of [. . .] three planes of human activity: the biological – eating, hunger, the sexual drive; the economic – there are many references to business, deals, bargains, diplomacy, trading, etc.; and the linguistic, since speaking, talking, translating, explaining are constant and crucial activities';[19] tantalizingly, the economic plane is little developed by Tanner, although he highlights the fact that Falk 'extracted his pound and a half of flesh from each of us merchant-skippers' (p. 161). However, the abundance of commercial references conveys the key concerns of the story and asserts the commercialized nature of the society. A number of the characters are depicted within commercial frames of reference which suggest that Tanner's linguistic plane is supplemented by the economic. For example, the narrator's financial situation is weak, his earnings potential, as

[17] *The Siam Directory, for the Year 1889* (Bangkok: [n.pub.], [1889]), p. 126. The 'broad carriage road' is no doubt the 'immensely wide thoroughfare' seen by the narrator (*F*, p. 188).
[18] *The Siam Directory, for the Year 1889*, pp. 156–57.
[19] '"Gnawed Bones"', p. 22.

an employee, modest, his assets nil (having been stolen); bearing less risk than the owner-operator of earlier times, he can expect less reward. He has unfairly incurred a substantial liability in the form of a bad reputation, and the misunderstanding with Falk rapidly attains ominous commercial consequences. The 'eighteen dollars' (p. 192) to be paid for Johnson's formerly valuable knowledge of sailing on the river is highly priced only because of the narrator's desperation, the amount reinforcing the pervasively commercial context in which even desperation may be precisely priced.

Except for Falk's monopoly, the probably high profits of former, more adventurous, times have been curbed by competition, as in the case of Hermann's moderate profits (although he has not traded solely out of Bangkok).[20] The narrator's challenges concern not adventure but financial affairs and the crew's health, especially establishing the financial position of his ship; as he is 'greatly ignorant of business' he foresees 'trouble with the charterers' (p. 155). Correspondingly, the skills of more complex sailing have been superseded: the narrator cannot safely contemplate the passage down river without a tug, for the alternatives are 'either working under canvas or dredging with the anchor down; operations which, in common with many modern sailors, I only knew theoretically' (pp. 188–89). The narrator's position, as an employee in a regulated business environment, contrasts with his predecessor's behaviour, whose hair, 'brushed forward above the temples in a manner reminding one of a boar's tusks' (p. 154), suggests a combative, adventurer's spirit out of keeping with the times. So too does his failure to abide by the fundamental commercial requirements of bookkeeping, writing 'jovial and improper' (p. 153) doggerel in the account book, a confusion of discourse which substitutes imagination, fun, and sexual pleasure for financial record, the regularity of the printed format of columns and rows having been over-written by a form of verse both literally and figuratively irregular.[21] Other aspects of the apparatus of bookkeeping are awry: 'unreceipted bills', inflated estimates, and vouchers representing 'extravagant expenditure' (p. 153), the captain portrayed within a context of transgressive commerce. In the photograph of himself with a woman, the captain has purchased a dream, acquiring a commercialized romance

[20] One can speculate that the departure of 'Mr. and Mrs. Falk' (p. 239) from Bangkok by the time the narrator returns five years later was caused not by 'Schomberg's tongue' (p. 240), as the narrator only half-seriously suggests, but by the fact that Falk had lost his monopoly with the arrival of a second tug (see Sherry, *CEW*, p. 236).

[21] Mary Poovey writes that double-entry bookkeeping 'displayed the merchant's moral rectitude, which was signified by the balance and harmony so prominent in the double-entry ledger', a harmony abandoned by the captain in favour of sensual harmonies. *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 11.

by stealing the ship's goods and earnings, a relationship which cannot be sustained and which is appropriately captured only momentarily in a photograph. As the responsibility for a ship's bookkeeping rested firmly with its master as the record of his duties to owners and charterers, the captain's neglect is serious; William Tate considered that such bookkeeping 'ought to be considered as essentially necessary as a log-book or ship's journal'.[22] The sexual symbolism of a boar's tusks indicates the nature of the captain's activities in Saigon, for the 'strange draperies' of the 'female' (p. 154) with whom he is photographed suggest neither French (Saigon being in French Indo-China) nor indigenous clothing, but the loose and floating clothing of a brothel.[23] The violin symbolizes perhaps the captain's yearning to express himself; the making, in some primitive arcadia, of music rather than money. The impersonal term 'female' recalls the earlier impersonal use of the collective 'women' in association with primeval man's hunger and hunting, indicating the captain's reversion to earlier modes of behaviour in which the quarry is just such a generalized female.

It is fitting that it is Falk, because he owns his boat, who displays behaviour reminiscent of some earlier adventurers: 'his conduct in matters of business [. . .] seemed to me totally unrestrained by morality or even by the commonest sort of decency' (p. 177), his monopoly enabling him to apply 'brutally inconsiderate' charges (p. 161). He reminds the narrator of a centaur 'with regular severe features and an immense curled wavy beard, flowing down his chest' (p. 162), this comparison, as well as Falk's own beard, evoking an adventurer's wildness, marking him as separate from the relatively sedate and workaday world which the merchant marine has become. In keeping with the commercial frame of reference, Falk's assets are mentioned as being the huge sum of 'seven thousand dollars' (p. 212).

Hermann, though also an owner-operator, is 'shaven' (p. 148) and domesticated, carrying a 'white parasol' (p. 181). The sums of money with

[22] *An Epitome of Naval Book-Keeping* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1845), p. 35.

[23] The depiction of the woman's clothes could have been prompted by Conrad's time in Singapore. *The Straits Eurasian Advocate* reported that 'the great evil in the Colony at present is the growing increase of European foreign women, who bring with them the low habits of life of Eastern Europe and Asia Minor and form by no means a desirable element'. Such immigrants could well have worn clothes that looked strange to western Europeans. The newspaper later went on to complain of Singapore being 'flooded with "Cold Drinks" shops' in which 'women of ill-fame' sit, such shops being a new front for their activities. 21 April 1888, p. 3; 19 May 1888, p. 4. Philippa Levine records that 'Jews were conveniently classed as the bulk of Europe's prostitutes [i.e. in British colonies], a group likely to sully the good name of western civilization by their barbaric and degraded practices' and that 'the vicious pogroms beginning in the 1880s led to mass Jewish migration out of central and eastern Europe' to destinations round the world. *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 223.

which he is involved are of a different order from Falk's: in keeping with his moderate profits, he is concerned about the precise 'forty-seven dollars and fifty cents of damage in the cost of wood alone' (p. 211), as well as 'five to six dollars' (p. 181) to have various items brought to his vessel. Like a shopkeeper's, Hermann's earnings are modest accretions and, not surprisingly, the loss of the narrator's 'Zwei und dreissig Pfund' (p. 159) appears a staggering sum to him and his wife. Hermann would never entertain an adventurer's financial and physical risks, and it is no coincidence that Hermann inherited his boat, so that he does not bear the additional risk of repaying its capital cost (unlike Falk with a mortgaged vessel). While Falk's tug is 'manned by the cheekiest gang of lascars I ever did see' (p. 165), Hermann's ship has 'a gang of four children' (p. 149), and unlike 'strange draperies', the clothes on Hermann's vessel do not hint at revelation and abandon: his wife's gowns are merely 'baggy' and the folds of the niece's frocks have 'a severe and statuesque quality' (p. 152). The photograph of the narrator's predecessor and the female is 'in front of a garden view' (p. 154), which we may imagine as a garden of delight; on board Hermann's vessel the gardening is domestic and enclosed: 'the greenery of flower-pots behind the glass' (p. 148), the 'fuchsias and mignonette' entirely decorative (p. 151). In the case of the niece, her financial status is clearly stated: she came to Hermann's family 'in one thin dress' (p. 213) and has perhaps received only board and lodging during her 'ten years' service' (p. 214). Her maintenance, including her passage to Europe, represents a financial liability to Hermann.

Miss Vanlo has no financial assets, having come out east to 'keep house for her brother' (p. 178), whose engineering shop 'was dropping money fast' (p. 178) and who has debts and no apparent assets. Miss Vanlo most likely came, as if on a commercial venture herself, to acquire an asset, a husband. In a pointed parody of singing for one's supper, she could only 'keep on playing the piano and singing' (p. 178) to Falk, a merely decorative activity, she having nothing else to offer. Falk, having compromised her reputation, pays off Fred's debts as if by a reverse dowry, enabling Fred to leave Bangkok.

Views of Siam

The historical reality of Siam offers a broader commercial context than these individuals, one connected with the themes of consumption and ownership. Although Siam was the only south-east Asian nation not colonized by a Western power, its national integrity, which included its arguably suzerain states in the northern Malay Peninsula, was frequently threatened

by the French, who suspected the British of similar designs.[24] Particularly sensitive at the time of Conrad's visit, this was a context of which many contemporary readers would have been aware. The seriousness of this political situation is indicated by the number and size of Foreign Office Confidential Prints on Siamese affairs.[25] The French wished to expand westwards from their colony of Indo-China, and the British were contemplating expansion northwards from the south of the Malay Peninsula.[26] In a revealing Memorandum, the British minister in Bangkok discusses various possible policies towards Siam, demonstrating the powerful urge to the use of force and the colonial appetite for further domination:

> At the present rate of progress it will plainly take us a long series of years to leap over the 300 or 400 miles which intervene between the northernmost point of the territory claimed for Perak and British Burma. We assumed the Protectorate of Perak in 1874, eleven years ago, and made it a reality in 1876. Since then our progress has ceased. [. . .] Yet we did not obtain our present position in Perak without a little war. Can we expect to obtain by peaceable means such a position in the remaining part of the peninsula as would give us better rights than the French would acquire through their anticipated Protectorate over Siam? Our past experience must lead us to believe that English administration is not everywhere welcomed with enthusiasm by the native inhabitants. If we have been so fortunate as to obtain their consent in the first instance by pacific methods, we have always had to encounter their armed resistance afterwards, to conquer their obedience, and to chastise them sorely before they have accepted the good we intended for them. No one can believe that we shall meet with less difficulty in imposing our authority over what remains of the Malay Peninsula than we have found in enforcing it on the portion which we have already acquired, for we have not only to subdue the almost certain ill-will of the inhabitants, but to appease the outcries which the Siamese Government would raise. [. . .] The only conclusion is, that if we are to be successful in such a policy, it must, sooner or later, be by the exercise of force.[27]

[24] The slightness of Siamese claims over these states was argued, in view of British interests, in [F.A. Swettenham], *An Account of the Origin and Progress of Siamese Influence in the Malay Peninsula, 1785 to 1882* ([n.p.]: [n.pub.], [1882(?)]).

[25] These begin with FOCP no. 5237, 'Part I. Correspondence respecting British Influence and Policy in the Malay Peninsula. 1885', April 1886. National Archives, Kew. FO 881/5237. Crown copyright. A further four parts had been printed by 1892, to be followed by five parts of Confidential Prints concerning the 'Affairs of Siam' by 1895.

[26] Fears were also expressed at one point about Germany's intentions in seeking a strip of land north of British Penang as a coaling-station and entrepôt. FOCP no. 6202, 'Part V. Further Correspondence respecting British Influence and Policy in the Malay Peninsula. 1890–91'. May 1892, p. 11. National Archives, Kew. FO 881/6202. Crown copyright.

[27] FOCP, no. 5237, p. 9.

Phrases such as 'a little war' and the concept of chastisement before subject peoples 'accepted the good we intended for them' lack the gloss of benign intention towards Siam characteristic of public pronouncements of the time, and show the 'economic voraciousness' referred to by Mario Curreli and Fausto Ciompi in connection with Siegers and capitalism.[28] Such 'voraciousness' is also evoked by the word 'fressen', which the narrator looks up in his dictionary to find that it means 'devour' (p. 221). While 'devour' reflects the fierceness of Falk's hunger, it also reflects the activities of a 'beast' (p. 218), the term used by Hermann to describe Falk. The constable too, a representative of British justice, is described as 'a wild beast' (p. 193), and, in his conclusion, the British minister in Bangkok uses precisely such terms of voracious consumption:

> If we are to look forward to a division of Siam and her subject territories between England and France, why should we abandon the most valuable portion to our rivals and allow our extensive trade to be exposed to the burdens which would be imposed upon it by the commercial jealousy of another nation? The difficulty of annexing the Menam Valley [in Siam] as well as the peninsula would not be much greater than that of the latter alone, and the Northern Laos States would also become ours by natural gravitation. We should thus be making a valuable acquisition instead of abandoning to others the profitable portion of the carcase, while reserving to ourselves nothing but the offal.[29]

Although the colonial appetite for Siam is not specifically referred to in the text of 'Falk', something of the intrusiveness of the colonial presence symbolically emerges in the episode of the constable and Johnson. Successfully tracking Johnson down, the constable, a colonial exemplar, 'displayed lots of energy and a marvellous amount of local knowledge of a sort', his 'scornful intimacy' (p. 190) with various non-European races and his violence to Johnson echoing the British minister's Memorandum.[30] Johnson's being formally unknown to the consulate is presumably due to the fact that he has failed to register, a normal requirement for British subjects resident abroad, and this underlines his cultural distance from

[28] 'A Socio-Semiotic Reading of Conrad's "Falk"', *L'Époque Conradienne*, 1988, 35–45, repr. in Keith Carabine, ed., *Joseph Conrad: Critical Assessments* (Robertsbridge: Helm Information, 1992), 4 vols, II: *The Critical Response: 'Almayer's Folly' to 'The Mirror of the Sea'*, 543–52 (p. 548).

[29] FOCP no. 5237, p. 9.

[30] That the constable's existence and role are historical reality is evident from FOCP no. 9028*, 'Regulations for His Majesty's Consular Prison at Bangkok', June 1907, pp. 15–20, in which his duties are laid out. National Archives, Kew. FO 881/9028X. Crown copyright. Mention of the '*1st Constable*' at the British Consulate General is also in *The Colonial Directory of the Straits Settlements, including Sarawak, Labuan, Bangkok and Saigon* (1873), p. 1N.

European circles.[31] Not only does Johnson – 'formerly captain of a country ship' (p. 190) – perform in his current state the decline of this trade, but his clothes, contrasting with those on Hermann's ship, undermine supposed white superiority: 'where the seams of his serge coat yawned you could see his white nakedness. The vestiges of a paper collar encircled his neck' (p. 192), the symbols of that superiority as superficial as clothes, Johnson's in any event coming apart at the seams. His home is beyond even the detritus of Western progress; serious obstructions and filth mark the extent of his separation from European society: 'A black mudhole blocked the lane. A mound of garbage crowned with the dead body of a dog arrested us not. An empty Australian beef tin bounded cheerily before the toe of my boot.' It is a setting, however, which reveals an unexpected existence, almost impenetrable to colonial eyes and entry ('Suddenly we clambered through a gap in a prickly fence. . . .'), which asserts its independence and viability beyond the definitions of registration, a home beyond Europeanism to which Johnson has successfully transplanted himself, the 'very clean native compound' (p. 191) contrasting with the dirt outside.

Commerce, Moral Dependability, and Renewal

Curreli and Ciompi argue that

> the semantics of 'Falk' [. . .] now seem to us to be clearly a variation on a mythical narrative scheme, or, rather, to be more precise, a work built around a notion of myth and the mythical hero, with the intention however of reducing these to an everyday bourgeois level, with aims that – far from being mythical – are rather of criticism and parody.[32]

However, the representation of 'bourgeois' values is more complex than 'criticism and parody'. For example, Conrad's ambivalent interrogation of commerce affirms at the end of the story, through the tone of the writing and the outcome of the plot, wider possibilities, both of redemption and healing. Falk is to gain, like the narrator's predecessor in Saigon, a vision, so that he can 'live his whole conception of life' (p. 236), but in a way which is not transgressive or short-lived. At the end of the story, Falk, likened to 'Hercules' (p. 201), and the 'olympian' niece become 'Mr. and Mrs. Falk' (p. 239), fulfilling Falk's 'desire for respectability' (p. 198) but achieving deep changes: Falk, having seemed to the narrator 'incomplete' (p. 162) when

[31] Notice of the requirement to register is advertised, for instance, in the *Bangkok Times*, 8 January 1890, p. 4, by 'H.B.M. Acting Consul'.

[32] p. 543.

away from his boat, is now part of 'a complete couple' (p. 239), and having been a 'composite creature' (p. 162) moves from composite parts to attain a new form of completeness, no longer seemingly heroic but positively redefined by the marriage contract which results from the niece's profound humanity, she having wept 'silently as if for the pity of his life' (p. 236). The niece, formerly barely mobile, now 'glided' (p. 239) past the narrator's chair, demonstrating release from the restrictions of dependence.

Tanner describes Hermann as 'the real exploiter in the book – he exploits the niece, using her physical labour for his convenience', and characterizes his mind as 'bourgeois'[33] because of his response to Falk's confession. The narrator's references to Hermann's 'civic virtue' (pp. 153, 214), Hermann's mindfulness of money, and the four references to his parasol might seem to support such a view. However, Hermann, for all his pedestrian outlook, does not allow any simple equation of himself with a socio-economic type, inviting instead a more varied and less harsh interpretation. Honest and tender, helpful and reliable, 'truly cordial' (p. 158), who, like Falk, 'would do his best to survive' (p. 236), he has readily recognized his responsibilities in taking on his niece, and although she has been useful, that is not to be equated with mere utility. In Hermann's family she has been trained in domestic skills, nurtured and protected, unlike 'plenty of poor girls walking about in Germany' (p. 211), her 'one thin dress' (p. 213) emphasizing her initial vulnerability. The narrator may say to Hermann that the marriage 'isn't a bad bargain' (p. 214), but this omits the fact of Hermann's care of her, and the associated costs, over ten years. While Hermann was not able to confront Falk's extraordinary past soberly, he is nevertheless a man of probity who has produced security for seven people. His 'world proof' (p. 156) ship exudes both innocence and effort: a wife who 'would blush in girlish confusion' (p. 150) while doing the washing, the industrious niece sharing in the sewing, candidly 'face to face' (p. 159) with her aunt. 'Arrayed artlessly' (p. 157) with its 'simple-minded distribution' (pp. 157–58) of white and green paint, and displaying 'purity, not cleanliness' (p. 157), the vessel reflects his own simple, decent qualities, his hat, slippers and parasol a parallel artlessness. Commerce is inextricably present in Hermann's family both as a means of support and as a code of conduct, and the text invites us to make generous allowances. Hermann '*resembled* curiously a caricature of a shopkeeping citizen in one of his own German comic papers' (pp. 181–82, emphasis added), but he is not that caricature, embodying a moral value in

[33] '"Gnawed Bones"', p. 21.

dependability which is not comprehended in the sense of 'bourgeois' as narrow-minded or ungenerous.

When the narrator assures Hermann that Falk 'possessed in himself all the qualities to make his niece's future prosperous' (p. 238), this cannot be read solely ironically, for the orphan has now, of her free will and after falling in love with Falk, passed to a position of independence with him, in the process enabling Falk to accept his past misfortune, their relationship 'candid' (p. 239) like the niece's glance at him. There is in this final scene an understated but definite celebration. The orphan and Falk, both coming from their different experiences of death, are brought to a fuller life; the niece's assured and purposeful swift 'friendly nod' to the narrator reassures us about their future and more generally about the future in this altered era. 'As if utterly unaware of their existence', the seaman 'splicing a strop' (p. 239) exemplifies a life of work and purpose which, even with its constraints as evident in the story, retains the possibilities of openness, dependability, and fulfilment, just as earlier the narrator had felt that the niece 'inspired you somehow with a hopeful view as to the prospects of mankind' (p. 152).

CHAPTER 6

Testing the West, Testing the Individual: The Shadow-Line

> The tales here told are written, not to glorify war, but to nourish patriotism. They represent an effort to renew in popular memory the great traditions of the Imperial race to which we belong.[1]

War and Commerce

In *The Shadow-Line* the First World War adds a further significance at the heart of a complex work, both to the captain's trial and to the nature and expansion of colonial and commercial power. The influence of the War is present in the dedication as well as in Conrad's letters.[2] Jacques Berthoud draws attention to Conrad's disclaiming in the 'Author's Note' any 'parallelism' (p. 6) between his experience of first command as reflected in *The Shadow-Line* and the experience of those fighting in the War. Berthoud argues that the novel explores the means – 'the interdependence of men' – of facing the catastrophe of the War as well as the protagonist's struggle: the 'protagonist [. . .] is taught that he could not have survived the ordeal to which he is exposed without a full reciprocity of dependence between himself and his crew. This lesson may seem banal enough; yet Conrad shows that it supports the entire edifice of human life'.[3]

Conrad believed that the War was a struggle for national survival, not a matter of mere ideal, and 'as early as 1905 [. . .] detected in the collision of industrial and commercial nationalisms every sign of a future disaster',[4] attributing this to the nationalisms' faith in 'the supremacy of material

[1] Rev. W.H. Fitchett, *Deeds that Won the Empire: Historic Battle Scenes* (London: Smith, Elder, 1897), p. v. Fitchett's untroubled view of empire was far from uncommon.

[2] For example, Conrad to Eugene F. Saxton, 17 August 1915: 'The shadow lies over this land. This is a time of great awe and searching of hearts and of resolute girding of loins.' In this letter Conrad also recounts hearing an airship and trying to see its 'elusive shadow'. *Letters*, V: 499–500 (p. 500).

[3] 'Introduction: Autobiography and War', to *The Shadow-Line*, ed. Jacques Berthoud (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), pp. 7–24 (pp. 13, 14).

[4] Ibid., p. 18.

interests'.[5] Conrad's assessment of the rivalry which gave rise to the War is relevant to a reading of *The Shadow-Line*, for an element of the struggle for national supremacy was colonial, and the historically specific context of *The Shadow-Line*, including global commercial and associated regulatory developments, reveals much about late nineteenth-century British attitudes and colonialism. The novella's commercial context is at the centre of the reasons for that war. Conrad wrote that 'trust in the peaceful nature of industrial and commercial competition' was a delusion,[6] and this was nowhere more evident than in colonial rivalry. The desire for cheap raw materials and the need for colonial markets to buy home-produced goods were a cause of tension in international relations. For example, there were frequent representations to the Dutch East Indies Government by Singapore about trade violations, and the outbreak of the Aceh War supports Conrad's view about national and commercial rivalry, for this war arose partly out of Dutch anxiety about other nations' interests (including Germany, Japan, and Italy) in acquiring hitherto independent territory in the Archipelago.[7] *The Shadow-Line* also questions some of the foundations – for example, Western knowledge (increasingly formalized and indeed commercialized), culture, and technology and their supposed supremacy – on which colonial commerce and prosperity rested.

Jeremy Hawthorn has noted that, 'Like many of Conrad's sea stories, *The Shadow-Line* is the story of a test, a test which enables the protagonist to find the self which, at the start of the tale, he has so conspicuously lost.'[8] However, the nature of this test in *The Shadow-Line* differs significantly from that in Conrad's earlier sea stories, and comprises a broader 'education'

[5] 'Autocracy and War', *NLL*, p. 88, quoted in Berthoud, 'Introduction: Autobiography and War', p. 18. Heinz Gollwitzer writes of the War being 'the result of imperialist antagonism generated by pact systems competing on a world scale'. *Europe in the Age of Imperialism 1880–1914*, trans. David Adam and Stanley Baron (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), p. 40.

[6] 'Autocracy and War', *NLL*, p. 88, quoted in part in Berthoud, 'Introduction: Autobiography and War', p. 18.

[7] *Holland. East Indies. Colonial Possessions. 1888* ([London(?)]: [Great Britain, Foreign Office(?), War Office(?)], [1888(?)]) strikingly illustrates the illusion of 'the peaceful nature' of late nineteenth-century commerce, as do the British Minister in Bangkok's views discussed in the previous chapter. A detailed military assessment of the Dutch East Indies' defences, and with reference to defence against possible attack on the Dutch East Indies by another country, this book refers to War Office Intelligence Reports and to Consular Reports, which suggests that it was a British Government study (as does the printer's reference, which is of a firm which carried out confidential government printing). The accusation of being a Dutch spy against the 'supposed' (p. 95) agent for the Dutch crockery house in *The Rescue* is significant here.

[8] 'Introduction' to Joseph Conrad, *The Shadow-Line*, ed. Jeremy Hawthorn, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. xi–xxxiii (p. xvi).

(p. 43) which echoes the ordeal of the War, for the maturing of the protagonist occurs in the context of 'the supreme trial of a whole generation'.[9] Hawthorn's observation encourages a view of the main character's test as an elemental contest which confers a qualification for living meaningfully, as if the heroic trial of an individual were comprehensively relevant to the context of the story. However, in *The Shadow-Line* it is the mutual dependence of captain and crew which is crucial, and the terms of the earlier Conradian elemental contest are here contextualized so that self-knowledge, a sense of certainty, self-reliance, or a recovery of self are all questioned and remain ambivalent.

Western and Siamese Knowledge and Culture

In the story, Western scientific advances supporting colonial commerce are exemplified in documents, particularly charts and geographical data. Captain Giles, who 'was supposed to know more about remote and imperfectly charted parts of the Archipelago than any man living' (p. 17), embodies an earlier tradition, surviving as a figure from a time of 'wonderful adventures' (p. 19). He signifies the gaining of that knowledge by the European imperial powers (which was an important contribution to Western seamanship),[10] someone whose 'brain must have been a perfect warehouse of reefs, positions, bearings, images of headlands, shapes of obscure coasts, aspects of innumerable islands desert and otherwise' (p. 17). His geographical knowledge is appropriately linked to his wisdom and insight: 'he told me that few things escaped his attention and he was rather used to think them out, and generally from his experience of life and men arrived at the right conclusion' (p. 25), his expertise and experience also qualifying him to be the exemplar of the tradition which the young captain has inherited. Significantly, Captain Giles's having 'no regular employment' (p. 17) recalls the older, more individualistic tradition from which he derives and emphasizes the reputation which enables him to obtain work as he chooses. Although his geographical knowledge is not new, having long been in the

[9] 'Author's Note', p. 6.

[10] Matthew Edney appropriately describes the tendency to 'cartographic perfection' of some mapping as prompting a 'critique of maps as paradigmatic tools of modernity's totalizing and all-engulfing culture'. *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1843* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997), p. 24, quoted in Robert Hampson, 'Conrad's Heterotopic Fiction: Composite Maps, Superimposed Sites, and Impossible Spaces', in *Conrad in the Twenty-First Century: Contemporary Approaches and Perspectives*, ed. Carola M. Kaplan, Peter Lancelot Mallios and Andrea White (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 121–35 (p. 123).

possession of indigenous seafarers,[11] its significance in the story is that it represents part of the process whereby such knowledge is being formalized in written documents – 'the secular experience of seamen as recorded in books' (p. 71) – and is becoming widely available.[12] Such documents include pilot books, works-in-progress towards the determining of geographical and navigational precision.[13] In the absence of definitive navigational documentation, Captain Giles's skill is invaluable: 'any ship, for instance, bound on a trip to Palawan or somewhere that way would have Captain Giles on board either in temporary command or "to assist the Master." It was said that he had a retaining fee from a wealthy firm of Chinese steamship owners, in view of such services' (pp. 17–18). Specialized, individual knowledge, however, will soon become redundant in the 'Eastern port' (p. 12) (Singapore), as symbolized by the departure of Captain Ellis, whose behaviour and speech reflect the earlier, more robust times of exploration and adventure which he shares with Captain Giles.

The self-assurance of European culture, like its codified maritime knowledge, is reflected in the architecture of the colonizers.[14] The hotel close to

[11] See Robert Hampson, '"A Passion for Maps": Conrad, Africa, Australia, and South-East Asia', *The Conradian*, 28/1 (Spring 2003), 34–56 (p. 35).

[12] The existence of even substantial land-masses was still at this time a matter for occasional doubt. Findlay (p. 947) records: 'Dampier tells us that an island, 38 miles long, by 34 miles broad, lofty, and covered with forest, called *San Juan*, lies 30 miles eastward of this coast. Modern knowledge is not sufficient to affirm satisfactorily that it does *not* exist, though it does not appear to have been seen since. Its existence is therefore incredible.'

[13] The relentlessness of this knowledge production can be seen in the frequency of editions of pilot books, Vol. I of *The China Sea Directory* going through five editions between 1867 and 1906. *Findlay's Directory* reached its third edition in 1889, with 1,478 pages of highly detailed sailing directions. Similarly, 'Horsburgh's Directory' had reached its 8th edition by 1864, with 1,729 pages. James Horsburgh, *The India Directory, or, Directions for Sailing to and from the East Indies, China, Japan, Australia, and the Interjacent Ports of Africa and South America*, 8th edn, rev. Edward Dunsterville, 2 vols in 1 (London: W.H. Allen, 1864). Contributions from seafarers are frequently noted in such books. On land a similar process was in train, and of such importance that government guidance was issued, recognition that the process was sufficiently far advanced for it to be possible to speak of geography having been superseded by topography and of 'filling in detail': 'Travellers in Africa, and still more in Asia, can no longer hope to explore thousands of miles of country never before visited by the white man, nor to discover huge mountain ranges or gigantic lake systems hitherto unknown. There still remains, however, plenty of room for geographical, or, perhaps, to speak more correctly, for topographical enterprise. Although we now possess a knowledge of the main features of the unsurveyed portions of the globe, sufficient work remains, in the way of filling in detail, to occupy the energies of our explorers for many years to come.' FOCP no. 6280*, 'Hints on Reconnaissance Mapping for Explorers in Unsurveyed Countries'. [1892(?)], p. 1. National Archives, Kew. FO 881/6280X. Crown copyright.

[14] J.H. Stape, in a valuable essay on Singapore, notes the hollowness of its buildings despite their providing 'concrete evidence of material progress and the triumph of colonial order and officialdom over primeval jungle'. 'Conrad's "Unreal City": Singapore in "The End of the Tether"', in *Conrad's Cities: Essays for Hans van Marle*, ed. Gene M. Moore, Costerus n.s. 82 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992), pp. 85–96 (p. 86).

the Harbour Office is 'low but somehow palatial, displaying its white, pillared pavilions surrounded by trim grass plots' (p. 14); the 'pavilions' evoke a sense of calm, expansive assurance. From the Harbour Office 'three lofty windows gave on the harbour' (p. 31), suggesting the enquiring colonial eye.[15] However, colonial knowledge and architecture are contrasted with other forms of knowledge and modes of existence. In a passage clearly referring to Bangkok, the 'Oriental capital' is marked out as being different from Singapore not least because it 'had as yet suffered no white conqueror' (p. 43), and is therefore, as it appears in *The Shadow-Line*, so far largely unaffected by colonial redefinition. The first feature noted is not a place of administration and commerce like the Eastern port's Harbour Office, but the 'great gilt pagoda' (p. 43), signifying the city's ancient culture and religion. This difference is reinforced by the contrasting architecture: 'an expanse of brown houses of bamboo, of mats, of leaves, of a vegetable matter style of architecture, sprung out of the brown soil on the banks of the muddy river' (pp. 43–44). The nail, so essential in Western building, is almost entirely absent, as if its forceful driving in is out of place in the city's vigorous organic culture, its oriental architecture contrasting with the stasis of Singapore, an impression accentuated by the long and detailed description it is afforded:

> Some of those houses of sticks and grass, like the nests of an aquatic race, clung to the low shores. Others seemed to grow out of the water; others again floated in long anchored rows in the very middle of the stream.
>
> Here and there in the distance above the crowded mob of low brown roof ridges towered great piles of masonry, the King's Palace, temples, gorgeous and dilapidated, crumbling under the vertical sunlight, tremendous, overpowering almost palpable, which seemed to enter one's breast with the breath of one's nostrils, and soak into one's limbs through every pore of one's skin.[16] (p. 44)

Beside the 'great piles of masonry' of Bangkok, the buildings of Singapore appear effete, and whereas it is 'official buildings' that are ironically termed 'consecrated' (p. 34) in Singapore, in Bangkok it is the pagoda and temples that are the consecrated buildings. The protagonist appropriately remarks of Captain Giles, the embodiment of imperial knowledge and certainty,

[15] Brenda S.A. Yeoh argues that Singapore's 'institutional structures of control over the built environment were established in order to facilitate the realization of colonial economic, political, and ideological aspirations.' *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003), p. 17.

[16] Thomson (p. 79) uses similar terms in describing Bangkok: 'these aquatic abodes and their amphibious-looking inhabitants'.

'You would not have been surprised to learn that he was an architect. To me (I know how absurd it is) to me he looked like a church-warden' (p. 17), for Captain Giles is part of the architecture of Western knowledge, which has been elevated to a form of sanctity. Though a 'squalid' (p. 61) city, in Bangkok there appears to be an organic unity of inhabitants with their surroundings, of water, sunlight (as felt even by the narrator), and the body; in contrast to Singapore, Bangkok exhibits a potency that is neither regular nor regulated, a vision presented not as secondary to, but as a viable alternative to that of the West.[17]

The other building described in Singapore is the Officers' Sailors' Home: 'a large bungalow with a wide verandah and a curiously suburban looking little garden of bushes and a few trees between it and the street' (p. 15). Unlike Bangkok, nature here is reduced to a modest garden, betraying in its *sub*urban [emphasis added] garden its secondariness in an urban space dictated by commerce and regulation – indeed, this so-called home is appropriately 'administered by the Harbour Office' (p. 15). In contrast, Bangkok's 'nests' are homely, and its 'aquatic' race implies a people at home in a fluid element which is not a 'world [which] can be measured and predicted and mastered', as Douglas Kerr describes the Western world of *The Shadow-Line*.[18]

Apart from using the word 'squalid', the protagonist responds sensitively and appreciatively to Bangkok, an indication perhaps of his potential openness to education and change. Other Englishmen, however, saw Siam as an impoverished world lacking the solidity and values crucial in Western culture, as seen in the revealing 'Report on the present Administration of the Kingdom of Siam' (1881) by the British Consul-General, in which he reports that 'in matters of religion and in Court ceremonies [. . .] an incredible amount of time, labour and money is continually squandered', and continues: 'a long-continued practice of marrying in and in [*sic*], even with half-sisters, has produced a marked degeneration, both physical and mental, in the Royal Family, many members of whom are scrofulous, some idiotic, and almost all undersized'.[19] The tone suggests the deep unease of the colonial mind when faced with cultural forms which it regards as

[17] Levine (p. 299) observes that 'community and order were natural partners, rejecting the non-European setting as improperly constituted. Eastern spaces were disorderly in their layout and their buildings, in their lack of attention to safe sanitation, and in their morals.'

[18] 'Conrad and "The Three Ages of Man": "Youth", *The Shadow-Line*, "The End of the Tether"', *The Conradian*, 23/2 (Autumn 1998), 27–44 (p. 43).

[19] FOCP no. 4567, 'Report on the present Administration of the Kingdom of Siam'. September 1881, pp. 1–2, 3. National Archives, Kew. FO 881/4567. Crown copyright.

deviant. In another objectionable passage the Consul-General entirely dismisses Siamese culture:

> There exists throughout Siam and its tributary States no literature worthy of the name; the historical annals are of the most meagre and childish description; works of science there are none, and the so-called poetry and romance is a feeble copy of the feeble originals in Sanscrit and cognate languages. Sacred books there are plenty; they are without exception written in Pali, a kind of Sanscrit, and are chiefly a farrago of Hindoo myths and Brahminical fables of no profit whatever.[20]

Such is his concern about the absence of Western forms of government that the retention of extraterritoriality is urged in tones of desperation: 'until it ['the judicial and legal Administration'] is reformed, or rather created, no sane mind can contemplate for an instant any relaxation of the existing Treaty rights of foreigners to extra-territorial jurisdiction in Siam; rather the reverse'. It is not surprising that he also finds the keeping of records – that important aspect of accountable government – totally deficient: 'of the Government expenditure, as no account is kept, so none can be given'.[21] Above all, however, it is a country considered harmfully deficient in the fundamental Western commercial and capitalist requirements for wealth:

> These social conditions, joined with the arbitrary power of the officials, excessive taxation, and the want of any proper administration of law and justice, have resulted in producing throughout Siam a phenomenon, so far as my experience goes, absolutely unparalleled in any other region – that, namely, of a country in which there does not exist, officials excepted, a single native proprietor, capitalist, or indeed any person whose condition and means of life are above those of a day labourer of the poorest class.[22]

Outwardly British policy respected the Siamese, who were valued as a buffer state between British and French possessions, and as an important trading partner. It is interesting to note that not many years after the Consul-General's report, and reflecting no doubt Siam's political shrewdness, a son and a nephew of the King of Siam were both at Harrow School, and were visited by the King during a visit to London, and another nephew was an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge.[23]

[20] Ibid., p. 13.
[21] Ibid., pp. 7, 10.
[22] Ibid., p. 11.
[23] *The Times*, 2 August 1897, p. 9. A Danish connection also seems to have been important: 'Two of the Siamese Princes have been for several months residing and studying at Copenhagen [. . .] whilst Siamese officers have been admitted to follow courses of naval instruction in Copenhagen, and a small number of Danish naval officers are serving in the Siamese navy'. FOCP no. 6479, p. 121.

Arab and Chinese Commerce and Culture

Although only fleetingly mentioned, cultures other than the Siamese also suggest, explicitly or implicitly, the limitations of Western imperial views. Arab culture is present in Syed, the owner of the ship which the narrator has decided to leave. The colours of the Syed 'house-flag' – 'red but with a green border and with a white crescent in it' (p. 12) – as analysed by Berthoud are significant: red signifying the British Merchant Marine, green from the flag of Saudi Arabia, and the white crescent associated with Islam.[24] Though Syed is 'as loyal a subject of the complex British Empire as you could find east of the Suez Canal', this flag indicates loyalties and connections independent of that empire. Furthermore, Syed represents an apolitical possibility, for 'world politics did not trouble him at all' (p. 12). The narrator, with the naïvety which characterizes him before the experience of his first command, remarks that 'it was all one to us who owned the ship', but Syed – 'the head of a great House of Straits Arabs' – is ironically an alternative power to the Singapore in which his vessel is registered.[25] Syed is 'head' of an important network which does not receive its mandate from the British Empire and which exerts influence not through the exercise of military and political pressure, but through 'a great occult power amongst his own people' (p. 12), a notion foreign to the beliefs and mores of the British Empire. This relates Syed and his tradition to the non-Western nature of Bangkok. Furthermore, although he plainly has a substantial commercial position, his influence through 'almost the whole Archipelago' – an

[24] Berthoud, 'Explanatory Notes' to *The Shadow-Line*, ed. Jacques Berthoud, p. 148, n. 6.

[25] The *Straits Almanac and Directory* (Singapore: [Straits Times Press], 1866), p. 52 lists a plantation in Singapore as belonging to 'Syed Abdullah. (Heirs of)'. Although this is too early to have been a reference to the historical Syed Abdullah of *The Shadow-Line*, it does further indicate Arab commercial prominence, and perhaps the property may have been that of a forebear of the Syed of *The Shadow-Line*. Another possible member of the 'great House', and also a further example of Arab commercial success and the wide-ranging network of Arab enterprise, occurs in Julius Jacobs, *Eenigen tijd onder de Baliërs: eene reisbeschrijving met aanteekeningen betreffende Hygiène, Land- en Volkenkunde van de eilanden Bali en Lombok* (Batavia: G. Kolff & Co., 1883) [Times among the Balinese: An Account of a Journey with Notes on the Health, Geography and Ethnology of the Islands of Bali and Lombok] in which he recounts meeting Said Abdullah, an Arab trader in Ampenan in Lombok who was also 'a sort of factotum to the prince there and advised him on a wide range of matters. [. . .] The main trade from Lombok is with Surabaya, Macassar and Singapore' (my translation). A KPM map listing a number of 'contractual' and 'non-contractual' (i.e. non-KPM) services, mainly linking Singapore and Penang with destinations in the Dutch East Indies, gives one of the agents as 'Said Abdullah' of Ampenan. 'Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij. Regeling der Stoomvaartdiensten' [Royal Packet Company. Steamship Services] ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], [1891(?)]), [no scale].

extensive influence ironically denied to either Britain or the Netherlands, the two main colonial powers in the Archipelago – is not achieved by colonial annexation or commercial domination, but by 'alms-giving'. The protagonist again ingenuously, and somewhat patronizingly, concludes he is an 'Excellent (and picturesque) Arab owner, about whom one needed not trouble one's head' (p. 12), revealing, as does his attitude to Captain Giles and his high-handed attitude to the Steward, that there is much he needs to learn.

Although the Chinese presence is slight in the story, mentioned only in connection with Captain Giles's 'retaining fee' (p. 18), it acknowledges another force in the Archipelago, the success of the Chinese firm indicating the existence of enterprises, in addition to the Arab, which benefit commercially, and yet remain culturally distinct from, European colonial activity. These Chinese have wisely gone into steamships, whereas the protagonist is 'a sailing-ship man' (p. 31) and seems unconcerned about his dependence on out-of-date technology. This locates him in an older tradition, at a remove from the modern world, his unconcern contributing an ironic significance to his later thought that 'my education was far from being finished' (p. 43); the word 'education' is additionally an ironically understated term with which to describe the events he will experience. Chinese values and commercial success, like the Arab, resist the foregrounding of Western assumptions in the story, and Chinese business skill demonstrates a sometimes superior foreign capability in a fundamental activity and purpose of Empire – the production of wealth. Indeed, contemporary accounts not surprisingly betrayed mistrust and resentment: 'Experience teaches us that the peopling of tropical lands under our rule by Chinese tends more to the enrichment of the yellow race than to the advantage of the European'.[26] Conrad could have had in mind the remarkable success achieved by Whampoa, a prominent businessman in Singapore who spoke perfect English: 'few, if any [of the 'European merchants' in Singapore] could match the material wealth of their more successful Chinese counterparts, Whampoa among them'.[27] He was:

[26] FOCP no. 5237, p. 9. The extensiveness of Chinese trade, embracing not only Singapore but Siam, the Dutch East Indies, and French Indo-China, was expressed by a French traveller: 'Ici [Batavia], d'ailleurs, comme à Singapour, Bangkok et Cholon, presque tout le commerce, gros ou petit, est entre les mains des Chinois' [Here too, as in Singapore, Bangkok and Cholon [present-day Ho Chi Minh City], almost all business, wholesale or retail, is in Chinese hands]. Fernand Bernard, *À travers Sumatra (de Batavia à Atjeh)* [Across Sumatra (from Batavia to Atjeh)] (Paris: Hachette, 1904), p. 16.

[27] Roderick MacLean, *A Pattern of Change: The Singapore International Chamber of Commerce from 1837* (Singapore: Singapore International Chamber of Commerce, 2000), p. 64.

> the most prominent member of the Chamber [Singapore Chamber of Commerce] in the middle years of the nineteenth century [. . .] and achieved higher political office than any other Chinese in the nineteenth century, becoming both a member of the new colonial Legislative Council after the abolition of the East India Company, and subsequently a member of the Executive Council, a unique distinction in his time. He was also the Russian Consul as well as the Consul for both China and Japan. Whampoa was made a CMG.[28]

That he was not alone in his success is also evident from the fact that two of the founding members of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce in 1837 were Chinese.[29]

Western knowledge and its assumed superiority are problematized by ironic inversion. On the one hand the narrative conveys, partly phenomenologically, the European view that its knowledge is sound and steadily growing. On the other hand, Captain Ellis regards himself as 'a sort of divine (pagan) emanation – the deputy-Neptune for the circumambient seas', and while this description is gently ironic, nonetheless 'if he did not actually rule the waves' (p. 30) – referring to the popular song 'Rule Britannia' – Captain Ellis is an official of Britannia's empire and the irony thus encompasses imperialism and not merely Ellis. Moreover, imperial confidence and control are seen to exact a variety of costs. Syed's having 'to employ white men in the shipping part of his business' (p. 12) refers to colonial privilege: Arabs and Chinese were not permitted to hold the necessary British Board of Trade certificates for Merchant Marine officers which would have enabled them to work as masters or mates in British-registered ships, but their businesses, ironically, can be successful nevertheless.

Regulation, Documents, and Forms of Writing

Colonial trade created a regulatory structure to uphold its interests. This structure and its documentary processes are explicitly criticized in *The Shadow-Line* through the young captain: 'the atmosphere of officialdom would kill anything that breathes the air of human endeavour, would

[28] Ibid., p. 34. In contrast, we find a dismissive reference to Chinese in writing possibly by Sir Frank Swettenham. [F.A. Swettenham(?)], *Journal of a Trip from Singapore to Japan and Back, viâ Hongkong and Shanghai. October-December, 1881* ([n.p.]: [Author(?)], [188–(?)]), p. 37. The pamphlet has no author's name. On the front cover of the copy in Cambridge University Library is written: 'From the author. | 19/9/89. Thaipeng[?]' and at the foot, 'By F.A. Swettenham, C.M.G., | Resident of Perak'.

[29] MacLean, *A Pattern of Change*, p. 29.

extinguish hope and fear alike in the supremacy of paper and ink'. Officialdom and its pervasiveness are also criticized ironically, as in the description of the Harbour-Master as 'the supreme authority' (p. 30), and in its structure not apparently being human but a 'whole system of desks' (p. 31). Even the young captain's appointment, of great significance to him, is made not by the owners but by official proxy. The narrator ironically notes the power of official writing to redefine what it is to be human, the very weight of being transferred seemingly from the living subject to the register:

> I was, in common with the other seamen of the port, merely a subject for official writing, filling up of forms with all the artificial superiority of a man of pen and ink to the men who grapple with realities outside the consecrated walls of official buildings. What ghosts we must have been to him! Mere symbols to juggle with in books and heavy registers, without brains and muscles and perplexities; something hardly useful and decidedly inferior. (p. 34)

Divergent accounts of form and colour reinforce the questioning of the validity of colonial knowledge and values, especially in connection with the colour blue in that nexus of colonial activity, the Harbour Office. The narrator observes that:

> Three lofty windows gave on the harbour. There was nothing in them but the dark blue sparkling sea and the paler luminous blue of the sky. My eye caught in the depths and distances of these blue tones the white speck of some big ship just arrived and about to anchor in the outer roadstead. (p. 31)

From these windows the immensity of nature is beheld, but with colonial vision which characteristically sees trade in the offing. The narrator, however, perceives possibilities beyond 'the prosaic agencies of the commercial world' (p. 35) when, following his appointment, he remarks that 'nothing in the way of abstraction could have equalled my deep detachment from the forms and colours of this world' (p. 34), thereby emphasizing their importance. Instead of that from which he feels detached being the everyday concerns of life, as might have been expected, it is form and colour from which he is detached and to which he is therefore seen fundamentally to relate – that is, to the 'realities outside the consecrated walls of official buildings', far removed from official perception of men as 'ghosts', beings devoid of form and colour. Conrad contrasts the blue of nature with the blue and white of officialdom: the young captain can see in a painterly way the gradations of one colour – the 'depths and distances of these blue tones' – but when he enters the Harbour Office it is official, sterile, colours

that are foregrounded: 'Everybody in it, the officials, the public, were in white. Only the heavy polished desks gleamed darkly in a central avenue, and some papers lying on them were blue' (p. 14). The syntax of the last clause emphasizes the protagonist's responsive perception: instead of the more likely 'and there were some blue papers lying on them', the word-order emphasizes the blueness of the papers, signalling the narrator's heightened awareness of colour as of greater significance than the function of the office, which might have been expected to be the subject of comment. The narrator's description of the letter of appointment which arrives out of the blue also focuses on colour – 'it was a sheet of blue foolscap' (p. 32), part of the commercial and official world of blue papers lying on the desks.[30]

In the story, written records serve to suggest the limitations of codified knowledge and to accord significance and value to other types of knowing and experience, contrasting the sterile forces of commerce and government with the living human spirit. Official and commercial writing attempts to control the wider world, but, as with the charter-party entered into by Mr Burns, 'which in an ideal world without guile would have been an excellent document' (pp. 55–56), such documents, to be truly excellent in commercial terms, have to attempt to account for contingency. Contingency, however, works to resist commerce's attempts to produce certainty, and, although commercially the voyage should be definable through the charter-party, it is instead strongly influenced from beyond the grave and by fears of madness and bewitching, feelings that suggest earlier, and arguably more deeply-rooted, irrational forms of awareness and power. We have already seen how in the de-personalized world of regulation, people become 'mere symbols' (p. 34), registers ordering both people and objects, which then obtain an official entitlement (e.g. permission to reside; qualification to be a ship's master or mate; the entitlement to fly the British flag) which would otherwise be unavailable. The nature of identity is altered in such a culture, requiring accurate recording in a book in order to gain the new, official identity, mediated by the register.[31] The assumptions of such documenting are undermined by its agents being described as 'clerks', 'quill-driver', and

[30] In this context it is worth noting, as another example of the pervasiveness of blue as the colour of officialdom, the 'Blue Books', the name given at this time to the annual reports from British colonies which were submitted in ready-made volumes consisting of pages of blue paper, on which were printed the headings on which report was to be made.

[31] Such an alteration can be observed in the case of certification without examination of masters deemed to have had appropriate previous experience prior to the introduction of compulsory Board of Trade examinations. An example was William Lingard, the historical figure for Conrad's Tom Lingard, who is recorded, as Sherry notes (*CEW*, p. 92), as having received his Master's certificate on 15th March 1861. 'Register of Certificates of Services Issued at Singapore from 6th June 1859, to 8th December

'scribe'; in addition, the clerks write 'in two industrious rows' (p. 30), combining the sense of orderliness with restrictiveness. The official being who results from this activity is 'a subject for official writing' (p. 34), the individual both the topic of, and yet subject to, this writing. The abstraction of experience into formal, commercial forms of record is also seen in the Chief Steward of the Officers' Home, his unhappiness inscribed in commercial discourse by 'the state of his accounts' (p. 18), the imbalance between credit and debit reflecting the Steward's own unbalanced state, having tried 'to poison himself once' (p. 37).

Although a ship's progress is underpinned by a legal requirement for daily entries by the captain in the ship's log, in *The Shadow-Line* the official log is withheld from the reader.[32] Instead we are given two samples of a contrasting form of document – the young captain's diary, a document which is fragmentary and fleeting, lacks clear purpose and origin, expresses uncertainty, and embraces contingency: 'I don't remember how it came about or how the pocket book and the pencil came into my hands. It's unconceivable that I should have looked for them on purpose' (p. 85). Whereas the captain's narrative, though that of a fundamentally sensitive man, is expressed in terms of a seaman-like resolution ('The seaman's instinct alone survived whole in my moral dissolution' (p. 87)), the diary reveals his innermost feelings about the elemental scale of his ordeal: 'the formidable work of the seven days, into which mankind seems to have blundered unbidden. Or else decoyed. Even as I have been decoyed, into this awful, this death-haunted command . . .' (p. 79). As well as ironically contrasting documents such as diaries, which express the human condition, with those which record the conditions of trade, the diary extracts emphasize the impossibility of survival against the indifference of nature and death without the interdependence of the ship's company.

The 'photograph taken in Haïphong' (p. 51) of the captain's predecessor with a woman is also described as a document, though again clearly different from any official record.[33] Whereas the charter-party was unsatisfactory because it was open to interpretation, this photograph is open to

1864', in *Straits Almanac and Directory* (Singapore: 1866), pp. 148–50 (p. 149). The weightiness of official validation is plain: 'Granted (agreeable to Act I of 1859, passed by the Governor General of India in Council) by the Government of the Straits Settlement [*sic*]'. Ibid., p. 148.

[32] 'An official log [. . .] must be kept in the appropriate sanctioned form, – which official log can, at the discretion of the master or owner, either be kept distinct from the ordinary log of the ship, or united therewith.' Bigham, ed., p. 65.

[33] Haiphong was a busy international port. In 1880 it saw 458 vessels, 35 per cent of which were British. A.H. Keane, *A Geography of The Malay Peninsula, Indo-China, The Eastern Archipelago, The Philippines, and New Guinea* (London: Edward Stanford, 1887), p. 107.

interpretation precisely because it is a '*human* document' (p. 51; emphasis added), representing the catastrophic decision by the former captain to abandon his duty. He had given up writing – 'He wouldn't write to his owners, he never wrote to his old wife either' (p. 53) – a powerfully symbolic act in view of the novella's concern with official and unofficial writing. The photograph stands for an alternative form of record and for different values from those sanctioned by commerce and officialdom. In a way which recalls the transgressive former captain in 'Falk', who had abandoned commercial writing for writing verses in the account book, the ending of commerce and writing in *The Shadow-Line* marks a decline in purposeful life and activity, and the photograph records an instant of personal life – suggesting living for the moment – as opposed to the continuous nature of commercial endeavour. While the young captain sees the end of his predecessor's life as 'a complete act of treason', he has enough insight to recognize that he 'had been in all essentials but his age, just such another man as myself' (p. 54).[34] His violent reaction to the photograph – 'I even threw it overboard later' (p. 51) – suggests his alarm at this recognition. For his predecessor, working life had become meaningless, recalling ironically the protagonist's own earlier desire to give up: 'to flee from the menace of emptiness . . .' (p. 25). His predecessor, as indicated by his obsessive violin-playing, seeks a deeper fulfilment, and in Haiphong is 'mixed up' with a woman who is undoubtedly a prostitute: a 'professional sorceress' and 'the last reflection of the world of passion' (p. 51). Levine has written that 'ugliness was only one of the negative visual attributes used to damn such women. They were represented as heavily made up, as hardened, as gaudily dressed',[35] and the young captain describes her in precisely such terms: a 'mature white female', with 'rapacious nostrils' and 'enormous eyes' which suggest sexual activity; 'disguised in some semi-oriental, vulgar, fancy costume', 'low-class', and with a 'cheaply ill-omened stare' (p. 51).[36]

[34] Poovey observes that 'commercial success [. . .] required self-control and privileged deferred gratification'. *A History of the Modern Fact*, p. 36. The captain's behaviour contravenes both these principles.

[35] Levine, p. 209. Levine's comment is in a discussion of the British Empire, whereas the woman in *The Shadow-Line* is in French Indo-China, but the British protagonist shares the form of condemnation. One of the individuals' accounts recorded by Havelock Ellis included the view that 'the white women [in] the East are insupportable, and small wonder, for they consist of the dregs of the European and American markets', and the young captain's reaction may also reflect such a received opinion. *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, 7 vols (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1920–28), III: *The Analysis of the Sexual Impulse*, App. B, History no. XIII by 'G.R.', pp. 306–15 (p. 314), quoted in Hyam, p. 133.

[36] The unusual clothes suggest those of the captain's 'female' in Saigon in 'Falk'.

The photograph is a document which does not regulate and which instead asserts and celebrates abandonment and the illicit pursuit of personal pleasure, experiences at odds with those fostered by imperialism and constituting transgressions of its social order. Such 'incomprehensible' (p. 51) behaviour reflects what is beyond the verbal expression available to the text, finding expression only visually (a photograph) or aurally (musical instruments). The prostitution signalled in this photograph can also be read as both a symptom of the imperial context and as a resistance to it. The resistance is partly performed by the woman's stare at the camera as an assertive counterpart to the male gaze: her 'enormous eyes' seem to see everything for what it is, without dissimulation or shame. The young captain's reaction to her is partly the result of this frankness and boldness: when he remarks that 'she was striking. A professional sorceress from the slums' (p. 51) he acknowledges her power and possibly the potential danger of such a situation to himself, having already been 'decoyed' (p. 79) into his voyage. He wonders naïvely whether her 'guitar or mandoline' were 'the secret of her sortilege' (p. 51), whereas read in conjunction with the captain's violin-playing, her musical instrument can be seen to stand as a signifier of inner yearning which runs beyond the limit of official control and writing. The captain's violin, appropriately, is thrown overboard when the possibilities of acting out that yearning cease with his illness.

The tension between professional, orderly conduct and the potential for delusion is also evident in the episode of the quinine.[37] The protagonist places his entire hopes in the presence on board of this Western 'unfailing panacea': 'It would save the men, the ship, break the spell by its medicinal virtue, make time of no account, the weather but a passing worry and, like a magic powder working against mysterious malefices, secure the first passage of my first command' (p. 72). Such unquestioning faith in the availability of this 'magic' is a form of self-deception, not reckoning with human weakness which has removed it, and comprises one of the series of disillusionments that the captain suffers. Having realized the deception, the shock to his pride and confidence is so great that he abandons the steadiness required of command and – ironically resembling his predecessor, 'off my balance, a prey to impulse' (p. 73) – impulsively drops the bottles without further examination. He tells Ransome to throw the remains overboard, echoing his throwing the photograph overboard: the bottles and photograph

[37] Hawthorn refers to bottles of medicine being 'a recurrent motif' in the story, one of the repetitions indicative of the art in the story. 'Introduction' to *The Shadow-Line*, pp. xxx, xxx–xxxi. The motif can be read as suggesting a society ill at ease and in need of cure.

undermine his understanding and beliefs, and on impulse he destroys the evidence of both. Ransome has tasted the substitute, which he describes as 'a mixture of all sorts, sweetish, saltish, very horrible' (p. 76); it is possible to see the mixture as symbolic of the reality of life's mixed experiences which Ransome, with his heart condition, has already tasted and which, unlike the young captain, he is prepared to face. The quinine episode is also significant because, forced to announce the loss to his men, they surprise him – 'I was mistaken' – by recognizing the unspoken appeal in his anxiety to tell them of the loss and its implications; he receives the 'encouragement of a low assenting murmur' (p. 78). This encouragement expresses and confirms the required interdependence as well as offering the opportunity to heal the captain, with a quite different medicine, of his guilt.

Western Outcomes

For all the support and confidence of colonial knowledge and power, the protagonist's first exposure to the challenges of command yields nothing triumphant. Exhaustion is the outcome and seems to be his future, for as Captain Giles says, 'Yes, that's what it amounts to, [. . .] Precious little rest in life for anybody. Better not think of it' (p. 105). The young captain's first command is tested not by fighting the elements, but by conditions where action is almost irrelevant, as if endeavour itself is becalmed, like the stasis of Singapore's architecture, and activity inconsequential, so that men can make little way, whether literally or figuratively, features which also evoke the War. In this, the ship serves in the broadest sense as the enduring 'moral symbol of our life'.[38] The questioning of colonial progress mirrored in that becalming is evident in the characters – such as the figures at the meal table in the Officers' Sailors' Home and the crew of the ship – who move as if inert or half-dead; Captain Ellis' criticism of many European shipmasters – 'Easy life and deck chairs' (p. 32) – recalls 'the supine stranger' (p. 18) at the meal table earlier.[39] In the Steward's room the 'smell of

[38] Joseph Conrad, 'Well Done', *NLL*, p. 149.

[39] The widely-held belief at that time in the inevitability of progress is reflected, for example, in the title of W. Douglas Hamilton, *The Civil Service Chronology. The Chronology of History, Art, Literature, and Progress, from the Creation of the World to the Conclusion of the Franco-German War* (London: Lockwood, 1872), which, significantly, was designed to assist would-be civil servants for both home and overseas service in the examinations, and at the same time to give them a sense of the progress of which they aspired to be part. The book does not see only potential civil servants as its object, but in a vision which incorporates progress with commerce, sees itself as 'no less essential to the student of history than to the man of business, and the statesman, and politician'. 'Advertisement', pp. iii–iv (p. iii).

decaying coral, of oriental dust, of zoological specimens' (p. 16) conveys a related becalming, as if these are to be the limits of the colonial endeavour, the specimens a substitute for complete possession or experience and offering only a shadowy and incomplete reality, the final outcome of European colonial stewardship. It is as if Singapore, for all the Western knowledge and modernity invested in it, resists enduring achievement, somewhere already played out and close to being abandoned, just as the protagonist's predecessor abandoned it.[40]

[40] See Kerr, 'Conrad and "The Three Ages of Man"', p. 42, an essay that is very helpful in considering the issues of colonial and Singapore's decline.

CHAPTER 7

The 'Irreducible Minimum': The Plantation and Comprehensive Commercialization in 'The End of the Tether'

> The new generation was orderly, peaceable, settled in prosperous villages. [. . .] it would have been unkind to remember against them that they had ever slit a throat in their lives. [. . .] What men wanted was to be checked by superior intelligence, by superior knowledge, by superior force too – yes, by force held in trust from God and sanctified by its use in accordance with His declared will. (*EoT*, p. 215)

In 'The End of the Tether' (1902) and *Victory: An Island Tale* (1915), two of the most significant forms of later capitalist colonial exploitation in south-east Asia – the company plantation and mining – are part of their respective contexts; significant developments in shipping are also incorporated. Both works are set against a background of the commercial decline of the individual trader or businessman, seen in 'The End of the Tether' in the varying experiences of Whalley, Massy, and van Wyk, the world no longer susceptible to individual pioneers but requiring an extensive official and commercial apparatus to support exploitation on a global scale, a change ushered in partly by the Suez Canal, which 'had let in upon the East [. . .] new methods of trade' (*EoT*, p. 131).

Pioneers

This shift is particularly apparent in the experience of Captain Whalley, whose 'fifty years at sea and forty out in the East' (p. 131) provides the perspective:

> a man who had served famous firms, who had sailed famous ships (more than one or two of them his own); who had made famous passages, had been the pioneer of new routes and new trades; who had steered across the unsurveyed tracts of the South-Seas and had seen the sun rise on uncharted islands. (pp. 130–31)

His discoveries have led to inclusion in the '*General Directory*' (p. 131) (a nautical directory or Admiralty pilot book) and to fame: 'writ, not very large but plain enough, on the Admiralty charts. Was there not somewhere between Australia and China a Whalley Island and a Condor Reef? [. . .] At that time neither the island nor the reef had any official existence'. Whalley marks the transformation from the sphere of the individual with 'enterprise' (p. 131) to a larger commerce, reflected in the writing of officialdom, for the '*General Directory*' marks the making familiar of what was once strange, the transformation of formerly personal knowledge into general knowledge, and the creation of a category of 'official existence' in keeping with the new times.[1] Whalley associates the change with the advent of steam, remarking to van Wyk: 'you men brought up to the use of steam cannot conceive the vast importance of my bit of venturesomeness to the Eastern trade of the time. Why, that new route reduced the average time of a southern passage by eleven days for more than half the year' (p. 213).[2] The earlier pioneering period's informality and energetic practical activity are evident not only in the Governor's accessibility to a mere seaman-trader with 'a plan for opening a new trade with a distant part of the Archipelago' (p. 148) and offering the help of the Navy, but also in the phenomenology. He is a Governor 'with his jacket off', living modestly 'as in a camp' in a bungalow 'on the half cleared slope of a hill', immersed in and connected to his surroundings. His table significantly has papers only at one end; at the other are 'two guns, a brass telescope, a small bottle of oil with a feather stuck in the neck' (p. 148), the guns and telescope denoting the military and naval activity which underpin his role, and the feather, for oiling the weapons, suggesting a man both prepared and providing for himself. The latter ironically compares with the grandeur of the present Governor, who will doubtless have a servant to care for his guns.

The earlier mode of seafaring is reflected in Whalley's combining enterprise with domesticity, his wife contributing singing and painting to their home aboard; 'he was a great reader' (p. 133) and 'she had decorated the centre of every panel with a cluster of home flowers' (p. 134). A partnership of thoughtfulness and expression, it was a rounded existence epitomized by

[1] This process was noted in 1884: 'Some few of the best tracks may have been avoided from ignorance of their nature, or their supposed dangerous character. This is fast disappearing before increased knowledge, and it may be predicted that some settled system for the navigation of these seas will be established in the course of a few years.' *The China Sea Directory*, 2nd edn, III: (1884), 64.

[2] The discovery of such passages was indeed on record, as, for example, concerning the 'Great Eastern Route to China. – [. . .] The first [of two routes] was adopted by Captain Butler of the ship *Walpole*.' Ibid., 55.

the description of her as 'a real shipmate' (p. 133), part of that brotherhood from which at her death 'an elderly sailor of the crew, deft at needlework, put together a mourning frock [. . .] out of one of her black skirts' (p. 134) for their young daughter. This wholesome conjunction of commerce with life is also seen in the piano ordered by Whalley for their engagement being narrated as part of 'the first direct general cargo landed in Hong Kong harbour' (p. 134). Whalley's recollection of his life includes its 'romance, its idyl' (p. 134). *Condor* and *Ringdove*, Whalley's and Eliott's clippers, denote not just speed but their captains' freedom of spirit; the nickname 'Dare-devil Harry' (p. 130) asserts the scope then for individuality.[3]

The Implications of Steam

The impact of steam is apparent in the financing of steamships and the predictability of their movements. Few individuals can afford to operate them, as the case of Massy demonstrates: 'Good bargain as she was, the price of the *Sofala* took up pretty near all the lottery money. He had left himself no capital to work with' (p. 157). Capital on the scale required for the purchase of modern steamships, and especially steamship fleets, could only be provided by raising funds from a number of individuals or by companies able to access stock markets, leading to separation of ownership (i.e. the shareholders or other joint owners) from management (including the ships' captains), who became employees. The need to maintain steady and competitive returns for shareholders compared with the expectations of owner-operators resulted in changes to commercial activity, for steady returns could not be achieved by the earlier adventurous trading but by a reliable freight market and, preferably, market domination.[4] Competition

[3] Conrad may have used Admiralty pilot books as sources for some of his ideas and names. In the case of 'The End of the Tether', the *China Sea Directory*, 2nd edn (III: 605) – the Directory relevant to part of the setting of the story, and a publication which Conrad may have consulted as a merchant marine officer while at sea in the area – records that an 'H.M.S. *Ringdove* was employed [. . .] in running the mails [. . .] in 1861'.

[4] Adequate returns in south-east Asian shipping were assisted by the shipping rings comprising most of the main lines and agents: 'Steam navigation also introduced far greater competition between the carriers and ship owners and their agents were vulnerable to undercutting. No company in the modern era could afford to maintain its fleet and commit itself to building new ships in such an uncertain marketplace and it was the need to resolve this issue that led to the introduction of the so-called "freight conferences", whereby the major shipping companies got together and agreed to a standard rate for freight charges'. 'In return, they guaranteed regular sailings and sufficient cargo space, services which could not otherwise be assured'. The first 'Straits Homeward Conference', which affected Singapore directly, was in 1879. MacLean, *A Pattern of Change*, pp. 75–76, 77, 200 (n. 4).

and the belief that the freight market would continue to expand led to the creation of steamship fleets, consolidating many individuals' trade through the integration with home runs of local and regional networks and providing frequent, dependable services. In the Dutch East Indies this trend was evident in the establishment and growth of the KPM.[5] Whalley's former employers, Gardner, Patteson, & Co., have developed a steamshipping line: 'their ships now had yellow funnels with black tops, and a time table of appointed routes like a confounded service of tramways' (pp. 136–37). Massy's inadequate working capital at first 'did not matter so much, for these were the halcyon days of steam coasting trade, before some of the home shipping firms had thought of establishing local fleets to feed their main lines. These, when once organised, took the biggest slices out of that cake, of course' (p. 157). Assisted by the use of the telegraph, competition led to a drive to reduce costs, and for small-scale sailing-ship owners such as Whalley, to an inevitable loss of opportunities:

> gone with them the white-winged flock of clippers that lived in the boisterous uncertain life of the winds, skimming big fortunes out of the foam of the sea. In a world that pared down the profits to an irreducible minimum, in a world that was able to count its disengaged tonnage twice over every day and in which lean charters were snapped up by cable three months in advance, there were no chances of fortune for an individual wandering haphazard with a little barque – hardly indeed any room to exist.[6] (p. 137)

Trade by sail, characterized by terms of adventure such as 'boisterous', 'uncertain', and 'skimming', has been translated into comprehensive commercialization of both time and space. The unpredictable has become subject to measurement and repetition: 'irreducible minimum', 'count', 'twice over every day', and 'three months in advance'. Whalley, considering his life, feels that that 'unique document would be looked upon as an archaic curiosity of the Eastern waters, a screed traced in obsolete words – in a half-forgotten language' (p. 144).

[5] Conrad is almost certainly referring to the KPM when he writes of 'the mail-boats of the subsidised company' (p. 207) ignoring Batu Beru.

[6] 'With the introduction of telegraphic communication the world became in effect [. . .] a single market. [. . .] It made for direct and immediate contact between buyers and sellers, eliminating uncertainty and reducing risks. The telegraph also brought about a more rapid turnover of business by enabling merchants to "sell on the water". Goods could be bought and sold while they were being shipped across the ocean from producing to consuming countries with the result that, with the same amount of capital as previously, merchants could [. . .] increase the volume of their business.' Ding, p. 71.

Reorganizing Time and Space

One of Whalley's trading successes was as 'the pioneer of the early trade in the Gulf of Petchili' (p. 214), on the east coast of China,[7] the Gulf where Whalley had also buried his wife, the burial marking the end of both the individual's scope for trade and the life which it made possible. Whalley's next partnership is very different, a business partnership, beginning appropriately not with the ordering of a piano, but in a lawyer's office. The beauty of the *Condor* has become the utility of the *Sofala*: 'a shabby steering-wheel, a battered brass binnacle on a stout mahogany stand, two dingy life-buoys, an old cork fender lying in a corner, dilapidated deck-lockers with loops of thin rope instead of door-handles' (p. 219).[8] This portrayal of objects losing their effective essence and becoming waste is also emblematic of Massy's unwise purchase of a vessel bought from its shrewder vendors by whom it was 'judged too small and not quite modern enough for the sort of trade she was in' and who 'had ordered a new steamer from Europe' (p. 156). Furthermore, the unbusiness-like management of Massy's ship is epitomized by the state of the storeroom:

> All sorts of rubbish was shot there: it had a mound of scrap-iron in a corner; rows of empty oil-cans; sacks of cotton-waste, with a heap of charcoal, a deck-forge, fragments of an old hencoop, winch-covers all in rags, remnants of lamps; and a brown felt hat, discarded by a man dead now (of a fever on the Brazil coast), who had been once mate of the *Sofala*, had remained for years jammed forcibly behind a length of burst copper pipe, flung at some time or other out of the engine-room. (p. 238)

Massy's search for iron to deflect the compass reveals, through the waste objects which are out of place, spent, and associated with death, the impending dissolution of the ship; the oil-cans, close to materials likely to catch fire, evoke his imprudence and a ship not ship-shape.

[7] Conrad never went to the Gulf of Petchili, but the *China Sea Directory* (2nd edn, III: 604, 610) records surveying in the area by the Royal Navy in 1859 and 1860, as well as the abundance of foodstuffs and their cheapness. Whalley is 'sixty-five years old' (p. 132) and has been forty years in the East. Using the development of Singapore as a means of establishing Whalley's walk there as in the second half of the 1880s (*CEW*, pp. 175, 179), and assuming that his early involvement with this Gulf is likely to have been towards the beginning of his time in the East, we may speculate that this involvement predates the Royal Navy surveying, which would be in keeping with Whalley's 'venturesomeness'.

[8] The name of the decayed ship is ironic, for the east African port Sofala was once associated with trading success: 'The identification of Sofála with Solomon's Ophir, to which Milton alludes (*Par. Lost*, xi. 399–401), is untenable'. 'Sofála', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th edn (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1875–89).

The landscape of Singapore enacts the changes which have occurred. The shore is 'terraced' (p. 146) and the 'wide plots of rolled grass' are 'like pieces of green carpet smoothly pegged out' (p. 145), entirely imposed on the land which from 'half cleared' (p. 148) has become an 'orderly and sylvan aspect'. The creek is 'canalized' but beneath a bridge is discernible a Malay prau covered with 'a ridge of palm-leaf mats' (p. 145), revealing its continuing relation with more natural manifestations of activity. Similarly, from Evans' 'patent slip in a lonely wooded bay' has sprung the 'Consolidated Docks Company', where the crane, 'fit to lift the heaviest weight ever carried afloat', has a head which 'could be seen like the top of a queer white monument peeping over bushy points of land and sandy promontories' (p. 149), the landscape itself altered by this alteration in trade, and trade become a rival subject for monumental record.[9] The lamp-posts, 'their globes of white porcelain atop, resembling a barbarous decoration of ostriches' eggs displayed in a row' (p. 146), ironically invert the colonial and the barbarous. The carriages providing leisure for their 'motionless' occupants have wheels which turn 'solemnly' (p. 147); all is mute and restrained, not least the Governor and his family's own carriage. Singapore's buildings – the 'New Waterworks', 'the new Courts of Justice', the 'new Colonial Treasury', and the 'Public Library' (pp. 139, 140, 140, 159) – parallel the changes to trade which have left Whalley with 'hardly indeed any room to exist' (p. 137), the literal and figurative consequence of the reorganization of time and space on new commercial and architectural principles. Fittingly, the 'landing place of the telegraph cable' is marked by an 'obelisk', this symbol of colonial commercial and political power interposed between the sea and the 'native town' (p. 161), thus signifying that power's alteration to the relations between indigenous people and the wider world, including trading relations.[10]

Financial Success and Failure

'The End of the Tether' depicts three financial downfalls – Whalley's, Ivy's, and Massy's – and three financial successes – Eliott's, van Wyk's, and Gardner, Patteson, & Co.'s – and all mirror the increasing commercialization

[9] MacLean records that 'in 1861 the Patent Slip & Dock Company was founded, which subsequently became the New Harbour Dock Company'. *A Pattern of Change*, p. 75. This may have provided Conrad with his reference to Evans' business.

[10] I am indebted to J.H. Stape, who comments on the 'triumph of colonial order and officialdom over primeval jungle' and that Singapore has been 'emptied at its very core of meaningful connexion with the peoples inhabiting it', arguing that 'the hostility evident here is directed not, primarily, towards commercialism but to its romanticisation and intrusive "colonisation" of other areas of life'. 'Conrad's "Unreal City"', pp. 86, 90, 90.

and regulation of existence. Van Wyk's success seems to have been a combination of personal influence and shrewd timing.[11] Charming and humane though he is, his success is qualified, if obliquely. The Sultan 'had granted him as much land as he cared to have cleared: it was neither more nor less than a fortune', but, perhaps as a result of indirect political pressure, the Sultan wished to ingratiate himself with the Dutch, hoping that 'he would die before the white men were ready to take his country from him' (p. 207). The rapacity of the colonial enterprise is suggested by the reference to van Wyk's 'wilderness, once his adversary, now his vanquished companion' (p. 209). 'The very gravel for his paths' (p. 210) has been imported, the new geography of his colonial residence marked out in alien material, even its plants associated with boundaries: 'flower-beds bordered the path' and there is a 'jasmine hedge' (p. 216). By contrast, the Sultan and his people move through van Wyk's importations as if at ease with original nature: 'those people damaged his grass plot in front (it was not easy to obtain some approach to a lawn in the tropics), and the other day had broken down some rare bushes he had planted over there' (p. 214). The commercializer of time and space, van Wyk also manages his coolies with 'almost military discipline' (p. 209). As the bank manager remarks, van Wyk is 'going home by the next mail to form a company to take over his estates. Another tobacco district thrown open' (pp. 249–50), and in realizing his investment through incorporation he is taking advantage of funds increasingly available from Europe for the financing of company plantations, and, with them, the disappearance of the individual planter.[12] J.H. Boeke describes the change as follows:

> As the calmer period of expansion follows the hectic days of pioneering, [the] personal element of the planter in the evolution of Western enterprise falls into the background. The limited-liability company appears; capital flows in a turgid but wide stream into the Indies and carries everything with it. The isolated enterprise is caught up in a larger relation, becomes part of an estate company, a colonial bank, a combine, or whatever the larger entity may be called. The planter becomes manager, administrator, a kind of head-employee, who has to accept his instructions from a board of directors and, in the last instance, from the owners of the capital, abroad.[13]

[11] There is a similarity between van Wyk's disaffection with life in Dutch government service and that of Jewel's grandfather, 'one of the brilliantly endowed men who are not dull enough to nurse a success and whose careers so often end under a cloud' (*LJ*, p. 208).

[12] 'Agriculture increased from almost 400 corporations in 1893 to 800 in 1906 and well over 1100 in 1913.' À Campo, 'The Rise of Corporate Enterprise', p. 81.

[13] *The Evolution of the Netherlands Indies Economy* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, Netherlands and Netherlands Indies Council, 1946), p. 16. Should the new company offer shares to the public its prospectus will no doubt resemble that of The Northern Tjiliwoeng Plantations, Limited (Figure 2).

This change is seen as one in which the body is displaced from its place of operation, becoming merely part of a global process:

> [The planter] no longer walks [. . .] through *his* gardens and fields – but is enthroned behind a desk in a large office building in Batavia, Surabaya, or Medan. Yes, in many cases the real entrepreneur, the man who takes the initiative, who has the reins in his hands, has climbed still a step higher and now resides in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, London, or New York.[14]

Boeke gives as the reason for the change to 'complete Westernization – large-scale production under direct management' the fact that bought-in produce could not be depended on for quality and quantity and availability.[15] 'Estate or plantation cultivation' had also become increasingly attractive following the Agrarian Law of 1870 in the Dutch East Indies, whereby 'it was possible to contract long leases on uncultivated land for the purposes of estate agriculture', land tenure having been reformed in this way in order to encourage private enterprise as an alternative to the inefficient Compulsory Cultivation System.[16] For van Wyk, 'the pioneer of tobacco-planting on that remote part of the coast' (p. 206), like the 'pioneer' (p. 131) Whalley, Batu Beru will change in just the same way as Singapore and will acquire a 'three-mile-long carriage-road for the afternoon drives and a first-class Resident with a fat, cheery wife', recalling Singapore's roads and its Governor's drive with his family; like the companies in Singapore, the society of Batu Beru will be that of employees of 'the big companies' (p. 207), the new age of commerce having universal effect.

Securing the Future

Gardner, Patteson, & Co., unlike Whalley, have adopted modern ways and formed a steamship line. The fact that 'there was no longer a Gardner or a Patteson in the firm' (p. 136) indicates the changes in ownership and management as businesses have become bigger, merit rather than family connection becoming the qualification. Whalley's contemporary, Eliott, had the sense to leave his career in sailing-ships before it was too late, and to take advantage of government employment's pension scheme. This

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., p. 14. In discussing the Indies farmer's attachment 'above all to his individual freedom as a determinant of his economic activity', Boeke records the significance of Javanese workers calling tobacco by two names, indicating whether it was produced under land leases and planting contracts – '*tembakau segelan* – verbally, "sealed tobacco"' – under the sealed contracts; or '*tembakau préman*, the tobacco of a freeman'. Ibid., pp. 4, 5.

[16] Ibid., p. 14; *CEI*, I: 20.

contrasts with Whalley's position, whose provision for old age has been lost in a bank collapse.[17] It is not surprising that in a world increasingly defined in commercial terms there should be such interest in these two individuals' financial provision, as there is too with Ivy's, Massy's, and van Wyk's. Success or failure is shown as defined increasingly by negotiation with the world of finance.[18] Kerr observes that Singapore 'is a colonial city of the third age, looking good and hogging the limelight but incapable of work or action, and emptied of the energy and values on which its legitimacy was founded'.[19] It is the nature of the work that has changed and the context of regulation in which it takes place.

The exemplar of such negotiation is Whalley's investment in the *Sofala*. The story is pervaded by details of his securing this investment for Ivy: 'the agreement should be clear: the whole five hundred to be paid back to her integrally within three months. Integrally. Every penny' (p. 163). This is consistent with Eliott's observation that 'what was wanted for [Massy] was a master with a couple of hundred or so to take an interest in the ship on proper conditions' (p. 158), for this 'taking an interest' is not beneficent involvement but commercial partnership, securing rights over earnings and capital in return for acting as master. The care with which the agreement is drawn up is evident, for example, in the fact that 'provision was made for forming a fund to pay him off' (p. 203) and may well be a partnership deed (the word 'partnership' is specifically used (p. 203) at the point when the agreement is being drawn up, and the word 'partner' occurs on numerous occasions). The agreement may also provide for Whalley's death, an

[17] As other critics have mentioned, there is an echo here – one of a number in the Asian fiction – of the Oriental Bank Corporation, the sensational failure of which in 1884 was an event of which Conrad would have been aware and which is attributed by Stuart Muirhead to its chief management's 'misdirection and mismanagement'. *Crisis Banking in the East: The History of the Chartered Mercantile Bank of India, London and China, 1853–93* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), p. 128. Sherry remarks that 'in 1884 an important and well-established bank in Singapore did fail' (*CEW*, p. 111), but this suggests a purely Singapore banking institution, whereas this British bank, founded in Bombay in 1842, had branches throughout the East. A poignant example of another individual caught up in the failure appears in *The Straits Eurasian Advocate* in the obituary of Mr Charles Ferdinand Keun, 'an old Eurasian resident of Singapore' who became chief clerk of 'the old Oriental Banking Corporation'. 'Some years before his retirement the bank offered to give him a gratuity of $10,000 provided he should not offer his services to another bank. Preferring, however, to retire on a pension he declined to accept the offer which he afterwards regretted for. He did not enjoy his pension long as the failure of the bank caused its stoppage.' 9 June 1888, (n.pag., [p. 3]).

[18] The Manila lottery to which Massy looks for reward was notorious, and marks the abdication of responsibility in engagement with the world of finance. Sales were banned in Singapore (*Bangkok Times*, 5 May 1888, p. 2), hence Massy's 'writing to Manila for the tickets' (p. 199). The *Bangkok Times* featured a humorous poem 'To a Manilla Lottery Ticket – That Did Not Win' which included the lines: 'Nothing that could lift | A fellow out of debt'. 9 January 1889, p. 5.

[19] 'Conrad and "The Three Ages of Man"', p. 42.

eventuality which would normally be included in a partnership deed, for the lawyer is probably working through the key components of such an agreement when he raises the question of dealing with possible illness, although Whalley declines to have illness incorporated in the agreement.[20] We can also perhaps surmise that death is covered in the agreement because the narrator specifically refers to it when relating that the agreement stipulated that if Whalley 'left the *Sofala* before the term, from whatever cause (barring death), Massy was to have a whole year for paying' (p. 203). The ship is also 'fully insured. [Massy] had had enough self-restraint to pay up the premiums' (p. 237). There is a complexity to these apparently comprehensive arrangements and ambivalence in the narrative which convey the complexity of the modern times Whalley is facing, and which have led to a variety of readings. J.H. Stape writes that 'the pivot' on which the story 'turn[s] is a malicious conspiracy to defraud an aged seaman by deliberately wrecking the steamship he relies upon for his financial well-being and identity'.[21] Tim Middleton observes that 'Massy escapes any blame and departs for Manila with the insurance money', although Daniel R. Schwarz writes that 'Whalley's death does accomplish his wish of saving his money for his daughter' as a result of his 'carefully planned commercial arrangements'.[22] The insurance policy may have been noted at the lawyer's suggestion to register the new partnership's legal interest in this asset, and the involvement of the lawyer both before and after Whalley's death, and the fact that Whalley has given a letter to the solicitor to send to Ivy in the event of his death, all point strongly to the possibility that Whalley's estate will have been properly wound up and by someone to whom all the facts of the partnership agreement and assets are known.[23] Both Ivy's reaction and van Wyk's character also suggest that the inheritance may be safe. For Ivy, 'for

[20] A partnership ceases on the death of a partner, and settlement of the partnership's liabilities to that partner's estate then needs to be made.

[21] '"The End of the Tether" and Victor Hugo's *Les Travailleurs de la mer*', *The Conradian*, 30/1 (Spring 2005), 71–80 (p. 75).

[22] *Joseph Conrad* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 53. Schwarz, *Conrad: 'Almayer's Folly' to 'Under Western Eyes'* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 127. Schwarz, however, does not address the significance of the commercial context in the story as a whole nor the ambivalence of the subtle commercial and legal information as discussed further below.

[23] The extent of Massy's share of the insured value can be estimated. The insured value of the ship may at first sight not appear to be attractive, given that the boilers need renewing and that, as Eliott remarks: 'Not even the Japs would give her insured value for her' (p. 157), but the insured value may have been the price Massy paid for her (which we are not told). Whalley 'claimed a sixth part of the profits under the three years' agreement' (p. 173), and since partnership drawings are commonly linked to a partner's share of the firm's capital, this suggests that Whalley has a one-sixth share (bought with the £500 he wishes to bequeath) in the partnership capital, i.e. that the partnership capital amounted to £3,000. There appear to be no assets other than the ship, and so it may be

the first time in all these years [life's] sting had departed, the carking care of poverty, the meanness of a hard struggle for bread' (p. 251). Van Wyk, 'energetic, and essentially practical' (p. 216), has already shown himself willing, in order to save Whalley's situation, to 'find the money' (p. 229) for the new boilers subject to a ship's mortgage and putting Sterne in as captain; it therefore could be read as unlikely that van Wyk would not have seen to it that Whalley's daughter should receive her due.

Whalley is a man of probity, having 'handled many thousands of pounds of his employers' money [. . .]. He had never lost a ship or consented to a shady transaction' (p. 131). This fine quality has, however, been inadequate for the moral challenges of his later life, and the end of the story maintains its deeply-rooted commercial dimensions, with Whalley using the legal and commercial tools of the age to secure his daughter's inheritance, ironically by means of the very society and commerce of which he no longer feels part, and the achievement of which has meant setting aside his integrity. When Whalley was young he had been involved in significant risk in his ventures: 'It was an undertaking full of risk' (p. 148) which he had discussed with the Governor of Singapore. At the end of his life he is left trying to protect £500 from every risk he can imagine, requiring a 'unique instrument' (p. 202) which will, in ironic contrast to the doubtful state of the *Sofala*, be – legally – watertight. It is also ironic that it is the *Sofala*'s insurance which seems to insure Whalley's bequest, the premium having become Whalley's death. Whalley ends his life navigating not so much a ship as an unpredictable new commercial context; seafaring, previously an enterprise of risk and skill, has become merely the 'huckster's round' (p. 130). The illusory nature of certainty in the story is brought home – again in commercial terms – when van Wyk believes his property on the *Sofala* to be safe, despite Whalley's blindness, because of his 'floating yearly policy', only to be told by Whalley that the policy had been invalid because of his disability. Van Wyk 'was amazed at the sudden cropping up of a commercial detail' (p. 224), but 'The End of the Tether' shows such details erupting into every aspect of life. Even language appears to be translated into the economic: the word 'floating' can be read as belonging originally to the more straightforward existence of Whalley's earlier seafaring days, whereas in the phrase 'floating yearly policy' it has been appropriated as a commercial term.[24]

inferred that the figure of £3,000 represents – or represented – the value of the ship, especially given that trading profits have become meagre and that therefore no premium for goodwill is likely to have been included in the £500 paid by Whalley (i.e. over and above the value of the assets).

[24] The term appears in the same sense in 'floating debenture', under which the debenture-holder has a legal charge over fluctuating (floating) trade assets.

Van Wyk and Whalley, different in age and worldly success, are portraits with much in common, enterprising sole traders whose day has therefore passed, the ships in the story now articles for purchase and sale. With Eliott and van Wyk, Whalley participates in an exodus from the good old days, a period frequently recognized in the Dutch East Indies by the Malay term '*tempo doeloe*'.[25] Thomson sadly summarized the changes in 1875, revealing the commercialization of time and space:

> the rows of new buildings [in Commercial Square, Singapore], with their colossal proportions, cast a cool shade over the less assuming, antique, green-venetianed structures, erected in 'the good old days,' in times when the residents might hear once in six months from home, and when two or three successful shipments of produce from the 'spice islands' might bring a princely fortune to their proprietor. 'Those were good times indeed,' said a worthy but unfortunate old merchant to me. 'We lived then above our offices, a small but a very happy community. Now we might almost as well live in London as here; steam and telegraph bring us daily into communication with the old world. Our Sundays are not our own. By night and by day we are at work, writing for the mail'.[26]

'Because of the Dollars'

'Because of the Dollars' (1915) shares a number of resonances with 'The End of the Tether', particularly in the change from old to new and the signs of late colonial capitalism. The old dollars will include those of Spanish origin from South America, providing a frame of reference embracing an extensive geographical and historical colonial dimension and the trade of an earlier stage of globalization. The desire for monetary stabilization, regulated control, and standardization aims to substitute for the old silver dollars – which are worth their bullion value – new silver dollars which, following an adjustment to the money supply, will have an exchange value different from their bullion value and linked to the gold standard.[27]

Davidson reassures his wife that there are 'no Java-sea pirates nowadays except in boys' books' (p. 141),[28] but these pirates, with their strong cultural traditions and independence, removed by colonial forces to facilitate European trade, have ironically been replaced by traditionless European

[25] Literally, 'the earlier days'.
[26] p. 56.
[27] Alexandre Fachard explains the complex background in 'Contextualising "Because of the Dollars"', *The Conradian*, 33/2 (Autumn 2008), 44–66. He does not, however, investigate the implications of such changes for Conrad's art in the story.
[28] Such a book is Guy Boothby, *Billy Binks – Hero. And Other Stories* (London: W&R Chambers, [1898(?)]).

pirates in Niclaus' prau, which flies the Dutch flag, as if colonialism endorsed his rapacious activities so similar to colonialism's own. The detritus of the colonial endeavour, their names reflecting their multinational status and lack of allegiance, the plotters relate only to the periphery – the Frenchman thinks of opening a shop 'in Vladivostok, Haï-phong, Manila' (p. 156) – and some have been ejected for offences in the colonies – Fector for blackmail, the Frenchman for theft. The 7 lb weight, an imperial measure which tellingly has penetrated even the remote Mirrah Settlement, becomes an instrument of destruction, as if symbolizing colonial intrusion and harm. Bamtz has deceived, among others, native chiefs, something which evokes the colonial deceit practised on these chiefs; in Saigon, however, he 'gave himself out [. . .] as a book-keeper' (p. 144), ironically associating himself with the foundation of regulated trade and mercantile correctness and uprightness.

In contrast, smiling Davidson and Laughing Anne represent an earlier, more open, mode of conduct, Laughing Anne's fidelity evident in her love for her boy and her desire for an enduring relationship with a man. Davidson, whose language draws on the Prayer Book – 'he (in his own words) "committed the body to the deep"' (p. 164) – refers, like Laughing Anne, to values other than colonialism's alone; his 'sacred trust' (p. 163) contrasts strongly with the artificial trust in currency signified by the exchangeability of the coinage's monetary values. Following his eventual openness with his wife, Davidson suffers an ungenerous response apparently more in keeping with modern times; his fate is the harsher because his son is destined to leave his dutiful father in order, ironically, to do good of an organized, regulated nature as a missionary with the White Fathers, who themselves represent another form of colonial intrusion.

Hollis, whose perspective derives from his youth in 'a (more or less) gorgeous East' (p. 137), also evokes earlier times, his discernment evident in his being 'a firm believer in the final value of shades' (p. 138). The reader senses that insightful perception of this kind is now out of place. Modern changes, including regulation, are distancing colonialism's European participants from such ultimate values, whether old dollars or faith in each other, and in place of a fully human Laughing Anne, capable of joy, there is the incredulity of Davidson's wife, with her heart 'about the size of a parched pea' (p. 165).

There are also in the story, however, a different presence and a set of values which remain opaque to Europeans, implied by Malay references.[29]

[29] There is a suggestion here of the 'Asian agency' and of the East 'withhold[ing] its voice' about which Hampson writes in connection with 'Youth' and the narrator's arrival in the East. *Cross-Cultural Encounters*, pp. 8, 7.

While Davidson delivers to his friends and to the Harbour-Master informal and regulated European discourse respectively, the narrator remarks: 'What story Davidson's crew thought fit to set afloat in Malay town is neither here nor there' (p. 165), the Malay area of the British port thus obscured by the terms of the story. Similarly, the mysterious 'Javanese plutocrat' (p. 145), who is probably, from this description of him, indigenous Javanese and not Dutch, pays fifty dollars to go to Mirrah, but his purpose is also obscure, at least to the Europeans; probably commercial, his seemingly substantial plans serve to resist the impression of ever-expanding colonialism, and point to different human networks through trading that are unconnected with Davidson's strange cargo comprising the mere means of payment, a cargo characteristic of the questionable sophistication of globalization.

CHAPTER 8

The Rise of the Commodity: Mining, Pan-European Financing, and Commercial Imagination in Victory

> My shoulder is to the wheel; I roll the dark before me, spreading commerce where there was chaos in the far parts of the world.[1]

We have seen how 'The End of the Tether' had the company plantation as part of its context. *Victory* (1915) introduces another form of later colonial exploitation in south-east Asia – mining, the realization of the European interest in the coal seam in Figure 1, the phenomenology of industry's abandoned buildings in the novel suggestive both of colonialism's failure and of Heyst's wider personal failure. *Victory*, like 'The End of the Tether', is set partly against a background of the decline of the individual trader (in the form of Morrison, the owner-operator of a ship) and of the waning tradition of sail (of which the narrator and his fellow-seamen are part), both aspects of trade which are out of place in a world of more advanced industry. The setting partially in Surabaya is highly relevant to the novel's industrial concerns, for it was 'the industrial and factory city of the Dutch East Indies'[2] as well as being the Dutch Navy's main base in the Indies and one of the three ports in the colony not prohibited to foreign shipping for trading.[3] In *Victory* we see the complex consequences of two crucial developments: the stimulation of 'local commercial development' by 'main line steamship services', and the 'quickening of commercial tempo through the creation of banks and other financial institutions, and by direct investment'.[4]

Coal and the Commercial Imagination

The redundant sign 'T.B.C.Co.' (p. 5) at the beginning of *Victory*, standing for 'The Tropical Belt Coal Company', is introduced amidst an urbane,

[1] Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (London: Hogarth Press, 1931), p. 182.
[2] Perelaer, III: 166 (my translation).
[3] Sulistiyono, p. 77.
[4] Hyde, p. xi.

amused account of the mysteries of the world of finance in which 'evaporation precedes liquidation' (p. 3), and of Heyst who, like the volcano, is 'also a smoker' (p. 4). The wry comments of the narrator, one of the 'we "out there"' (p. 3), frame the commercial episode as a merely minor occurrence and material for irony. The Company is similarly ironized when described as Heyst's 'late employers' (p. 5), 'late' meaning either recent or deceased, the suggestion of human mortality thus attributed to an entity without embodiment which, insensible to human feeling, can attract no sympathy. However, behind this introductory distancing of 'the unnatural mysteries of the financial world' (p. 5), the historically specific commercial context resists the narrator's amused detachment. Commerce, assisted by steam and the protection of European military strength, propelled colonialism and has placed the novel's characters in the colonized Archipelago; it is therefore far from an activity to be disregarded as the narrator disregards the collapsed Tropical Belt Coal Company. Furthermore, that Heyst the philosophizing wanderer should apparently achieve a measure of self-realization as the manager of a coal-mine, is not merely ironic, nor to be explained as an aberration.

As Robert Hampson observes, 'the search for coal runs as a motif through James Brooke's journals', Brooke's activities having led to the cession to Britain of Labuan and its coal deposits.[5] Coal, its availability deriving initially from the enabling imagination of commercial people, provided the steam power required for the economies of scale offered by larger vessels as well as for greater speed. Coal mined overseas reduced the cost of transporting it from Europe, and, in the context of *Victory* and the Archipelago, Labuan was of interest as a coaling-station between Singapore and Hong Kong to enable steamships en route for China to carry less coal and more cargo.[6] In a leader, *The Times* deplored the shortage of shipping, especially to carry coal,

[5] *Victory*, ed. Robert Hampson (New York: Penguin, 1996), p. 391, n. 16, a note (pp. 390–91) that also provides useful background about coal in *Victory*. Mundy (II: 349) eagerly assesses the cost of Brunei-mined coal at twenty-three shillings a ton compared with 'thirty-two to thirty-five' at Singapore. Royal Navy reports to the House of Commons also indicate the importance of coal mining in Labuan, for example, Great Britain, House of Commons, 'Correspondence between Rear-Admiral Austen and others with the Admiralty, respecting the Supply of Coal by the Eastern Archipelago Company'. Sessional Papers (hereafter 'Sessional Papers'), 1851, Vol. XXXIII, 309–20.

[6] Hall, 4th edn, p. 572. Ding (p. 6) explains the need for a chain of coaling depots for East-bound vessels from the Cape of Good Hope, and the importance of Singapore in this respect. The commercial benefits of Bornean coal in this context were widely remarked. See, for example, G.F. Davidson, *Trade and Travel in the Far East* (London: Madden and Malcolm, 1846) records Henry Wise's view of the advantages of Bornean coal for stocking Hong Kong, Singapore, and Penang as well as Wise's inclusion of 'Pulo Labuan' as a coaling-station on the route from Hong Kong to Singapore, Malacca, and Penang (Appendix I, pp. 303–04 (p. 303)). See also Hugh Low, *Sarawak; Its Inhabitants and Productions* (London: Richard Bentley, 1848), pp. 12–16. The historical Lingard's trading forerunner in Berau, George Peacock King, developed coal in Kutai in east Borneo. Warren, *At the Edge*, p. 9.

emphasizing the need for 'anything that can roll about with two or three hundred tons of coal on board, with a fair chance of ultimately reaching its destination', precisely the role of the *Judea* in 'Youth' (1898).[7] The importance of coal is evident from the House of Commons receiving a report in 1851 on the chemical analysis and fuel efficiency of the types of coal mined in Britain and in its colonies, which included Borneo and Labuan.[8] Commerce and government record here demonstrate a common interest.[9] A similar concern with coal is evident on the part of the Dutch Indies government, whose 'working of the mines near Banjermasin led to a conflict with the sultan of that city, and to a war which ended with the annexation of the sultanate to the Dutch territory'.[10]

When at the start of *Victory* the allotropic relationship between coal and diamonds is given as the reason why coal is known as '"black diamonds"' (p. 3), there is no doubt from what follows that the more important reason is that coal too 'represent[s] wealth' (p. 3).[11] Coal is 'the supreme commodity of the age' (p. 3), an age in which values are destabilized, the novel suggests, by a commodity of only commercial value being given a provocative parity with objects whose value is seen primarily as aesthetic. What is earlier in the book referred to as 'Black Diamond Bay' (p. 28) – commerce claiming the geography by naming it as commodity – is later referred to simply as 'Diamond Bay' (p. 226), coal's commodity use-value tellingly elevated into a precious stone, metaphor replacing simile and suggesting the image become reality. Only such a valuable commodity could stimulate the commercial imagination to plan, finance, and achieve its extraction in remote Samburan.

The irony and humour of the novel's opening derive at least partly from the topical issue in the latter half of the nineteenth century of the limited liability company. The ready possibility of incorporation with limited

[7] 21 July 1853, p. 5.

[8] Sir Henry de la Beche and Dr Lyon Playfair, 'Museum of Practical Geology. Third Report on the Coals Suited to the Steam Navy (1851)', Sessional Papers, 1851, Vol. XXXIII, 387–442. The narrator in *Victory* unsurprisingly refers to 'scientific demonstration of the value of these coal-outcrops' (p. 25).

[9] Coal was also recognized as crucial to Britain's political interests, as noted by Mundy (II: 346) in his journal for 7 April 1847: 'Coal is the last article in our list, but it is certainly, politically (and perhaps also commercially), the most important of all.' Mundy also envisaged these interests as including future wars (II: 349).

[10] Bernard H.M. Vlekke, *Nusantara: A History of Indonesia*, rev. edn (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1959), p. 299. F.H.H. Guillemard remarks on how in 1883 a 'Kontroleur' in the Dutch East Indies was anxious to join their vessel in order to investigate coal-mining possibilities on an island some 160 miles south of Ternate. *The Years that the Locusts have Eaten*, 7 vols, typescript (Cambridge: the author, 1927–32), VI: 46, 46–47.

[11] Frank S. Marryat, *Borneo and the Indian Archipelago. With Drawings of Costume and Scenery* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1848), a book Conrad read, records that one of the Bruni chiefs seemed to believe that the European visitors regarded coal as 'black diamonds' (p. 115).

liability created by Acts of 1856 and 1862 was crucial to the development of trade and continued to be a topic for vigorous debate. The dramatic consequences of the Acts can be seen in the fact that between 1856 and 1862 nearly 2,500 companies were formed, and that by the end of the century some 5,000 companies were being formed annually; as important were the activities of fraudulent company promoters and the taking of excessive risk, for 'of the seven thousand companies formed between 1844 and 1868, only [. . .] 42 percent, still existed in 1868'.[12] By these Acts 'a society of Persons' could be incorporated and yet be impersonal and perpetual – that is to say, not ended by the death of a partner – the limited company's ambiguous subjectivity seeming to demand a degree of implicit personification ('late employers') in the narrative contrary to its seemingly perverse legal impersonality.[13] The Tropical Belt Coal Company is fittingly associated with other aspects of ambiguity, 'the unnatural mysteries of the financial world' (p. 5) linked with 'unnatural physics', and shares in a pattern of other unlikely combinations: coal and diamonds and 'the practical and the mystical' (p. 3) attractions of coal. The Company's end is appropriately an almost alchemical liquidation of its physical assets.

In the opening pages of *Victory* a vast aspiration unfolds of commercial imagination commensurate with that 'supreme commodity' (p. 3). The necessary quality of imagination in the entrepreneur – to imagine change, activity, and profit – is referred to by the narrator with amusement: 'Company promoters have an imagination of their own. There's no more romantic temperament on earth than the temperament of a company promoter' (p. 24). Yet in the next sentence the far from merely imaginary 'manifestations' (p. 24) of such a temperament are a record of admirably incisive action: 'Engineers came out, coolies were imported, bungalows were put up on Samburan, a gallery driven into the hillside, and actually some coal got out' (p. 24); the Company had 'not merely a coaling-station' (p. 5), but a mine. The irony regarding company promoters is a double irony, since the livelihood of the narrator, a merchant seaman, derives from just such imaginative leaps of faith, creating commercial activity in areas

[12] Mary Poovey, 'Introduction' to *The Financial System in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Mary Poovey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 1–33 (pp. 16–19, 19), to whom I am also indebted for the preceding statistics. That The Tropical Belt Coal Company was a public limited company is evident from its issuing a prospectus and from Schomberg's describing Heyst as 'the swindler of many shareholders' (p. 156). On limited liability see also the distinguished writer on banking and economics, Henry Dunning Macleod, *The Theory and Practice of Banking*, 5th edn, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green, 1892–3), II: 389.

[13] This echoes the debates throughout the nineteenth century on the immortality of corporations. See Michaels, p. 55. The term 'society of Persons' is from Macleod, I: 23.

previously unavailable to trade.[14] A mining venture differs from the trading nature of a coaling-station, for 'capital invested in mines, railways, land, &c., often remains fixed there for years', whereas in trading the trader can replace his floating capital 'with a profit in a single operation'.[15] Mining is additionally uncertain 'for it is always doubtful whether a mine will be productive'.[16] Trading, like Morrison's or Davidson's, touches harbours and wharves; mining is an arrival made permanent, an entering into the earth.[17] Although the offices of The Tropical Belt Coal Company in London and Amsterdam have probably only one room, its business involves the entire 'Tropical Belt': 'to get hold of all the outcrops on tropical islands and exploit them locally', Samburan being merely the 'No. 1 coaling-station' (p. 5). What in the novel's typescript was called 'The Archipelago Coal Syndicate'[18] is in the published novel transformed into a company whose name suggests perhaps even grander ambitions; its liquidation 'in London and Amsterdam' (p. 5) implies cross-border legal jurisdictions.[19] Such ambition and aspiration, it seems, hardly need spelling out, literally or figuratively, the ciphers 'T.B.C.Co.' standing for the vastness of this production of the commercial imagination.

A history which provides valuable context and illustration for *Victory*'s mine is that of The Eastern Archipelago Company in Labuan, a 'notorious' case of ambition and fraud.[20] This Company was established in 1848 with the moral support of James Brooke and was promoted to exploit the natural

[14] Boeke (p. 4) refers to the importance of the 'creative urge', among other factors, to the entrepreneur.

[15] Bithell, p. 127.

[16] Ibid., p. 286. Mining, appropriately, is portrayed in the Asian fiction as the most speculative of activities, bordering on delusion, as, for example, Chester's guano plans and Lingard's obsession with gold.

[17] Insofar as mining permanently removes part of the colonial territory, it can be considered its ultimate exploitation.

[18] Mara Kalnins, 'Explanatory Notes', in *Victory*, ed. Mara Kalnins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 317–30 (p. 318, n. 7).

[19] Limited liability companies were popular in the Dutch East Indies as in Britain. The historical specificity of The Tropical Belt Coal Company can be seen in the fact that incorporation in the mining industry in the Dutch colony started shortly after 1890, corresponding to the 1890s setting of the novel. À Campo, 'The Rise of Corporate Enterprise', p. 75. 'Dutch-European combinations [. . .] increased steadily after the 1880s to 119 in 1913. [. . .] The emergence of corporations of mixed nationality may be explained partly by political motivations', given the occasionally unhelpful attitude of the Dutch to foreign companies. Ibid., p. 77. See also Anne Booth, *The Indonesian Economy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A History of Missed Opportunities* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 253–54.

[20] *The Times*, 7 July 1854, p. 9. Allen (p. 210) writes of 'the history of Labuan perhaps supplying Conrad with some of the background for his story' but does not enlarge on the possibility. Conrad is very likely to have been aware of the Labuan mines, and of The Eastern Archipelago Company, through his knowledge of James Brooke. Conrad, in a letter of 15 July 1920 to Dowager Ranee Margaret of Sarawak, claims his 'admiration for and mental familiarity with the Great Rajah' (quoted in *CEW*,

resources, especially coal, of Labuan and to develop the island as a commercial centre. Parliament was persuaded to grant it chartered status, its shareholders thereby benefiting from limited liability.[21] Labuan, midway between Singapore and Hong Kong, would provide not just a coaling-station but a coal-mine, as was the intention for The Tropical Belt Coal Company. Writing about The Eastern Archipelago Company survives in considerable detail in House of Commons papers, the annual *Blue Book* returns for Labuan, and in *The Times*, recording its management failings, the mutual accusations between its managing director and Brooke, and its liquidation on grounds of fraud.[22] It may be speculated that Conrad had The Eastern Archipelago Company in mind when writing *Victory*, given the relation of the name to the typescript's 'The Archipelago Coal Syndicate' as well as other similarities: The Tropical Belt Coal Company also had management shortcomings (e.g. 'the props were too weak to begin with' (p. 351)); the use of Chinese labour was common to both concerns

p. 11). Knowledge of Brooke is also convincingly argued in another connection by Florence Clemens: the opening pages of *The Rescue* refer to Brooke, in addition to which, Conrad's captain on the *Vidar*, who had 'ten years of experience on the Burnean [*sic*] section [. . .] talked freely with Conrad, and it is difficult to believe that they never discussed the famous white rajah'. 'Conrad's Malaysian Fiction: A New Study in Sources with an Analysis of Factual Material Involved' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1937), pp. 23–24. Brooke's successful prosecution of the Company for fraud and the consequent cancellation of its charter were widely reported and are likely to have been part of local memory. The mines and their pier are also referred to in *The China Sea Directory*, 2nd edn (II: 117–19), which Conrad may have consulted at sea.

[21] *The Times*, 7 July 1854, p. 9 and 'Copy of the Charter of Incorporation of the Eastern Archipelago Company; and Correspondence relating thereto', *Sessional Papers*, 1847–48, Vol. LVIII, 143–52 (p. 146). The Glasgow Chamber of Commerce complained in vain in correspondence with the Privy Council for Trade about the unfair competition represented by this grant of limited liability and about the Company's exclusive trading rights with Borneo. Ibid., pp. 146–51. In contrast, "Philopatris", *Commerce and Free Trade Promoted in the Indian Archipelago* (London: Smith, Elder, 1848), a pamphlet written to promote The Eastern Archipelago Company, claimed the need for a chartered company as a commercial vehicle in such circumstances (pp. 12–15, 22). Evidence suggests that The Eastern Archipelago Company was a product of a phenomenon described by Webster (p. 4): 'wealthy financiers [. . .] enjoyed great political influence through their entrenchment in the political establishment and high society. British imperial expansion was thus engineered by a financial class able to secure state protection for its overseas investments.'

[22] For House of Commons reports, see in particular the three papers (hereafter 'Eastern Archipelago Company correspondence') in *Sessional Papers*, 1852, Vol. XXXI, 623–832 which are listed in XXXI: iv under the heading 'Eastern Archipelago Company', full details of which are given in the Bibliography (for ease of reference in these notes, only page-numbers are given). Amongst other matters there were complaints that the Company operated a truck system for payment of part of employees' wages (642, 721–22, 733–35, 737–41, 814–17). Under such a system payment is made in kind or by tokens instead of normal money, and the tokens may only be exchanged at disadvantageous prices – for example, at an employer's shop. Depositions from mainly Malay labourers and other employees, some with their marks as signatures, appear on pp. 738–40 and 816–17, a surprising survival of a record of the ordinary employee in such a remote location at this time. Two maps featuring the Company's operations are also given (pp. 763–64, 786).

(though problematical for The Eastern Archipelago Company), as were a tramway or railway and government contracts;[23] The Eastern Archipelago Company had a 'No. 1' working; and both mines were some hundreds of yards from the shore and had insecure jetties.[24]

The liquidation of The Tropical Belt Coal Company resulted from the evaporation of its capital, another similarity with The Eastern Archipelago Company, whose liquidation was due to illusory representation of its capital. When the £50,000 capital – which under The Eastern Archipelago Company's charter was required to be paid up (i.e. in cash) within twelve months of incorporation – reached only £4,000, the difference of £46,000 which had been subscribed but not paid up had in effect evaporated. In the case of The Tropical Belt Coal Company, under-capitalization is suggested by its one-room offices, the 'rickety' (p. 5) wharf, and by the expression of surprise about 'some coal got out' (p. 24), all indicating an unsustainable enterprise.[25] Although The Eastern Archipelago Company's shortfall in its paid-up capital was the primary reason for its failure, the successful prosecution for fraud was based on the way in which the shortfall was accounted for.[26] The additional £46,000 appears, but fictitiously, in the balance-sheet on the basis that the directors had purchased on credit an unopened mine 'for the price of which they debited themselves with 46,000ℓ., and which they treated as capital subscribed to the same amount'. *The Times* further commented that 'a debt was never before treated as a payment, or a heavy liability as capital'.[27] The notice offering the assets of the Company for sale in *The Times* is fittingly in the property section of the newspaper,[28] the Company having been transformed from being an enlivening, ordering, but inanimate 'society of Persons' into an assortment of truly inanimate objects.[29]

A consistent thread of irony undermines Conrad's portrayal of imperial expansion in *Victory*. In addition to the narrator's ironic tone, the irony of '"black diamonds"', of putting a coal-mine 'into one's waistcoat pocket', and

[23] The tramway formed part of the assets in the liquidation of The Eastern Archipelago Company. *The Times*, 19 June 1858, p. 16.

[24] 'Eastern Archipelago Company correspondence': management (693–95, 808); Chinese labour (649, 694, 700, 707, 741); tramway or railway (729); government contract (644); No. 1 – The Eastern Archipelago Company had a 'No. 1' working at 'Beach Level' (728, 729); distance from shore (map, 763–64); jetty (808).

[25] In his diary (17 January 1873), Bayly records the 'rickety pier' when his ship coaled at Labuan.

[26] Hall, 3rd edn (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 534.

[27] 28 June 1852, p. 4.

[28] 19 June 1858, p. 16.

[29] Macleod, I: 23. The formal announcement of The Eastern Archipelago Company's winding-up was reported in *The Times* on 5 February 1862 (p. 7).

of evaporation preceding liquidation unsettle the qualities of the 'supreme commodity' (p. 3) and appear to trivialize the significance of the business undertaking: so much enterprise has come to nothing, and the invasion of the jungle can easily be read as a re-assertion of some higher, natural order. Such an interpretation would be reductive, however, for Samburan's commercial archaeology emphasizes as much the undoing of industriousness and activity as colonial industry. Undercutting the narrator's ironic tone, the signs of failure are serious, even mournful, constituting a memorial to endeavour and drawing the reader's eye to absorb its remains: 'a black jetty and a mound of some sort, quite inky on its unlighted side' (p. 5); mere letters remaining on a blackboard.[30] These signs seem to accord significance and to demand interpretation, partly because they mark the site of Heyst's apparently redemptive active life, and partly because of a crucial statement in the book, that 'there is a fascination in coal, the supreme commodity of the age in which we are camped like bewildered travellers in a garish unrestful hotel' (p. 3).[31] This statement, linking a substance and the human condition, emphasizes the alienation of the age in which, as typified by Schomberg's hotel, we are no longer at home but living in a domestic simulacrum, suggesting that the commodity has translated life from home's point of rest to the imminent departure associated with a hotel; life is now always about to become something which can be fulfilled, if at all, at a later date.

Commerce, Time, and Space

Commerce, portrayed initially through coal, also defines space and, to an extent, time in *Victory*. The novel is focused on the Dutch East Indies, particularly Schomberg's hotel in Surabaya, but the shared implication in colonial exploitation of the Archipelago by the Netherlands and Britain is reflected in the Company's having offices in London and Amsterdam. While the town may be 'a civilised, European-ruled town' (p. 122), the violence of conflicting colonial ambitions is evoked by the appearance in the novel of Portuguese Delli, the only part of the Archipelago from which

[30] F.H.H. Guillemard, the Cambridge geographer, conveyed something of the haunting significance of the lost enterprise in Labuan when he compared it following a visit there with Pompeii. 'Sulu Islands. N. Borneo. Labuan. Bruni. Sarawak. Malacca'. MS notebook. 8 June 1883.

[31] Tony Tanner considers Heyst's coal-mining an irony about 'the illusions of progress'. 'Joseph Conrad and the Last Gentleman', *Critical Quarterly*, 28/1 & 2 (Spring and Summer 1986), 109–42 (p. 119). However, The Tropical Belt Coal Company signifies more than that – for example, posing questions, as do other situations and events in the book, about the validity and benefits of activity and engagement with the world, and about the apparent merits and demerits of some of the various types of commercial activity which constitute the reality of 'work-a-day' (p. 60) life.

the Portuguese were not ejected by the Dutch. The narrator and his group further exemplify the unresolved issues of colonial space. Home is still in the European home country, but now alienated: 'Nobody amongst us had any interest in men who went home. They were all right; they did not count any more' (p. 23). The lack of homeliness abroad is indicated by the centrality of the hotel in the novel and by the fact that for the British merchant seamen – the 'we "out there"' (p. 3) – that hotel is in the Dutch East Indies in which they are an alien minority, abroad because their commercial work entails mobility and impermanence. In this foreign space, existence as camping in a hotel is particularly fitting: a hotel – in offering accommodation, dividing space, and charging for it daily – being a commercial arrangement for the provision of time and space. The repeated references to tables d'hôte also emphasizes displacement – tables kept by someone who, in being paid to be host, becomes the Other of normal social relations, with Schomberg even introducing female company to mimic that normality.

Part of the commercial definition of space in *Victory* derives from the novel's setting in, and references to, particular trading locations in the Archipelago, while the novel's geography simultaneously resists definition by confusing fictive and real locations, as in the case of Samburan,[32] an uncertainty extending to geography itself which (like ethnography) was not yet in a position to yield an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the region.[33] Conrad captures the evolving, heterogeneous commercial context from archaic to modern and its interaction with time and space. By the time of *Victory*'s setting in the 1890s, European commercial activity had been developing from trade in sea and jungle produce to more sophisticated

[32] For a summary of the scholarship concerning the location of Samburan, see Mara Kalnins, 'Explanatory Notes', in *Victory*, pp. 318–19. An island which may have contributed to Conrad's consideration of the title, and which does not appear to have been noted, is Victory Island, now Pulau Pengibu, which lies between Singapore and north-west Borneo some 160 miles east of Singapore and close to the route travelled by Conrad in the *Vidar* from Singapore. Findlay (p. 221) has an entry for the island, recording that, similar to Samburan, it is 'densely wooded, and rises to a hill in the centre'. The island is also recorded by C.J. Temminck in his *Coup d'oeil général sur les Possessions Néerlandaises dans l'Inde Archipélagique* [A General Survey of the Dutch Possessions in the Indian Archipelago], 3 vols (Leide: A. Arnz, 1846–49), II: 430–31, a book considered by Zdzisław Najder as having been a source for *Lord Jim*, as recorded by David W. Tutein, comp., *Joseph Conrad's Reading: An Annotated Bibliography* (West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 1990), p. 97. Brooke describes sailing by the island in his journals. Mundy, I: 13 (1 August 1839).

[33] Terry Collits in *Postcolonial Conrad: Paradoxes of Empire* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), p. 165 refers to the 'endless uncharted seas' of *Victory*'s 'fictional geography'. However, the commercial traffic of the novel suggests otherwise, as does the fact that even obscure Samburan is 'the "Round Island" of the charts' (p. 5). There are fourteen islands with the name of 'Round Island' in Findlay, of which one (p. 216) is even in a broadly likely area for Conrad's setting. For a discussion of mapping and exploration in the Archipelago in relation to Conrad, see Hampson, '"A Passion for Maps"'.

operations,[34] and, perhaps appropriately, Morrison, unlike Lingard formerly, is unsuccessful in exploiting the poorly understood geography, even though 'most of the places he traded with were unknown not only to geography but also to the traders' special lore which is transmitted by word of mouth' (p. 11). Morrison is fêted (and appeased) by the villages with which he trades, this hospitality recalling an even earlier trading culture which supported peaceful social interaction and in which contact between different clans was made safe by prestation rituals surrounding the exchange of gifts.[35] Morrison is described as 'owner and master of the *Capricorn*' (p. 10), and in Conrad's manuscript of the novel as a 'seaman-trader',[36] someone who can voyage and trade freely but, at this point of commercial evolution, with no access to capital except through sympathizers such as Heyst. Davidson merely commands his Chinese owner's boat, following a pre-determined route and reflecting Chinese dominance of much Archipelago trade. For the seamen it is not that steam simply supersedes sail, it is that the seamen-traders 'could not afford to buy steamers' (p. 24), thus marking the transition from the independence of the sole trader to companies, or to Chinese traders, with readier access to capital. The Tropical Belt Coal Company – and the larger south-east Asian plantations – represent a third stage, its international finance, imported coolie labour and ownership of land, whether appropriated or purchased, indicating an early 'commoditization of land, labour and capital' which

[34] 'Prior to the concerted economic intervention of Europeans [. . .] indigenous, unprocessed and luxury [jungle] products' predominated, but humbler products such as sago, rattans, and gutta-percha were also important. 'The intervention of capitalists was at the level of trading, through mercantile companies, rather than production networks'. Mark C. Cleary, 'Indigenous Trade and European Economic Intervention in North-West Borneo c. 1860–1930', *Modern Asian Studies*, 30/2 (May 1996), 301–24 (p. 303).

[35] See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, trans. W.D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 40, and P.J. Hamilton Grierson, *The Silent Trade: A Contribution to the Early History of Human Intercourse* (Edinburgh: William Green, 1903), p. 69. Lindblad records silent trade as reportedly in operation in the nineteenth century in Borneo. *Between Dayak and Dutch*, p. 7. As A. Hingston Quiggin observes, 'Silent trade [. . .] is obviously the most convenient method for peoples of different cultural levels, mutually hostile or mutually unintelligible.' *A Survey of Primitive Money: The Beginning of Currency* (London: Methuen, 1949; corr. repr. 1963), p. 12. In his journals for 1 August 1841 Brooke describes trade in Borneo which echoes the hospitality shown to Morrison: when 'a trader from the coast, whether Malay or Dyak, [. . .] ascends the river' his goods are sent away from him perhaps 'four or five days' journey in the interior [. . .] without the slightest article being pilfered'. The trader incurs no expense, and feeds 'on the fat of the land for a month or six weeks' while the goods he wants are being gathered ('beeswax, camphor, or birds' nests'). Quoted in Mundy, I: 263–64. The trader is both taken in and kept apart (in Malay the word for trader is, significantly, 'stranger'). N.B. Dennys, *A Descriptive Dictionary of British Malaya* (London: London and China Telegraph, 1894), p. 414.

[36] *MS*, p. 446. Frederick R. Karl, '*Victory*: Its Origin and Development', *Conradiana*, 15/1 (1983), 23–51 (p. 36).

characterized the movement from regional economy to world commodity markets.[37] Individuals' agency, like their mobility, predictably reduce in the progression from Morrison to Davidson and to The Tropical Belt Coal Company; Heyst merely receives his appointment through the post. These varying but co-existent stages of trade, alongside 'civilized' Surabaya and Delli's corrupt officials, indicate Conrad's perceptiveness of the colonial situation as described by Nicholas Thomas: 'colonialism was not a monolithic metropolitan enterprise that had some kind of uniform "impact" in colonized places'.[38]

Commerce depends upon movement, the satisfying of demand in one place with supply from another; commercial motion is focused on arriving at a transaction's point of conclusion. Heyst, who begins his life in the Archipelago in perpetual motion, becomes conspicuous only when he comes to rest and makes contact, despite his belief that 'the world [is] not worth touching' (p. 176). The Chinaman's unexpected enquiries about Heyst point to his alertness to irregular movement which might impact on his trading interests, Heyst already having been involved in operations with a potentially revolutionary effect on local business – 'the end of the individual trader, smothered under a great invasion of steamers' (p. 24). Although commerce is seen in *Victory* in a variety of sites of exploitation, both colonized and independent – Schomberg's hotels having been, for example, in Bangkok, 'somewhere else' (p. 20), and now in Surabaya – commerce alone appears to provide connection and movement, just as the prospectus map for The Tropical Belt Coal Company implied many and distant connections with an obscure island. Davidson's steamer calls at Surabaya on its regular round trip, its progress imposing points of reference and circular repetition, standing for both the ceaseless commercial imperative and the commercialization of time. The Chinese owner may say to Davidson 'You do what you like' (p. 30), but the ten miles' detour near Samburan is the smallest of divergences from the route which will always ultimately be required. Whereas for Morrison time is subject to his own wishes and to wind and tide, steam requires more regular trade to pay for the coal which, though a cost compared with wind, has profitably reduced journey times. As steam encroached and changed the Archipelago's trade,

[37] Cleary, p. 314. Van Helsdingen and Hoogenberk (p. 231) record how 'In 1872 a Tariff Law was passed ending all preferential tariffs in the Indies for the mother country. Since then the Government's policy has aimed at directing private investments, whether Dutch or foreign, to the Indies. The results of this policy have been remarkable. An almost uninterrupted flow of investments, chiefly Dutch, but also foreign, poured into the Indies between 1870 and 1930.'

[38] *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 205.

the term '"Country Service" [fell] into desuetude',[39] perhaps reflecting these redrawn commercial patterns which were at odds with the spirit of independent traders, the world of late capitalism instead regarding all places simply as markets of workaday trade.

Mapping, Visibility, and Ownership

Trade was often said to follow the flag,[40] with mapping an inevitable part of the colonial enterprise, but the reality was often reversed, with commerce taking the lead, as in Morrison's trading with places 'unknown [. . .] to geography' (p. 11). Exploration narratives recorded what was for the European the visible and audible in the foreign culture. For example, the sub-title of John Crawfurd's *History of the Indian Archipelago* confidently declares that it contains *An Account of the Manners, Arts, Languages, Religions, Institutions, and Commerce of its Inhabitants*,[41] and such works are paralleled by surveying, symptomatic of the colonial enterprise for which it is a means of appropriation. The systematic hydrography and cartography of the colonial powers, enabling the orderly appropriation of space, privilege feature over essence – topography over both geography and ethnography – as in the case of 'the "Round Island" of the charts' (p. 5), the name conveying only shape, the minimum of visual recognition, the mapping which precedes appropriation imposing pattern in the absence of knowledge of the object recorded, thereby appropriating for itself meaning and history. The interior often remains unexaminable, geographical interiority the cartographic Other, reflecting the colonial division of space into the known and unknown. Protected by the coastal skin, the interior is visited only by an occasional trader such as Morrison, who has been able to create his own geography.

The merchant seamen, describing themselves as 'we "out there"' (p. 3), locate themselves in a geographical Other;[42] in the appropriated countries in

[39] W.H. Coates, *The Old 'Country Trade' of the East Indies* (London: Imray, Laurie, Norie and Wilson, 1911), p. vii.

[40] Holt S. Hallett was advocating the building of a railway line from Burmah to China via Siam, since although he acknowledged that 'Trade follows the flag!', he realized that 'Trade follows the cheapest route!', with traders not necessarily favouring their own flag but, in this case, the French if that brought lower costs. 'France and England in Eastern Asia', *The Asiatic Quarterly Review,* April 1888, 336–61 (pp. 361, 336).

[41] 3 vols (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1820; repr. London: Frank Cass, 1967). Other examples include: William Marsden, *The History of Sumatra* (London: [n.pub.], 1783); Low, *Sarawak; Its Inhabitants and Productions*; and Raffles, *The History of Java.*

[42] The apparent existence in *Victory* of a British community in Surabaya, with perceptions seemingly those of men more established and local than a community simply of merchant seamen temporarily there, is puzzling since there were few British nationals in the Dutch East Indies. However, such a

which they find themselves, departure is always implied and home is always elsewhere. Attempts to translate home overseas appear perverse: in Semarang in Java 'the old European portion of the town is almost the exact reproduction of a Dutch town, without the slightest accommodation to the exigencies of the climate'.[43] European settlements invade space, The Tropical Belt Coal Company with its mine and clearing by the shore denoting landscape merely possessed and made Other. Insofar as the blackboard sign suggests that the island *is* The Tropical Belt Coal Company, it refers to the trend for the commercialization of space by restyling land as commercial attribute, of 'commercial companies endowed with territorial authority' such as the North Borneo Company.[44]

As an extension of appropriation through mapping, the commercialization of space requires the registration of land-holding so that investment can be safeguarded, and ownership protected, in line with European principles. These principles were supported by the established belief that, as Crawfurd put it, 'Innumerable islands of the vast Archipelago are still unappropriated'; 'it need hardly be insisted, that [settlement] implies a right of private property in the soil'.[45] The nature of the title to the land occupied by The Tropical Belt Coal Company is not specified – as the Alfuros have fled to the other side of the island, it is possession, not ownership, which is apparent; Heyst revealingly asserts his 'remain[ing] in possession here', like any colonial appropriator (p. 27). The island is divided between the Alfuros and the Company on the basis of the Company taking what land it requires; the Alfuros form a barrier between the two interests, which they guard with spears. The island, both during and after the time of The Tropical Belt Coal Company, is a colonized territory, an originally corporate land-holding, the Alfuros' remaining land requiring no recognition, existing only as space yet unappropriated. Once the Company's activities have ceased, the land reverts to Heyst by – ironically for a European – a type of squatter's right; his dominance as '"Number One"' (p. 184) – a mere cipher, like 'T.B.C.Co.' (p. 5) – continues not because of his post but because of his money and his revolver, symbols of colonial power.

community existed, and gave the clock-tower inscribed, in English: 'Clock presented to the town of Sourabaya by the British Community on the Occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee 1897'. British firms there included Fraser Eaton & Co., and a few Englishmen were prominent in other aspects of the town's commercial life. Von Faber, pp. 70 (including a photograph of the clock and its presentation), 151, 166, 173–74.

[43] 'Samarang', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th edn (1875–89).

[44] Alleyne Ireland, *The Far Eastern Tropics: Studies in the Administration of Tropical Dependencies* (Westminster, London: Archibald Constable, 1905), p. 39. Other such companies were to include the Imperial British East Africa Company and the British South Africa Chartered Company. Ibid.

[45] Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, III: 263, 269.

Heyst, who says of his father that he 'dominated me without difficulty' (p. 196), dominates Samburan. Wang stays on only because he has few prospects elsewhere; he provides services to Heyst in return for permission to stay and occupy a building which is not in Heyst's gift, the presence of Wang and Heyst continuing the appropriation of Alfuro land.[46]

Irregularities in land-holding were a concern of colonial government, and the pre-printed format for the annual *Blue Book* return for Labuan significantly includes a page on property ownership with a question about squatters' rights. This format and the returns represented colonization, their discourse organized according to the priorities of the colonizer and recording their colonial operations. Squatters' rights required monitoring so that, ironically, the land already appropriated by or ceded to Britain should not be similarly appropriated by others.[47] These rights can be seen in formation in the case of Wang, who occupies a Company bungalow and who fences ground for his garden, the potentially long-term nature of the appropriation evident from his return to the bungalow with his Alfuro wife.[48] Wang embodies the survival of Chinese over colonial immigration in south-east Asia, built upon individuals' engagement with the land in agriculture and other enterprises and on marriage with the other races of the region.[49]

In a powerful parallel to these ambivalent representations of ownership and possession, the members of Zangiacomo's Ladies' Orchestra in *Victory* are little more than economic captives, their low pay and required mingling with the male concert audiences allowing neither respect nor escape. Like Lena, they may all have come to this work as economic refugees. There is an ironic cross-cultural reference here to the bonded labour and debt slavery practised

[46] Wang's living in the bungalow is curiously similar to the scene at the abandoned Labuan coal-mines: 'surrounded by a pretty garden and orchards, stood a charming bungalow, formerly the residence of the manager. It was tenanted by a solitary native, the only inhabitant of the place.' Guillemard, *The Cruise of the Marchesa*, II: 119.

[47] 'Small pieces of Land have been cleared in various parts of the Island by Chinese and others and planted chiefly with vegetables' (p. 186). 'Remarks on Squatting', Great Britain. Colonial Office. *Blue Book* for Labuan, 1856. National Archives, Kew. CO 146/9. Crown copyright. W.E. Maxwell, Commissioner of Lands, Straits Settlements, set out his goal for a land register accompanied by detailed surveying. *Straits Settlements. Present and Future Land Systems* (Rangoon: Government Press, 1883). In 'Land Tenure in Malaya and the Squatters', *Malaya*, 1/3 (March 1952), N.R. Jarrett discusses the system of land tenure established in Malaya (pp. 39–41, 56), and 'large areas [. . .] planted up by unauthorised Chinese' (p. 56).

[48] Chinese industriousness, especially on the land, was frequently remarked on, together with their readiness to appropriate land. For example: 'All over the island [Penang], too, Chinese are scattered as planters, squatters, and tillers of the soil'. Thomson, p. 13.

[49] Collits observes that *Victory* 'marks the end' of the colonial novel genre and that 'the intriguing glimpses we are given into that other world which Wang represents anticipate new opportunities for English-language fiction in a postcolonial world'. *Postcolonial Conrad*, p. 173.

by many peoples of the Archipelago, such labour being common in mining, a practice Conrad is likely to have been aware of from his reading of Sir Edward Belcher.[50] The band members are bound to Zangiacomo and their duties enforced; Madame Zangiacomo pinches Lena for not being prompt in talking to members of the audience, and when Lena escapes with Heyst, both Schomberg and Zangiacomo go after her as if after a slave, her status evident in Heyst's remark that he 'can always steal' her as he cannot 'buy [her] out' (p. 81): Lena has become part of the commodity of music, having both use-value and exchange-value. The performance of the orchestra is a commercial transaction not about playing music, the quality being so poor, but about providing feminine objects as a commercial commodity, for company and for view; the performance is women performing, not music performed. Except for Heyst's appreciation in Lena's voice of a transcending music ('Your voice is enough' (p. 88), he says), sound is replaced by the audience's eyes gazing on the 'bare arms' (p. 68) of the players, whose near resemblance to 'middle-aged brides' (p. 72) implies the audience's sexual interest.[51]

In a world partly 'unknown [. . .] to geography' (p. 11), the recurrence of vanishing in *Victory* is unsurprising. Presence is what can be seen, evidenced by its phenomenological manifestation; insight can barely operate when in geographical, figurative, and cultural terms the map has many blank spaces

[50] 'The Chinese [. . .] belong to their captain or headman, and it is difficult to obtain their labour excepting through him, with whom they are under bond.' *Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Samarang*, 2 vols (London: Reeve, Benham, and Reeve, 1848), I: 35. Belcher's book is listed by Tutein (p. 8) as having been read by Conrad. Webster (p. 172) describes how under the 'tribute system' Chinese labourers became partners, owning a share of mining profits, but that lack of profit together with indebtedness from purchases of stores and opium on credit from the Chinese entrepreneur, often led to them becoming entrapped.

[51] Sherry convincingly argues that the ladies' orchestra resident at the 'Tingel Tangel', part of a hotel in Singapore, was the source of Conrad's ladies' orchestra in *Victory*. *CEW*, pp. 243–45. The Tingel Tangel was 'a concert and dancing hall'. Walter Makepeace, Gilbert E. Brooke, and Roland St. J. Braddell, eds., *One Hundred Years of Singapore*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1921), II: 183, quoted in *CEW*, p. 244. Sherry's search, however, was based on 'the fact that this [Schomberg's] hotel had an all-ladies' orchestra, uncommon then and now in the East, [which] made it a much more distinctive hotel'; he 'could find no evidence for such a hotel having existed in either Bangkok or Sourabaya' (p. 243). However, Conrad's ladies' orchestra is advertised as being on '"Zangiacomo's eastern tour"' (p. 38) and is clearly not a resident orchestra. The *Bangkok Times* (6 December 1890, p. 3), interestingly, advertises a similar attraction: 'The Austrian Ladies Band has arrived in Bangkok, and will give entertainments every night until further notice, at the Bangkok Hotel.' The sexual suggestiveness of Conrad's orchestra is also evident in this Austrian band's name, especially as only half its twelve members were women. I can find no other reference to this band in the *Bangkok Times*, 1887–92, but they had played in other cities and it is possible that they had been in existence when Conrad was in the East. Sherry does not think 'that Conrad had the Oriental Hotel [in Bangkok] or its concerts in mind when he was writing *Victory*' (p. 243), but the Oriental Hotel (in existence when Conrad was in Bangkok), like Schomberg's, had a separate building: 'a building in the Avenue opposite the hotel, is especially adapted to club meetings and associations', which Conrad could have seen. *The Siam Directory, for the Year 1889*, p. 126.

within the outline of what has been charted. Wang's habit of vanishing is due partly to his silent movement, but it is also a cultural disappearance, for falling within – to the narrator's eyes – a cultural blank space, his absence is equated irrationally with ceasing to exist: 'the Chinaman had gone in his peculiar manner, which suggested vanishing out of existence rather than out of sight' (p. 188). Similarly, when Pedro places on the fire 'a ready-filled kettle handed to him by Wang impassively, at arm's length, as if across a chasm' (p. 244), it is culturally-mediated distance which separates them.[52] Again, Heyst, after travelling 'in some of the Tesmans' trading schooners, [. . .] then vanished' (p. 8), having transferred cultures from European commercial voyages (with the narratives of their bookkeeping accounts and ships' logs) to New Guinea, which is beyond the geography which the West, represented by the narrator's British community, can narrate: the 'we "out there"' (p. 3) can only express surprise about 'a man who will go to New Guinea for fun' (p. 8). Heyst is, however, on board an Arab ship, part of an older commercial history, and part of another commercial and cultural discourse. Heyst's existence passes from European accounts to Arab accounts, and so is lost to the European narratorial community and to the reader. Heyst then passes to yet another commercial history, that of the indigenous traders, the 'Goram vagabonds' (p. 8). Lost to the narrator by immersion in a sea-going commercial context unknown to Europeans, Heyst returns as the subject of speculation from having been beyond European narratability; fittingly, he 'swam into view again' (p. 8) from these unnarratable enterprises of the sea.

Heyst's movements, although 'wandering' – he might turn up like 'the settling of a sparrow on one's window-sill at any given moment' (p. 16) – nevertheless have a relation to space. This relation is 'a circle with a radius of eight hundred miles drawn round a point in North Borneo [. . .] a magic circle' (p. 7), but this arbitrary point, arrested in two-dimensional cartography, is an unidentified location not linked to any settlement or activity, its precision without context expressing the way in which the representation of geography has outrun significance.[53] The circle, enclosed, pointing neither inwards nor outwards, is a form of geometric perfection which reflects spatially the self-contained state that Heyst's enchantment is likely to induce, and is markedly different from the commercial definition of

[52] Tanner makes a related point, discussing Wang and Pedro in terms of evolution. 'Conrad and the Last Gentleman', p. 123.

[53] One may speculate that this point relates to Labuan, perhaps because Conrad had the mines there in mind.

space in the map accompanying The Tropical Belt Coal Company's prospectus, in which lines – implying direction and willed connectedness – radiate from Samburan.[54] On this map 'Samburan was represented as the central spot of the Eastern Hemisphere with its name engraved in enormous capitals. Heavy lines radiated from it in all directions through the tropics, figuring a mysterious and effective star' (p. 23). While this may partly be read ironically, as, for example, critical of colonialism's commerce as over-reaching and deluding, it also allows the possibility of admiration – the merchant seamen 'greatly admired' (p. 23) it – for the commercial imagination and for its bold redrawing of geography on occasion as aspiration, part of commerce's pervasive impact through its imaginings and its manifestations in time and space, its imagination a form of supreme activity related to the 'supreme commodity' (p. 3) of coal which commerce has created.[55]

Although Heyst remarks of his life since leaving London, 'I was simply moving on, while the others, perhaps, were going somewhere' (pp. 211–12), his involvement with the coal-mine engages him in a different kind of travelling – that of a commercial traveller. Now intent on commercial success, his drifting changes to purposeful activity, 'jumping in and out of local mail-packets' (p. 25), his movements following the linearity of those routes which commerce has defined, in contrast to his previous pattern of movement. 'Very concrete, very visible now' (p. 25), he ironically performs in his movement the 'great stride forward' of 'the era of steam' (p. 21).[56] In a further contrast to these types of mobility, characterized first by drifting and then by linearity, Heyst finally becomes immobile. Whereas before his involvement with the coal-mine Heyst seemed 'like a feather floating lightly in the work-a-day atmosphere which was the breath of our nostrils' (p. 60), he now settles on Samburan where, aptly for his newly immobilized state, 'there was seldom enough wind to blow a feather along' (p. 4), the cessation of his movement due more, it seems, to the failure of the mine than to choice.[57] Samburan ironically echoes the hotel of the novel's beginning, with Heyst camping in

[54] Douglas Kerr discusses the significance of such circles in 'Conrad's Magic Circles', *Essays in Criticism*, 53/4 (October 2003), 345–65.

[55] GoGwilt (p. 67), in a helpful analysis, refers to the 'failure of this map to represent a corresponding power'.

[56] In his rapid movement Heyst enacts an effect of the steam age observed by Edward Pulsford: 'Today, now that steam and electricity are [man's] servants, he appears to think that he must emulate them and always be in a hurry'. *Commerce and the Empire* (London: Cassell, 1903), p. 6.

[57] A meaning of the Malay 'Sâmburan' reflects this ejection and spent activity: 'Sâmburan. The object shot or emitted'. John Crawfurd, *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Malay Language*, 2 vols (London: Smith, Elder, 1852), II: 167. Also appropriately, given the glowing 'indolent volcano' that is Heyst's 'nearest neighbour' (p. 4), the word referred, and still does, to the eruption of a volcano.

the abandoned buildings like one of the 'bewildered travellers' (p. 3), recalling similar buildings in *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*.

Tanner has pointed out the similarity and difference between Heyst and Jones in relation to drifting and 'their habitual mode of motion'.[58] They are similar too because both have left society, Jones having been ejected 'from his proper social sphere because he had refused to conform to certain usual conventions' (p. 317), and Heyst removing himself because of his beliefs. Both, as the narrator says of Heyst, have decided 'to drift without ever catching on to anything' (p. 92). This sharply inverts normality, as shown by Wang, whose catching extends to 'catchee one piecee wife' (p. 179). While Wang gardens and is economically active, Heyst, who was previously supported only by letters of credit derived from his inheritance, by contrast subsists, rentier-like, on the Company's abandoned provisioning (another inheritance), an example of 'unproductive consumption' reminiscent of the inactive and bankrupt Tropical Belt Coal Company.[59]

In a world deprived of familiar contexts and meanings, and consequently depending on the interpretation of signs, Heyst 'started on his travels – to "look on and never make a sound"' (p. 176). Heyst withholds signs too, not being a 'signalling sort of man' (p. 53). Heyst's enchantment by the islands is apposite, for enchantment is a state which involves no interaction; in this respect he is the mirror of his father, who considered interaction with people pointless and harmful, and whose idealism is expressed by Heyst, appropriately for the commercial theme in the book and for a capitalist age, in terms of sound monetary values which have been undermined:

> I suppose he began like other people; took fine words for good, ringing coin and noble ideals for valuable banknotes. [. . .] Later he discovered – how am I to explain it to you? Suppose the world were a factory and all mankind workmen in it. Well, he discovered that the wages were not good enough. That they were paid in counterfeit money. (pp. 195–96)

Commercial Discourse

Underlying the commercialization of time and space is the literature of business practice which seeks to order commerce in Britain's

[58] Tanner, 'Joseph Conrad and the Last Gentleman', pp. 118–19.

[59] Bithell, p. 75. The abandoned buildings, trolley, and the tramway's 'rusty rails' (p. 183) also suggest the 'wastefulness of empire' noted by David Trotter, which is epitomized for Marlow by the machinery at the inland station in 'Heart of Darkness'. *Cooking with Mud: The Idea of Mess in Nineteenth-Century Art and Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 166, n. 10.

empire.[60] Where time is money, and space the site of commerce's limitless opportunity, the setting out of sound business practice aims to provide a modus operandi for the commercial application of economics, that is, the production and distribution of wealth by buying and selling, and to protect business by procedures which balance laudable ambition on the one hand and greed on the other. Such literature is the foundational discourse of commercial practice, promoting probity as a basis for the development of enduring and successful businesses and envisaging a high moral standing for an activity which, according to Macleod, had a place in relation to jurisprudence: 'as Jurisprudence is the Science which treats exclusively about Rights, and not about Things: so Commerce or Economics is the Science which treats exclusively about the Exchanges of Rights, and not about the Exchanges of Things'.[61] Macleod argued that 'there are, in truth, laws of nature in the industrial world, as well as in the moral and physical world; and a systematic attempt to violate these terminates in disaster', citing free trade as 'the great law of nature in the industrial world'.[62]

For Davidson in *Victory*, such commercial standards are reflected in his extreme integrity, while Tesmans' being a 'tip-top house' (p. 7) suggests its irreproachability, a quality crucial in its business as a bankers' agent, paying out against Heyst's letters of credit. The banks and trading-houses which facilitate the operations of commerce do so under rules of law, custom, and practice applied to a potentially disorderly context, these rules setting out rights and obligations so that trade can be pursued anywhere on a sound basis. In attempting to minimize risk, works of business practice are the commercial parallels to manuals of navigation upon which the safety of seagoing was dependent and which, for the harlequin in 'Heart of Darkness', provide a talismanic certainty in an unfamiliar world. For Heyst, when his involvement with the mine has ended, commercial language becomes 'commercial gibberish' (p. 203), partly perhaps because of the disparity

[60] Examples of such works broadly contemporary with the setting of *Victory* in the 1890s include: Bithell; Macleod; J.W. Gilbart, *The History, Principles, and Practice of Banking*, new edn rev. A.S. Michie, 2 vols (London: George Bell, 1882); and J. Platt's exhortatory *Business* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1876). Macleod's and Gilbart's were learned works, albeit not concerned with a learned profession, and in print for a considerable number of years. Macleod was a barrister. Gilbart was self-educated, rose to eminence in banking, assisted in the formation of the City of London Literary and Scientific Institution, lectured widely on various subjects, and was a Fellow of the Royal Society. Platt wishes commerce to emulate naval standards reminiscent of Conrad, advising that 'the employer should be as captain of a ship' (p. 43) and, indicating the effect experienced by Heyst in his work with the mine, that 'work is the medicine of the soul' (p. 45).

[61] Macleod, I: 25.

[62] Ibid., II: 391.

between The Tropical Belt Coal Company's claims and the reality, but also because Heyst's new, more reflective activities on the island – indicated by a book in his pocket – mean that he is subject to a different language: the language of philosophical reflection present in his father's library. The carefully defined language of commerce was never gibberish, unless abused; it is Heyst's own failure which suggests to him the failure of that language and its transformation into a debased commercialese.

A commercial product, coal, having been given as both motor and image of the human condition, Heyst's arrival in the Archipelago from London is fittingly described in terms of 'business offices', 'letters of introduction', and 'modest letters of credit' (p. 6). Heyst exhibits for the narrator 'the incongruity of a hermit having agents' (p. 34), this no doubt referring to Heyst's letters of credit, issued in London but to be paid out against by Tesmans'. The network of such textual production crosses seas and legal jurisdictions, like the lines on the Company's prospectus map, indicative of the power to realize 'the great stride forward' (p. 6), albeit conceived far away in Europe. Detached wanderer Heyst may be, but he is not out of touch, his drifting existence ironically facilitated by this commercial network. It is given to the manager of the 'Oriental Banking Corporation in Malacca', the man of commerce, to remember and relate Heyst's enchantment 'with these islands' (p. 6).[63] This banker 'had been so impressed by the tone, fervour, rapture, what you will, or perhaps by the incongruity of it' (p. 7), and, familiarized by his training and work in assessing people, reads the signs of Heyst's imagination.[64] Similarly, when Mr Tesman asks him 'And you are

[63] The mutual involvement of Britain and the Netherlands in colonial exploitation is also evident in the fact that certain of the two countries' banks had offices in the other's south-east Asian possessions. The *Handboek voor Cultuur- en Handelsondernemingen in Nederlandsch-Indië* [Handbook of Agricultural and Commercial Enterprises in the Dutch East Indies], I (1888–89) (Amsterdam: J.H. de Bussy), p. 414, records three British banks with a total of eighteen agencies and correspondents in the Dutch East Indies. See also Arnold Wright, ed., *Twentieth Century Impressions of Netherlands India. Its History, People, Commerce, Industries, and Resources* (London: Lloyd's Greater London Publishing, 1909), p. 131. The Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China was the first British exchange bank with its own establishment in the Dutch East Indies, opened in 1863. Compton Mackenzie, *Realms of Silver: One Hundred Years of Banking in the East: Standard Chartered Bank Ltd* (London: Routledge, 1954; repr. 1979), p. 119. The Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China advertised its services and its two branches in the Dutch East Indies in, for example, *De Locomotief* (5 January 1888, p. 9), a leading Dutch East Indies newspaper published in Semarang.

[64] 'Bankers [. . .] always have a regard to the moral character of the party with whom they deal; they inquire whether he be honest or tricky, industrious or idle, prudent or speculative, thrifty or prodigal'. Gilbart, I: 222. The nature and standing of bank managers at that time is indicated by the fact that Sir Frank Swettenham(?), stopping off in Hong Kong, stayed with the Manager of the Chartered Mercantile Bank at the Manager's invitation and dined at the Bank. Sir Frank Swettenham

interested in —?' (p. 7) – an enquiry which in the discourse of commerce is an enquiry about his business interests – and Heyst replies 'Hard facts! Facts alone' (p. 7), Tesman discerns the naïvety of Heyst's interests, even though such an attachment to facts might be considered a sensible, if limited (because lacking commercial imagination), view for a businessman. Such examples of perceptiveness resist reductive readings of commerce and its practitioners as portrayed by Conrad. Ironically, a business interest is what ultimately for Heyst provides activity, definition, and apparently a degree of self-realization as manager of the coal-mine; his interest in facts is sterile, the assertiveness of his reply to Mr Tesman revealing a wariness of the complexities of life that lie beyond mere facts.

Implied by the physical remains of the Company's Samburan establishment is the commercial discourse associated with the Company, a discourse which is untraceable in the novel except for the prospectus, this formal record presenting the Company very differently from the novel's whimsical opening. The published prospectus had an influential circulation of 'a hundred and fifty thousand, certainly' (p. 188), its readers including the narrator and his fellow merchant seamen. There would have been annual accounts to record its progress, and later an account given by the Company's liquidators. In the case of the historical Eastern Archipelago Company these documents, as we have seen, are traceable through House of Commons reports (e.g. not only some financial accounts but also its charter and information about its subsequent problems) and newspaper reports (concerning its annual reports and liquidation), recovering a business history of which little for many companies survives.[65] In the absence of the documents comprising this account for The Tropical Belt Coal Company, we engage with it as a commercial enterprise through signs and the senses.[66] The Company's capital having evaporated, the Company has become merely images, 'the ghosts of things that have been' (p. 241), the blackboard sign, 'like an inscription stuck

was Resident of Selangor, later Resident of Perak, and later Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Straits Settlements. [F.A. Swettenham(?)], *Journal of a Trip from Singapore to Japan and Back*, p. 44.

[65] Balance-sheets for the years 1849–51 are given in 'Eastern Archipelago Correspondence', 675–77. This area is an example of the 'neglected realms of economic story-telling – for example, accounting ledgers' for which Mark Osteen and Martha Woodmansee write of a need for 'more innovative examinations'. 'Taking Account of the New Economic Criticism: An Historical Introduction', in *The New Economic Criticism: Studies at the Intersection of Literature and Economics*, ed. Martha Woodmansee and Mark Osteen (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 3–50 (p. 40).

[66] Conrad refers in the 'Author's Note' (p. xv) to 'this world of senses', within which the Company seems included.

above a grave' (p. 42), sharing that status with the other ephemeral images – moon, shadows, cigar, and volcano – seen by the narrator and which are for contemplation only, enterprise and its active life having been abandoned. Inhabiting the abandoned buildings, Heyst and Lena participate in the novel's preoccupation with colonial disappearance, inhabiting the waste of a colonial culture which offers no lasting future, a culture of things ended or about to end.

Collits' claim that in *Victory* Conrad 'underestimates the power of economic forces in sustaining European imperialism' is problematical, given the commercial context and networks evident in the novel.[67] The extensiveness and variety of commercial activity suggests the economic grip of Britain and the Netherlands, with infrastructure, labour, and international capital directed energetically to the production of wealth, and determining the societies portrayed, including that of the British merchant seamen. It is no surprise that in this highly developed colony there is a 'Dutch government doctor in Amboyna' (p. 22), at whose bungalow Heyst stays. The choice of Amboyna also recalls, in the long-remembered Massacre of Amboyna in 1629 in which British factors were tortured and killed by the Dutch, the long-running and intense economic rivalry between the British and Dutch which underlay their imperial projects. A map of Surabaya (Figures 5 and 6) contemporary with the action of *Victory* brings out the economic implications of its description as 'a civilized, European-ruled town' (p. 122), revealing military and merchant navy establishments, fortifications, a man-made harbour, factories, and a railway.[68] Just to the north of the town can be seen the Prins Hendrik citadel (Figure 5), a fortress, and in the citadel's centre, plainly marked on the map, the flagpole ('*Vlaggestok*'), its representation and the size of the lettering justified not just by its significance as a geographical feature, but seemingly by its symbolism of colonial power.

While exchange may appear to have broken down, as Hampson suggests,[69] trade elsewhere continues steadily in Davidson's round and in the activities of the 'we "out there"' (p. 3), albeit threatened by steam, in what readers of *Victory* in the colonial period, more familiar with colonial geography and trade, would more readily have recognized as the deeply embedded economic forces of colonialism as recorded by this map of

[67] *Postcolonial Conrad*, p. 173.
[68] Schomberg's concern at Jones's illegal gambling demonstrates the town's similarly developed civil procedures.
[69] *Cross-Cultural Encounters*, p. 158.

Fig. 5. Map of central and southern Surabaya, Java. ['Residentie Soerabaja', Java]. ([Government of Dutch East Indies, Topographische Inrichtung]: [Batavia, Dutch East Indies], [1886–(?)]). [1:20,000], section of sheet M.VIII (adjoining Figure 6). Original coloured. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

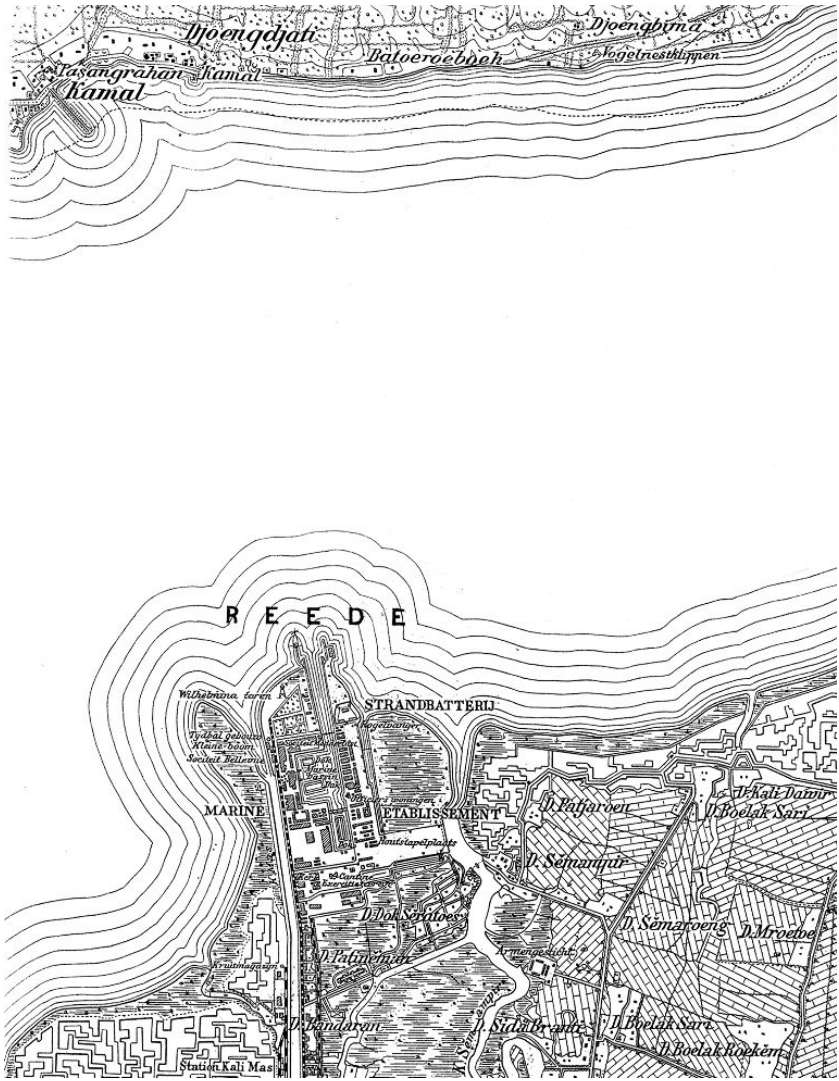


Fig. 6. Map of northern Surabaya, Java. ['Residentie Soerabaja', Java]. ([Government of Dutch East Indies, Topographische Inrichtung]: [Batavia, Dutch East Indies], [1886–(?)]). [1:20,000], section of sheet M.VII (adjoining Figure 5).
Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

Surabaya. In The Tropical Belt Coal Company Conrad looked ahead to what was already emerging: the more developed use of capital and the pan-European corporate structure which came to be the pattern of European colonial investment.[70] Davidson's words at the close of the novel to the 'high official' are surely ironic (from his title 'Excellency', doubtless the colonial Resident, and no doubt Dutch, given that the primary links in the story are to the Dutch East Indies). His words remind us of the violence and cruel imbalance of power associated with colonial hegemony and concomitant with commercial exploitation: 'there are more dead in this affair – more white people, I mean – than have been killed in many of the battles of the last Achin war' (p. 408).

The 'we "out there"' 'used to laugh among ourselves – but not inimically' (p. 3) at Heyst's inertia, the narrative with their genial good humour suggesting understanding and reflecting a commercial community at balance – interested, sympathetic, and conversing. Drawn from the seafaring business community, they share something of the Director of Companies, the Accountant, and the Lawyer in 'Youth' and 'Heart of Darkness', an audience designated simply by their commercial occupations. Their admiration of the prospectus' map, despite its threat to them, is a mark of their recognition of the proposal's boldness and of their realism in the face of inexorable changes to trade. They would not merit Collits' description of those who are 'passive and parasitic on a social order established by those heroic adventurers who preceded them', a statement which might exculpate the imperialistic tendencies of some adventurers not least because of their heroism, while not recognizing that adventurers rarely produce equitable social order; this is created rather by those who reside and, amongst others, those whose trading is more settled, that trading requiring its own courage and boldness.[71]

Wallace expressed faith in 'the genius of Commerce at the work of Civilization'.[72] In *Victory* Conrad portrays commerce problematically, but as inseparable from and contributing to the moral and social order of 'work-a-day' (p. 60) life, and, as such, comprising more than interest or

[70] Collits relates Conrad's 'perception of imperialism' – reflecting 'the shift from individual capitalist or banking finance (for example, Holroyd in *Nostromo*)' – to Hilferding's analysis, in Collits' words, of '"finance capital" or "joint stock" as the mechanism which enabled the final and most massive development of imperialism, from 1870 on'. 'Imperialism, Marxism, Conrad: A Political Reading of *Victory*', *Textual Practice*, 3/3 (Winter 1989), 303–22 (pp. 311; 322, n. 38).

[71] Collits, *Postcolonial Conrad*, p. 168

[72] I: 216.

utility. It is what connects Morrison's trading natives, Davidson and his Chinese owner, the narrator's community, Wang, and the colonial powers. To trade is to take risks; Heyst is not so much 'ultra-civilized'[73] as someone whose civilization is limited by his desire to seek a human version of limited liability.[74] Jones is only one aspect of 'the world itself, come to pay you a visit' (p. 379); the Resident, who discusses the recent events on Samburan with Davidson, also comes 'on his tour' (p. 408), not drifting but regular, derived, like Davidson, from that connected social order, and representing within the flawed colonial enterprise the enduring and ambivalent force of commerce.

[73] Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan, *Joseph Conrad and the Modern Temper* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 179.

[74] In this Heyst can also be seen as reflecting the high levels of suspicion and fear which characterized pre-trading society and which may account for his excessive politeness. For a discussion of this stage of society see, e.g. Grierson (pp. 68, 86).

Conclusion

> It certainly does appear strange, but it is no less true, that no nation can colonise like the English [. . .]. England fills the world and civilises the world with her redundant population, and all her colonies flourish, and remind you of a swarm of bees which have just left the old hive and are busy in providing for themselves. The Dutch colonies are not what you can call thriving; they have not the bustle, the enterprise, and activity which our colonies possess. The Dutch have never conciliated the natives, and obtained their goodwill; they have invariably resorted to violence, and to a disregard of justice.[1]

Sherry wrote that Conrad's experience of Berau made it 'inevitable [. . .] that trading concerns should enter into his stories about the area', but does not enlarge on the implications of such concerns.[2] Not inevitable, however, was Conrad's imaginative writing through, and interrogation of, commerce in ways which made it an important element in his depiction of complex relations in a region undergoing the effects of globalization, colonization, and capitalism. Stoler has written that 'few students of the colonial would claim that colonialism was more an economic venture than a cultural one or that studies of the colonial can be bracketed from the making of the modern, of Europe and its nation-making projects'.[3] Part of Conrad's achievement in the Asian fiction is to portray the inextricability of the economic and the cultural, in a context in which even space and time are commercialized, and in which not only political, but also social and moral relations are informed by, and often expressed through, commercial considerations. Berthoud has rightly argued that an awareness of the historical

[1] Marryat, p. 95 here proudly asserts Britain's supposedly wide-ranging colonizing superiority, at the same time endorsing generally the colonial concept.
[2] *CEW*, p. 126.
[3] *Carnal Knowledge*, p. 10.

reality can enrich the reading of fiction.[4] This book has argued, however, that in the commercial context historical reality performs a complex and subtle role in Conrad's Asian texts which requires interpretation, and sometimes recovery, in order to bring fully to light a commercial presence which often lies partly outside, or deeply within, the text rather than being foregrounded, and where it can sometimes only be fully observed through its phenomenological manifestations.

À Campo draws attention to Sherry's basis for writing *Conrad's Eastern World*; as Sherry puts it, 'certainly what has been discovered would hardly account for Conrad's acknowledging such a profound debt to the Eastern seas. He must have found there a much wider experience than has yet been suspected.'[5] À Campo rightly points to the neglect of Dutch archival sources in Conrad research, an area in which much further scope remains;[6] an allied and broader issue in Conrad studies has been the limited investigation of Dutch East Indies culture and background as it informs the Asian fiction. This book has attempted, as part of its broader regional recovery, some recovery of that culture and background insofar as they are commercially connected, and locates the Asian fiction primarily in its Dutch East Indies context, as opposed to one oriented largely on the British Straits Settlements, a standpoint which has often preoccupied literary critics. As a result, it is evident that Conrad's knowledge of the Dutch East Indies, and his deployment of that knowledge in his fiction, were more extensive than has generally been recognized. This knowledge was no doubt gained not only from his reading – an area that has received considerable critical attention – but also from his time in the region, in which the Dutch colony was well known from trade, so that he would have picked up much from conversation with those with whom he came into contact.[7] Further investigation of the region's wider culture, including the use of Dutch published and archival sources, could form, when added to the findings of this book, the basis for a study of the Dutch East Indies and the wider region in relation to Conrad, without being viewed through the lens of commerce;

[4] 'Appendix', in *Almayer's Folly*, ed. Berthoud, pp. 241–44 (p. 244).

[5] p. 2, quoted in à Campo, 'A Profound Debt', p. 87.

[6] 'A Profound Debt', p. 87, n. 10. Dutch colonialism in the East Indies produced very extensive archival records, which are largely held in the Nationaal Archief, The Hague, and in the Arsip Nasional (National Archive), Jakarta. In addition, there is a very extensive published record deriving from Dutch East Indies and Dutch homeland learned societies' and other periodicals, and from official publications.

[7] G.J. Resink's 'Josef Korzeniowski's voornaamste lectuur betreffende Indonesië' [Joseph Conrad's Main Reading about Indonesia], *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 117/2 (1961), 209–37 remains a valuable source of information.

such a study would recover the economic, political, and social contexts which are usually unavailable to readers, knowledge of which would provide the possibility of a fuller appreciation still of Conrad's achievement regarding realization of the region's, and colonial, relations.[8]

As was explained in the Introduction, this book has been restricted to the Asian fiction for reasons of length, and because this fiction is substantial and culturally cohesive. Other works of Conrad would lend themselves to investigation from a similar commercial viewpoint, in particular *Nostromo*, 'Heart of Darkness', 'A Smile of Fortune', and *Chance*. For example, 'A Smile of Fortune' offers the opportunity to examine the conflict between the twin roles of the sea-captain, both seafarer and common carrier, while revising the generally negative critical view of the businessman Alfred Jacobus.[9] *Chance* includes a portrait of transgressive, fraudulent business, contrasting with the higher-minded ambitions of Gould in *Nostromo* which also result in failures, albeit of a different nature. The present book also suggests literary-critical approaches for considering the activities of commerce and commercial practice in literature more generally.

Jeffrey Meyers observes that the 'divine right of colonists was sustained by the idea of progress, European cultural superiority and ethnocentric nationalism, the most characteristic ideas of Victorian England, and was popularized principally by Kipling and by his mentor Carlyle'.[10] The list of nations implicated in Conrad's writing in a colonial light include Belgium (in 'Heart of Darkness' and 'An Outpost of Progress'), USA (in *Nostromo*), and France (in 'Heart of Darkness'), and, as this study has amplified, Britain, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain. As critics have noted, a wider range of culpability is often also indicated. For instance, in 'Heart of Darkness' Kurtz's parentage and European creation suggest a more extensive European liability. The present study has made frequent reference to irony, in particular irony undercutting the representation of such colonialism as well as imperialism. Colonial culpability is often not only communicated, but also intensified in Conrad by the use of irony, such as by his use of the term 'pilgrims' in 'Heart of Darkness'. The concept of progress through colonialism, popular in Conrad's time, is also undermined

[8] Reinier Salverda refers to the Dutch East Indies as 'the missing empire' insofar as 'it is curiously absent from most contemporary debate in postcolonial studies internationally'. It can also be described as 'missing' to an extent from much Conrad research. 'The Case of the Missing Empire, or the Continuing Relevance of Multatuli's novel *Max Havelaar* (1860)', *European Review*, 13/1 (February 2005), 127–38 (p. 127).

[9] See Francis, '"In the Way of Business"'.

[10] *Fiction and the Colonial Experience* (Ipswich: Boydell, 1973), p. 12.

by such irony, often in conjunction with the disillusioning of those involved in the colonial enterprise. The comment in 'An Outpost of Progress' on 'the witchcraft of white men' (p. 91), for example, reverses with sharp irony a practice supposedly reserved to indigenous peoples. Ultimately, 'the conquest of the earth which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much' (*HoD*, p. 47). It is an undertaking about which Marlow refers to 'the dustbin of progress', in which are 'all the sweepings and, figuratively speaking, all the dead cats of civilisation' (*HoD*, p. 96), a description that is of a piece with all that is abandoned in the story: people, machinery, drain-pipes, morality, and a fitting place for the memory of Kurtz.

It is in the Asian fiction, a large body, as we have seen, of culturally cohesive writing, that Conrad most thoroughly, consistently and widely critiques the colonial enterprise. Its European representatives – both Dutch and British – are taken largely from those at the margins of that enterprise, in whose situations and in whose hands it can compellingly be seen for what it is, alongside the colonized whose voices we hear as authentic. The ironic description in 'Karain' of 'the strong life of white men, which rolls on irresistible and hard on the edge of outer darkness' (p. 28) is a finely expressed, disturbing judgement. The Asian fiction offers numerous representations of the nobility of Malay peoples which work to undercut European behaviour. Hassim and Immada in *The Rescue*, for example, contrast starkly with the self-seeking Travers. Many Malay individuals are portrayed protecting their rights, and they are seen to contrast by irony of situation or behaviour with the evidence of European opportunism, rapacity, or self-deception in characters ranging from Travers to Lingard to Almayer. The contrast is accentuated by Conrad's giving Malay culture and people a voice and presence, and highlighting their bravery, sense of honour, and qualities of leadership – qualities which hold them up to ironic contrast with, for example, the indecorously and discourteously lounging Dutch naval officers in *Almayer's Folly* (although Conrad also critiques Malay and other cultures in his Asian fiction). Extensive use of verbal irony further reinforces the contrast, such as Joanna's brother-in-law describing Willems as 'a savage' (*OI*, p. 28), or when Lingard asks Babalatchi 'What have I done?' (*OI*, p. 226).

The concentration on Belgian and Dutch colonization in Conrad might suggest that Britain's own colonizing is spared qualification, if not criticism, perhaps because of Conrad's estimation of the British approach. Donovan has provided a lucid examination of Conrad's attitudes to British imperialism, concluding that he was both for and against it: for it, because of

Conrad's belief that 'liberty . . . can only be found under the English flag all over the world'; against it, 'because his writing offers a critique of imperialism itself'.[11] As we have seen, Britain is clearly swept up in the imperial definition at the start of *The Rescue*. Nina in *Almayer's Folly* longs for a higher, less deceitful order than she has experienced in Singapore, a city that should epitomize British colonial and imperial standards. Her treatment there vigorously resists as hypocrisy any thorough-going endorsement of such a civilization, both at the institutional level – as in her school, which is meant to stand for the transmission of sound cultural values – and in the domestic and private setting, as seen in Mrs Vinck's racial spite. Again, The Tropical Belt Coal Company in *Victory* is apparently a substantially British company, albeit also in Amsterdam. Lingard's desire to dominate and to make money, and his eventual departure, can be read as a template alongside his Dutch equivalent, Almayer. And Hollis' description of the spirit of Britain, as we have seen in Chapter 3, is also highly problematic, not least in the irony of its faltering endorsement. Whatever the manifestation of the grand colonizing design might be, whether in imagined drawing-rooms and offices of Batavia and Buitenzorg, or in the finery and mannered behaviour of the Governor and his family in Singapore, the text and its devices, in particular irony, arrest any too ready acceptance of colonialism's intentions or apparent realities by the reader.

David Trotter has written, referring to G.O. Trevelyan, of the 'individual regenerations' intended for 'the people who administered and engineered and policed [empire], often under harsh and demoralizing conditions', these regenerations being meant to validate 'the system which had made them necessary in the first place; they demonstrated its moral utility. An empire founded on individual regenerations was clearly preferable to one founded on greed'.[12] To that list of occupations we might add, in the light of the present book, that of supposedly civilizing trade. No regenerations, however, can be contemplated in the Asian fiction. Trotter goes on to write that Kipling's 'ironic detachment from the attitudes of the white community does not bring us any closer to the black community'.[13] Conrad's use of irony in his Asian

[11] Donovan, '"Figures, facts, and theories"', p. 32, who quotes from Conrad, letter to Aniela Zagórska, 25 December 1899, *Letters*, II: 229–30 (p. 230). In the same letter Conrad writes of the Boers: 'C'est un peuple essentiellement despotique [they are essentially a despotic race], like by the way all the Dutch.' Ibid., p. 230.

[12] 'Introduction' to Rudyard Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills*, ed. H.R. Woudhuysen (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), pp. 7–25 (p. 17). Kipling's book also achieves part of its insight into imperialism by means of irony.

[13] Ibid., p. 25.

fiction in connection with the white community, while also suggesting a detachment from it, puts it in a fresh perspective and, importantly, reinforces the validity of his non-European characters' words, whose voice is heard as well as that of the Europeans. That most of the European characters do not have to do with the administration of empire but with its commerce – arguably its true aim – enables them both to be of empire but also just apart, among its supposed beneficiaries but not its political and official proponents, a means by which Conrad secures purchase on the issues of empire from a perspective which derives from the reality of its day-to-day manifestations and operations.

Commerce emerges in the present book as a parallel history by which other histories – political and social – may partly be read. The breadth of Conrad's portrayal, with the interconnectedness of the economic and the cultural, embraces manifold manifestations of commerce which resist the reductive readings commerce frequently attracts, allowing a diverse commercial vision which embraces a range of morality, from, on the one hand, meaningful and beneficial activity to, on the other, enterprises perniciously committed to gain. Hyde has written that 'behind all the statistics of relative growth and decline in particular Far Eastern trades stand men who were prepared to risk their capital and work with untiring enthusiasm in the pursuit of an idea. [. . .] it would be wrong to suggest that [profit] was their sole motive'.[14] Although this cannot apply to all engaged in such trade, nor mask the colonial enterprise, it invites a wider interpretation of motive, character, and behaviour in connection with commerce, one that is humane, reflective, and enquiring. In tracing these complexities from the centres of commercial power in Singapore and Surabaya to the no less affected outposts of Sambir and Patusan, Conrad gives this 'business age' an interpretation which responds ambivalently and yet often generously in relation to the forces which, as Elson described them, 'transformed Southeast Asia with an astonishing thoroughness, rapidity and finality'.[15]

When Conrad's uncle Thaddeus gave him the account book he had kept since 1869, he seems to have considered it as telling the story of 'all the experiences of your parents and their relations with the family'.[16] This commercial discourse, of a ledger telling a narrative, can be regarded as a forerunner of a kind of the many narratives which in the Asian fiction derive from the operations of trade and whose record is the account book. Account books themselves are always powerfully signifying presences in the Asian

[14] p. 197.
[15] Easson, p. 69. Elson, 'International Commerce', p. 131.
[16] Quoted in Allen, p. 265.

fiction, and most are empty or misused, declaring symbolically that there can be no such ordered or apparently conclusive history of these ephemeral endeavours. These books, together with other signs, indicate an essentially derelict core to colonial trade. Buildings and people are gone to waste and abandoned, their trade and relationships unsustainable, while Arabs and Chinese, supported by ironically often superior acumen and tenacity and by alternative systems of values, flourish. The main locations of the Asian fiction – Sambir, Patusan, Samburan – are tellingly not in established colonial centres, but in backwaters where colonial endeavour can be seen all the more starkly, and often as literally and figuratively bankrupt, as it attempts its intrusions. Even Singapore, advanced in its colonial development, displays deep vulnerabilities.

The renowned Indonesian writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1925–2006) remarked of Multatuli's *Max Havelaar* that it was the book 'that killed colonialism'.[17] While the Dutch East Indies was to continue in existence until the middle of the twentieth century, *Max Havelaar*, in publicizing Dutch and native rulers' commercial oppression of the indigenous people, undermined that colonial enterprise so that its ambitions would forever remain suspect. In Conrad's writing about, and through, commerce in his Asian fiction, the wrongs of colonialism make themselves felt, but at the same time another aspect of his imaginative and literary skill is revealed by which he illuminates the lived, subjective experience of commerce and through it represents the changes and relations of an era and region. In this, Conrad can be said to have created a poetics of commerce.

[17] Interview with the *International Herald Tribune*, 18 April 1999, quoted in Salverda, p. 133.

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