International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

Narrativizing the "other": Joseph Conrad's Art of Story-Telling in Almayer's Folly

Saila Ahmed[1], Md Sakhawat Hossain[2]

[1]Associate Professor (English), Department of Humanities, Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology
[2]Professor, Department of English, University of Rajshahi

Abstract:
This paper proposes to focus on Joseph Conrad's narrative style in his first novel *Almayer's Folly*, which has been so far neglected by most mainstream critics. Conrad's narratives employ different narrative techniques in different texts that complicate the attempt to generalize about his narrative method or style. Still some distinctive features are common in his narratives. Critics so far agree to his modernist style that links the narrators with the characters as well to explore the deep psychology of both. When most of them find Conrad's narrators as unreliable and reflexive especially in his *Lord Jim, Heart of Darkness* and some other Western fictions, this essay investigates the author's style in his debut novel, and drawing on Edward Said's idea of "secular criticism", finds a "secular style" of telling the story, by which Conrad achieves a kind of narrative detachment from the text and lends his narrators a transnational identity. By hiding the authorial identity and narrator's location and racial or national perspectives, Conrad gains the confidence of his readers across the globe. That is why in the Malay trilogy, he makes his narrators nationless, and hence makes them appear as limited omniscient narrators who satirize the dominant cultural, racial, religious and political ideologies, especially the Western Imperialist hegemony. This is what makes Conrad both a writer of the East and the West. This paper critically evaluates this secular style of fiction writing in *Almayer's Folly*.]

Keywords: Narrative Techniques, Secular Style, Ironic Method, Transnational Identity, Justifying Narratives, Self-Consciousness

Every writer meditates first what to write and then how to write it, and thus tries to find a distinct style although it may have some similarities with that of the other writers, and whatever that style is, the purpose may be more or less the same, that is, to make readers recreate the story in their minds and engage them in the text's rhetoric either to convince them to believe in or accept something or to question it and thus invite them in a kind of deep rational thinking and research in order to bring about a sort of enlightenment. Conrad's fiction draws readers in the story and makes them recreate it in their minds. He gives his readers quite a shock at the beginning by thwarting their expectations through giving a different treatment to the established themes and methods of storytelling. In the Preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus* Conrad states: "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you *see*. That – and no more, and it is everything" (x). This is almost unachievable in real life. He wants his readers to partake in his telling the story, and get involved in the entire narrating process. How does a reader feel after reading

Conrad's *Almayer's Folly* or *Heart of Darkness*? What does he or she expect in the beginning and what do they get at the end? Do they feel enlightened or more confused about the nature of people and politics? Whatever, something obviously happens, and it is what makes the reader keep on thinking about, assessing and reassessing his or her preconceived ideas about human behaviour, racism, civilization and savagery, colonialism and resistance to colonialism, and cultural confrontation. After reading the story, the reader is not the same reader anymore, and this effect on the reader is achieved by the writer not merely by the events of the story but by the very narrative style the writer employs. This is what I deem as Conrad's "secular style" based on Edward Said's idea of "secular criticism" in *The World, the Text and the Critic*. Said is influenced by Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis,* especially by his idea that "our philological home is the earth: it can no longer be the nation" (Said, *The World* 7). He adds:

> His [Auerbach's] essay makes clear … that his earthly home is European culture. But then, as if remembering the period of his extra-European exile in the Orient [Turkey], he adds: 'The most priceless and indispensable part of a philologist's heritage is still his own nation's culture and heritage. Only when he is first separated from this heritage, however, and then transcends it does it become truly effective.' (*The World* 7)

Said appreciates Auerbach's trans-national position while writing his book *Mimesis* in Turkey when he was living an exilic life as a Jew, and so he did not have access to all the theories and books of the Western tradition, as he did not have any worthy library for that purpose. Said argues that Auerbach claimed this objective trans-national character because he was away from his home; so the state of being homeless gave him a detachment from his nationality which helped him achieve the truthful representation of reality and an objective judgement on literary works. So, to dissociate oneself from one's own nationality while writing about the world, one has to forget one's location and nationality and has to become the world's citizen – one "to whom the entire world is as a foreign land" (Said, *The World* 7).

However, Siad's secular criticism refers to the critic's responsibility not to "defend the classics, the virtues of a liberal education, and the precious pleasures of literature", but also not "to be silent about the historical and social world in which all these things take place" (*The World*, 2). The traditional critical practice and the narratives that endorse the existing culture, according to him, are divorced from the reality that has a deep connection with power. David Herman states: "stories are accounts of what happened to particular people2 – and of what it was like for them to experience what happened – in particular circumstances and with specific consequences. Narrative, in other words, is a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change" (2) Precariously, humanists and intellectuals accept the state sponsored ideology and crime that victimize a marginalized group or a nation, and thus tacitly become complicit in those crimes. But the intellectuals who do not go with the coercive and murderous ideology and actions of the state are rusticated or made outcast by the mainstream media that align with power. Said's illuminating words are worth quoting:

> It is not practicing criticism either to validate the status quo or to join up with a priestly caste of acolytes and dogmatic metaphysicians. Each essay in this book affirms the connection between texts and the existential actualities of human life, politics, societies, and events. The realities of power and authority-as well as the resistances offered by men, women, and social movements to institutions, authorities, and orthodoxies-are the realities that make texts possible, that deliver them to their readers, that solicit the attention of critics. I propose that these realities are what should be taken account of by criticism and the critical consciousness. (*The World*, 5)

Thus, by questioning the very secular mode of writing, Said wants a self-critical consciousness that would include the hidden situations or unsurfaced realities both temporal and situational, both historical and political, both filiated and affiliated, both subversive and supporting elements of power that appropriates the prevalent culture by manufacturing consent of the elite, educated and the artist class. My theoretical alignment in this paper is premised on the preceding discussion on Said, but I use the term "secular style" as a vision and method applied by Conrad to achieve a kind of narrative distance from his narrators and characters; it also lends his narrators a kind of transnational identity by which the author legitimizes his act of writing on and about the self and the other. He explored this method because he was also an exiled man in England from Britain like that of Eric Auerbach and Edward Said. Actually, he applies the metaphor of exile which makes one free from any kind of unbound loyalty to any nation or ideology.

By hiding the authorial identity, the narrator's location and racial or national perspectives, Conrad thus gains the confidence of his readers across the globe. That is why in the Malay trilogy he makes his narrators appear nonreligious and nationless; he presents them as limited omniscient narrators who consciously try to become objective narrators without upholding the dominant cultural, racial, religious and political ideologies; rather they speak truth to power and question the dominant worldview. This is what makes Conrad both a writer of the East and the West. By fighting the pressure of culture acquired, to borrow Said's words, "filiatively" and by the intellectual tradition learnt "affiliatively", Conrad uses the techniques of defamiliarization and ironic detachment to entrap the reader into revisiting his or her perceptions and conceptions about the phenomena of the world. Robert Hampson states the same in his *Joseph Conrad: Betrayal and Identity*, "Conrad's … novels challenge our preconceptions about his work and force us to change our method of reading" (9).

However, through this ironic detachment Conrad makes his narrative viewpoints elusive in order not to give his readers any definite clues to understand both the narrators' and the characters' views, and by the defamiliarization technique he gives a shock to his intended and learned readers by giving an unexpected treatment to some accepted themes and notions of fiction, say for, adventure fiction or imperial/colonial fiction. As while most imperial literature in the late nineteenth century establishes a discourse of adventure, knowledge, romance, progress and enlightenment upholding the paradigm of Robinson Crusoe, Conrad turns it upside down by the skeptic Decoud's suicide in *Nostromo*. When Robinson Crusoe after shipwrecked survived alone in an uninhabited island and later transforms that land into his fiefdom, Decoud commits suicide only after a few days' loneliness. Moreover, he avoids the glorification of the Western adventurers in the colonies and presents the failed patriarchs and failed colonialists rather than the successful ones in his Malay fiction. This demonstrates his secular vision but he employs not an explicit view; rather his is an elusive ironic method of narrating events in which he keeps the reader's suspense at its height. This deferral strategy of withholding the true facts from the reader only to be revealed for a later period is, however, close to Ian Watt's "delayed decoding" technique and John Peters' "impressionistic technique".

Conrad's very foreignness (an outsider in Britain), the anxiety of his acculturation and self-identity makes him follow a style which would give him an identity of an objective writer whose national identity would be less important than his global identity as a human being. Thus, he would be able to portray the non-European society and culture both from the perspectives of the European and the native. His secular style is self-critical and moral, and it challenges the traditional nature of story-telling which is more often subjective and politically motivated. However, he achieves it by employing, to borrow

Spivak's phrase, a "contrapuntal reading" method that helps his narrators maintain a kind of distance from the narrative and present an incident or a fact from multiple angles. However, Conrad has not used a particular method in all of his work; taken as a whole his oeuvre demonstrates multiple narrative techniques. In his first novel *Almayer's Folly* Conrad uses irony and suspense to create a dramatic appeal in order to draw the reader inside the text. This way he becomes successful in blurring the distinction between fact and fiction through suspenseful dramatization of events, referential language and suspension in the narrative strategy of a limited omniscient narrator who has been able to denationalize, depoliticize, de-Christianize and de-rationalize himself in order to achieve a kind of objectivity and realism that would make him worthy as a universal or global narrator. Conrad's narrator thus hides his religious identity and assumes a secular garb by which he gains the legitimacy of writing about both the non-European and European people and culture. Think of the very first line of his debut novel:

> "Kaspar! Makan!" The well-known shrill voice startled Almayer from his dream of splendid future into the unpleasant realities of the present hour. An unpleasant voice too. He had heard it for many years, and with every year he liked it less. No matter; there would be an end to all this soon.

The use of the Malay words by the narrator is undoubtedly very dramatic and may have an exotic appeal at the very beginning of the novel to attract both the Western and Eastern reader. These words (meaning Hey man, come to eat) and the mention of the name "Almayer" in the next line immediately take readers into a dialogue between a Western man and an Eastern woman. Thus, in the very beginning he connects East and West, Master and Servant making his fiction "extraterritorial" or "transnational" or "global". As his immediate readers are the English or the Western people, he starts the novel with the protagonist, Almayer, a Dutchman in the Malay region. He draws the reader's attention and interest by placing Almayer in a colonial setting where he is now brought back from his both nostalgic and tragic reverie to the present unpleasant realities, but which, Almayer hopes, would end soon. The reader cannot wait to know what the reality is and how the Western man is going to overcome this and if he would be successful. So, the suspense is at its height in the very beginning of the narrative. This technique of arresting the reader's attention is, to use Robert Hampson's phrase, a kind of "Reader trap" (*Conrad and the Idea of Empire* 498). Hampson wants to mean by "reader trap" Conrad's ironic impressionistic technique that takes the reader to a different realm beyond their expectations and the readers are left with no conclusive judgement and hence they are bound to draw their own conclusion. When Hampson uses the phrase to indicate the writer's technique of making his readers feel a kind of intellectual awakening and revise their understanding of the text at the end of reading like that of delayed decoding, I use this as a technique of arousal to trap a reader into reading the text with the desire to know what is going to happen next.

The reader's desire to know who calls or invites Almayer to dinner by the word "Kasper" is held in suspense till the tenth page of the novel. This is withholding the desired information to keep the reader in suspense in the midst of which he tells the past and present situation, and also the future plan of his protagonist, a lonely man who has a Malay uncivilized wife and a beautiful half-caste daughter. Conrad very deftly combines personal life, family life and social life in the background of international politics of imperialism. Conrad's complex style of writing is thus evident in the very first lines of his very first novel. Apart from achieving this transnational identity for his omniscient narrator, he also confuses the points of view. Allan H. Simmons thinks that Conrad manipulates the point of view, what he also terms

as “focalization”. But the archipelago, which is a combination of some small islands, gives an air of movement of the protagonist and other characters from one island to another in search of a hidden treasure. This archipelago setting emblems the modernist themes of fragmentation and broken images and hence serves as a metaphor for the quest of an identity and hidden treasure simultaneously. This in fact lends Conrad’s narrative as Julie Gay argues “a polyfocalisation that seems to be key in his search for a new form of fiction” (64). Gay thinks that Conrad by the use of the multiple island settings develops a style of writing that yields multiple perspectives of an episode, and this is akin to contrapuntal viewpoint leading to his distinct secular style.

In the first passage the first Maly word is used by a character whose identity is known after nine pages and then the next line is spoken by the narrator about Almayer, but the next verbless sentence is about the unknown voice which we later come to know as Mrs. Almayer’s. Simons argues: “The next two sentences then repeat this shift in point of view from the narrator’s statement to Almayer’s desire, structurally re-emphasising the inward movement from narrator to character” (41). This juxtaposition of the voice of the narrator and the character is, according to Simmons, a free indirect style that “affords simultaneous versions of the same situation. Tacitly this strategy alerts the implied reader to the importance of perspectives” (42).

This shift of focus makes reading and understanding difficult though Conrad foreshadows the ending of the play by laying bare the mind of Almayer in the first few paragraphs. Almayer would be caught in his wrong dream through an error of judgement for which he will have a tragic and lonely death. His failure to succeed in life in terms of gaining wealth and returning to Europe with her daughter Nina is hinted. First, he had to marry a native woman only for money but he did not get that money as Lingard who promised him the money would never return from his continental tour. Next, he places his trust on Dain, a Balinese prince, who, as Almayer believes, knows the secret passage to a river that would take them to a hidden treasure, which upon their discovery would be shared by them. And the final dream that he wants to settle in Amsterdam with her daughter Nina whom he wants to marry off with a European does not come true. Not only that, Nina does not possess the racial superiority like her father, and thus she likes the native culture more than the European culture. She inherits more of her mother than of her father, and thus Nina elopes with the native prince Dain, and this elopement is the crushing blow to Almayer leading him to opium addiction and slow death. Conrad’s omniscient narrator only reports without passing any judgements and tells the history of both Almayer and Lingard. He wants to make readers see and feel what the narrator and characters see and feel, and thus make readers intimate and make them involved in the narrative as Najder argues that “Conrad always wants to engage, involve, activate his readers – he does not repeat his techniques, he uses different strategies to achieve this end” (38). Thus, his first novel is linear in their narrative form but this linearity is complicated by the flashback technique. As the first phrase at the start gives the temporal setting of the present when Almayer is called by his wife for dinner, the narrative immediately shifts into Almayer’s mind that shows his present thoughts, past history and future plans.

Thus, Conrad uses both the narrative techniques of analepsis and prolepsis. Through the analeptic narrative, as Hampson suggests, Conrad narrates the story of a European who reminiscences how he twenty years ago came to this island of Macassar: “a young and slim Almayer, clad all in white and modest-looking, landing from the Dutch mail-boat on the dusty jetty of Macassar, coming to woo fortune in the godowns of old Hudig” (AF 10). The interesting side of this narrative is that not only does the character go into his past, but also the narrator digs out the past informing the reader who this

Almayer was. He was the son of a Dutch couple; his father was working in an imperial outpost at Java where they had their bungalow and some comfort as well. Still, Almayer was sent to the trader Hudig for a job. As was the belief in the success of life in the colonial trading posts or in the colonies during the nineteenth and twentieth century engrained in the minds of the young Europeans, so was Almayer. The narrator says: Almayer had left his home with a light heart and a lighter pocket, speaking English well, and strong in arithmetic; ready to conquer the world, never doubting that he would" (11). This way the first few chapters present the background of the age of imperialism and the reasons behind the European people's stay in the Malay Archipelago.

Conrad's omniscient narrator narrates the story with a sequence that weaves present, past and future in a logical connection. This is how humans live: living in the present sometimes look back at the past and look forward to the future; and everybody wants to live a comfortable life based on wealth and fortune. Almayer's life is the same. However, the trust in material prosperity was an imperial idea, and it was so popular in the late Victorian to the early modern period in Europe, that many colonial and adventure writers, like that of Kipling and Stevenson, appropriated it – the Crusoe like successful man. But Conrad treads the other path. He, rather than presenting successful and glorious imperial protagonists, portrays failed colonialists who dreamt the same dreams of the colonial success but could not materialize them, not because of fate but because of their own follies and egoistical nature. Conrad undermines the dominant and glorious view of imperialism more blatantly in *Heart of Darkness* but in his debut novel he does the same though with less harshness. It has been possible for him because of his secular style that shows the native perspectives as well, and he attained this perspective from his experience of being a colonized citizen under the Russian empire. Conrad was born in 1857 in that part of Poland which is now the present Ukraine. During that time Poland was under the Russian empire, and Conrad's father was a Polish patriot who was secretly working with the Polish revolutionaries, and was eventually arrested and sent into exile in a Russian cold region where young Conrad and his mother also went. Upon returning home from several years his mother died because of her cold in the cold Russian region. And when he was eleven, his father also died. These losses were a terrible blow to his childhood and so he left Poland for France to avoid being a Russian citizen. He later formally denationalized himself from Russian citizenship from a British court. Thus, Conrad had the first-hand living experience of imperialism, and thus he knows the native perspective which the imperialists try to hide under some rhetoric. Therefore, Conrad was a colonized as well as a colonial citizen in Europe. He was an immigrant in Britain, and so he developed a life-long aversion against any sort of imperialism, though he had to work under the British imperial administration. Thus, he was conscious about his fluid identity, and it has impacted his style as well as Ms. P. Amalorpava Mary states:

> The imaginative reconstruction of the past through the act of narration involves the construction of identities: above all the identity of the narrator, but also that of the characters described in the narrative. Nor does the identity of the listeners remain unaffected. By negotiating their identities with their audience, Conrad's narrators often appeal to as well as challenge the purported values of the community to which they all belong. (3)

Therefore, Conrad's own life shapes his political vision and narrative style. He seems to provide native perspectives though he may not represent the Malay life fully as he did not have much first-hand experience of living with them. Only about- a -year-stay in Malaysia cannot educate him about the native psychology. Yet Conrad imaginatively displays the native view through the one-eyed diplomat of Borneo village in *Almayer's Folly*, Babalatchi, who while talking to captain Ford, states: "Ah, Tuan!'…

'the old times were best. Even I have sailed with Lanun men, and boarded in the night silent ships with white sails. That was before an English Rajah ruled in Kuching. Then we fought amongst ourselves and were happy. Now when we fight with you we can only die" (218)!. Though problematic it seems that the native accepts the superiority of the West, yet Conrad lays bare the cause of the Western triumph. Babalatchi predicts, "There will be fighting. There is a breath of war on the islands" (218). Thus, the Western Power controls that region because of the internecine conflicts and each of the warring factions wants to take the Western power to their side. This is how still today the Western intervention is sought by Third World countries where the lack of credible elections and justice in society create an aura of conflict and war. However, these native perspectives are often questioned by some critics, as Hans van Marle: "Are these really the views of the natives? Incidentally it may be stated that our author is weak in his Malay…. The power of the European has substituted a sullen peace for the open war of the past." (31-32). Richard Curle argues, "Conrad neither dehumanises nor Europeanises the Oriental mind" (121). Nina in *Almayer's Folly* is also given the native perspective. She prefers her native mother and a native lover to her European father and dreams of a white European husband. When the Dutch officer comes to arrest Dain and tells Nina that Dain killed two white men, Nina replies aggressively to the officer's amazement, "Two only! . . . There might have been more" (140). She shows her violent reactions to the Dutch officers, "I hate the sight of your white faces. I hate the sound of your gentle voices. That is the way you speak to women, dropping sweet words before any pretty face. I have heard your voices before. I hoped to live here without seeing any other white face but this [her father]" (140-141). Therefore, Conrad's depiction of the resistant characters - Mrs. Alamyer, Nina, Babalatchi, Dain Maroola, - give the postcolonial critics the perspective of postcolonial resistant narrative long before the beginning of formal Postcolonial Criticism. Even Mrs. Almayer shows the native perspective: "Let him [Dain] slay the white men that come to us to trade, with prayers on their lips and loaded guns in their hands. Ah … they are on every sea, and on every shore; and they are very many" (56)! She encourages her daughter and does not let her to be emotional about her father Almayer:

> Give up your old life! Forget that you ever looked at a white face; forget their words; forget their thoughts. They speak lies. And they think lies because they despise us that are better than they are, but not so strong. Forget their friendship and their contempt; forget their many gods. Girl, why do you want to remember the past when there is a warrior and a chief ready to give many lives – his own life – for one of your smiles? (150-151)

Mrs. Almayer's and Babalatchi's remembrance of their glorious past, the time of the pre-colonial Malaysia, is like the present-day Postcolonial writers' attempt to dig out the past history of their respective nations. Thus, despite their oppressed condition in the colonized society, the natives, to use Ngugi wa Thiong'o words, "maintain their defiance: liberty from theft" (3). Conrad's works not only project a world accommodating all these issues relevant to cultural and postcolonial studies, but also a critical lens through his contrapuntal viewpoints. Padmini Mongia commenting on Conrad's distinctness as a colonial writer different from Kipling and Stevenson rightly says, "Conrad has been everywhere before all of us who were schooled in English Literature, whether we come from the areas he wrote about or not" ("Between Men" 87).

Conrad's attempt of objective detachment from the narrator's side and a subjective involvement from the characters' side gives rise to his method of the omniscient narrator's dependence upon the subjective narrator limiting the omniscient narrator. This method creates a sort of ambivalence in the narrators which also intrigues the readers. Andrzej Busza states: "The cultural dislocation he [Conrad] had

undergone, on the one hand, developed in him a sharpened sense of critical detachment…" (412). But it has some connection with the setting of the story too. For if the settings had not been the East, an alien land and foreign to the English or European reader, Conrad might not have felt the possibility of readers' disbelief. That is why Conrad always tries to justify the motive of his writing and a space-time context or the background of the circumstances of the storytelling.

Edward Said holds the same view: "Conrad's narratives pay unusual attention to the motivation of the stories being told; this is evidence of a self-consciousness that felt it necessary to justify in some way the telling of a story" (*Conrad*, 171). His narrators are thus caught in a situation that demands the storytelling, and his listeners are often active characters or passive, but they are made to see "his narratives as the place in which the motivated, the occasional, the methodical and the rational are brought together with the aleatory, the unpredictable, the inexplicable" (173). Said discerns in Conrad the fear of failure in communication as he was a Pole, and English was his third language learnt from his real-life contact with the English people. Citing Walter Benjamin's idea "that the success of narrative art has traditionally been dependent upon a sense of community between speaker and listener, and on the desire to communicate something useful" (179), Said argues that Conrad uses a "circumspect method" to tell his stories. Michael Greaney also puts emphasis on Conrad's technique of creating situations when there would be a story-teller and a listener and therefore he holds that Conrad "displays a particular and sustained fascination with *gossip,* a "speech genre" to borrow Mikhail Bakhtin's useful term – that constantly threatens to pervert authentic storytelling. Conrad's … Marlow is deeply exercised by the problem of raising his narrative discourse above the level of mere gossip" (5). Most of Conrad's tales have multiple narrators in which the frame narrator introduces another or other narrators like that of *Heart of Darkness* and *Chance*. Therefore, like that of speech genre, his narrators tell stories for communication, though as Serajul Islam Choudhury states, "Communication is a difficult, sometimes a hopeless, problem in the Conradian world – a problem that adds very much to the fact of man's tragic isolation from others" (4). In *Almayer's Folly* too, there are character-narrators who report things side by side with the omniscient narrator. David Herman argues, "narrative can be viewed under several profiles simultaneously – as a form of mental representation, a type of textual or semiotic artifact, and a resource for communicative interaction…" (2).

Though an omniscient narrator tells the story in his first novel *Almayer's Folly*, the story starts in the middle of the narration keeping the reader in utmost suspense as to whose voice it is: "Kasper! Makan!" (1). When the reader after some time comes to know that it is Mrs. Almayer's voice, a Malay native wife of Almayer's, the colonial history and a hybrid multicultural setting appear before us. Thus, the very beginning of his first novel is not only dramatic but also very much premeditated rhetoric to combine two continents: Europe and Asia. Can any reader leave the novel for later time after reading the first few lines? The plot that starts with a couple of inter-racial marriage between a Dutch colonialist and a Malay uneducated orphaned woman cannot easily let the reader keep the novel aside. Conrad traps the reader in the very beginning in suspense and in an exotic world that seems to be familiar and at the same time mysterious. The protagonist Almayer, a European, is trapped in Sambir, a remote village on the coast of a Borneo River, and so is the reader. A musing over Almayer's past, his lost chances, present hopes and future plans in a colonized setting with a native "savage" wife, not a concubine, makes the narrative appealing. A native woman's voice, the sound of the splashing of a roar and then the mention of the Arab trader Abdullah and the native Hindu prince Dain make the start of the novel dramatically arresting, creating an aura of a global village much before the age of globalization consciously started.

Thus, this exposition part of the novel presents a transnational, not colonial, setting at first taking both Eastern and Western readers into confidence.

Conrad uses both the descriptive and narrative techniques. His description of the settlements, nature and the jungle in the Malay Archipelago demonstrates his power of observation; the setting and the jungle function like characters, and they reflect the moral failings, psychological dilemmas and the incomprehensibility of both nature and the motives of the characters. Moreover, his settings of the early Malay novels that dramatize conflicts within characters and between Eastern and European characters demonstrate his humanism. In his Author's Note to *Almayer's Folly* he shows his justification for writing about the far-off Eastern people: "For, their land – like ours – lies under the inscrutable eyes of the Most High. Their hearts – like ours – must endure the load of the gifts from Heaven: the cause of facts and the blessing of illusions, the bitterness of our wisdom and the deceptive consolation of our folly" (viii). Because of his exotic setting and non-Western characters, Conrad was always in doubt about the reception of his works, and as English was not his mother tongue, he always deemed language as an imperfect and artificial medium of communication; His ambivalent narrative mode that draws the reader into interpreting texts critically lies in his anxiety about the acceptability of his narratives to English readers. Though his intended readers were British people, he did not hesitate to challenge the dominant ideology of imperialism through the enactment of personal tragedy and ridiculing human follies. Surely, his criticism of the West and sympathy for the marginalized Malay people demand a non-essentialist secular style that takes into account the relation between contemporary realities and exploitative power dynamics.

Works Cited

1. Busza, Andrzej. "Conrad and Forster: Not Only a Matter of Style". *Conrad's European Context*. Brill, 2024.
2. Choudhury, Serajul Islam. *The Moral Imagination of Joseph Conrad*. 2nd Edition, 2007. University of Dacca, 1975.
3. Conrad, Joseph. *Almayer's Folly: A Story of an Eastern River*. Collected ed., J. M. Dent, 1961.
4. ---.. Author's Note. *Almayer's Folly*. Collected ed., J. M. Dent., 1961, pp. vii-viii.
5. ---. Preface. *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. Collected ed., J.M. Dent, 1957, pp. vii-xii.
6. Curle, Richard. *Joseph Conrad: A Study*. Doubleday, Page and Company, 1914.
7. Gay, Julie. "'Crumbling Islets': Joseph Conrad's Archipelagic Writing". The Routledge Companion to Joseph Conrad, edited by Debra Romanick Baldwin. Routledge, 2024. P. 59 – 68.
8. Hampson, Robert. *Joseph Conrad: Betrayal and Identity*. Macmillan, 1992.
9. ---. "Conrad and the Idea of Empire (1989)". *The Nineteenth Century Novel*, edited by Stephen Regan. Routledge, 2001, pp. 498-508.
10. Herman, David. *Basic Elements of Narrative*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
11. Jakob Lothe, et al., ed. *Joseph Conrad: Voice, Sequence, History. Genre.* Ohio State UP, 2008.
12. Leavis, F.R. *The Great Tradition*. Rpt. Penguin, 1948
13. Marle, Hans van. "The Jumble of Facts and Fiction: The First Singapore Reaction to *Almayer's Folly*". *Joseph Conrad: Third World Perspectives*, edited by Robert Hamner, Three Continental Press, 1990, pp. 29-35.
14. Mary, Ms. P. Amalorpava. "Identity-Construction and Looking into the Soul: The Narrative Structure and Dynamics of Joseph Conrad". Language in India. Vol. 19:4, April 2019. Vol. 19:4

April 2019. Pp. 1-7. Accessed 10.10. 2024. https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=amalorpavamarynovelsjosephconrad.pdf

15. Mongia, Padmini. "Between Men". *Conrad in the Twenty-First Century: Contemporary Approaches and Perspectives.* Routledge, 2005, pp. 85-99.
16. Njder, Zdzislaw. "The Personal Voice in Conrad's Fiction". *Joseph Conrad: Voice, Sequence, History. Genre*, edited by Jakob Lothe, et al., Ohio State UP, 2008, pp. 23-39.
17. Peters, John G. C*onrad and Impressionism*. Cambridge UP, 2004.
18. Said, Edward. *The World, the Text and the Critic*. Harvard UP, 1983.
19. ---. "Conrad: The Presentation of Narrative". *Joseph Conrad: Third World Perspectives*, edited by Robert Hamner, Three Continental Press, 1990, pp. 171-188.
20. Simmons, Allan H. *Joseph Conrad: Critical Issues*. Palgrave: 2006
21. Watt, Ian. Conrad in the Nineteenth Century. California UP, 1979.