Joseph Conrad and the Imperial Romance

Linda Dryden

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An Outcast of the Islands: Echoes of Romance

Conrad appears to have chosen the title of his second novel expressly for the purpose of attracting an audience used to a diet of romance and adventure fiction; it is even more in that tradition than his original title, *Two Vagabonds*.[1] Unwin had lost money on *Almayer's Folly*, a fact that must have troubled Conrad, still contemplating a life at sea. On 10 March 1896, just after *An Outcast of the Islands* was published Conrad wrote to Karol Zagórski saying that having refused a command writing was his only source of income: 'I know what I can do. It is therefore only a question of earning money—' (*Letters 1*, 266). Wise notes that in a 'copy of the First Edition of *An Outcast of the Islands* Mr. Conrad has written: "Before beginning this book I hesitated whether I should go on writing or not. Edward Garnett's remark 'you have the temperament, you have the style—why not write?' tipped the scale"' (Wise, 9).

Like *Almayer's Folly*, the novel was hailed by early reviewers, including H. G. Wells, as a romance. Conrad was, for the first time, compared by many with Stevenson, and also Melville, and his name coupled again with that of Kipling.[2] In fact the novel does read more like Stevenson's *The Ebb-Tide* or 'The Beach of Falesá', which, as Brantlinger says, 'marks the end of the innocent, heroic adventurousness of Marryat and early Victorian imperialism' (*Rule of Darkness*, 41). The reviewer for the *Daily Chronicle* on 16 March 1896 says that Willems's degradation is charted 'with a power and an insight that are truly Stevensonian' (*CH*, 64). But again Conrad disappointed those reviewers who were hoping for unalloyed exotic adventure. On 18 April 1896 the *National Observer*'s reviewer declared *An Outcast* 'undeniably dull':

> It is like one of Mr. Stevenson's South Sea stories, grown miraculously long and miraculously tedious. There is no crispness about it

> and the action is not quick enough, a serious charge to make against a book of adventure. Even schoolboys will probably have some difficulty in getting through it and we fear adults will find it impossible. (*CH*, 70)

Conrad's 'diffuseness', noted by many commentators, had not yet alerted them to the fact that while locating his fiction in the exotic landscapes of the traditional imperial romance, his focus is on altogether different matters.

The imperial hero manqué

Willems is corrupt from the outset; the only characteristic he has in common with the typical hero of imperial romance is his whiteness; he is not even English. The hallmark of the white imperial hero, moral uprightness, is significantly absent:

> When he stepped off the straight and narrow path of his peculiar honesty, it was with an inward assertion of unflinching resolve to fall back again into the monotonous but safe stride of virtue as soon as his little excursion into the wayside quagmires had produced the desired effect. (*OI*, 3)

The 'unflinching resolve' anticipates Jim's vision of himself as an 'unflinching' romantic hero; but the idiom of imperial romance receives ironic treatment in Conrad's narratives. Treading a straight and narrow path is a common cliché, a prerequisite for the imperial adventurer.[3] The temptation to stray is a familiar one for Conrad's protagonists: Jim jumps; Nostromo steals; Kurtz 'goes native'; each chooses to take the wrong road, a road that leads to destruction. Conrad's heroes may imagine themselves to be romantically heroic, but the choices they make are indicative of their fallibility. Heroic status, such as Willems fantasizes about, is the illusion of fiction, an insubstantial dream posed against the limitations of individual character. Through his characters' self-delusions Conrad invokes the formulaic hero; through their actions he questions the possibility of heroism.

Willems has not even the debatable appeal of a character like Jim. He is Dutch; and within the Conradian scheme of things to be Dutch is to be decidedly not 'one of us'. His honesty is 'peculiar', begging the question of whether Willems ever was virtuous. White observes that from the 'opening sentence we know that the "he" can refer to no ordinary

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hero' (White, 137). While he congratulates himself on his privileged position, presenting his grubby domestic circumstances as evidence of his own glory, Willems reveals the hollowness of his self-image and the extent of his conceit. That he will 'tyrannize good-humouredly over his half-caste wife', or 'notice with tender contempt his pale yellow child', and 'patronize loftily his dark-skinned brother-in-law' (*OI,* 3), suggests Willems's sense of superiority; but Conrad's irony cuts through the sham romance of his hero's imagination to reveal a self-aggrandizing fool beneath the pretentious surface.

Willems regards himself as an imperial hero: in contrast to the 'half-caste' wife, the 'pale yellow' child, and the 'dark-skinned' brother-in-law, he is the 'successful white man' to whose 'shrine' these dependants offer 'coarse incense' (*OI*, 4). As Hampson notes, while others seem to accept Willems's self-image, 'the ironic overtones of such label-like phrases as "the successful white man", at the same time, subtly problematise that self-image' (*Betrayal*, 33). Like the imperial benefactor of boys' adventure fiction, Willems believes he commands the 'loquacious love' of 'those degenerate descendants of Portuguese conquerors': 'They lived now by the grace of his will. This was power. Willems loved it' (*OI,* 5). He imagines that he descended amongst them like Haggard's white imperialists Quatermain, Curtis, and Good who announce to their African hosts in *King Solomon's Mines* that they 'come from the Stars' (*KSM*, 154).[4] Conrad's irony undercuts his hero's narrative: he fails to recognize that in 'descending amongst them' he has become one of them. In imperial romance white adventurers, masquerading as gods, bring peace, stability, and prosperity to 'native' peoples. Willems's intervention in local affairs sparks off political unrest and highlights his inadequacy, his conceit, and his own degeneracy.

Believing his race to be proof of his superiority, Willems boasts of his success and cleverness in the bars and billiard rooms. But with biting irony Conrad records how the 'Chinaman' marker regards his utterances as 'the buzzing monotony of the unintelligible stream of words poured out by the white man' (*OI*, 6). Willems's philosophy is sacred to him, almost a religion, whereas it is in reality amoral and corrupt: 'The wise, the strong, the respected, have no scruples. Where there are scruples there can be no power. On that text he preached often to the young men. It was his doctrine, and he, himself, was a shining example of its truth' (*OI*, 8). His immense arrogance is born out of assumptions of white imperial potency. Willems glosses over the fact that he is already a criminal, that the 'sheer pluck' with which he won his reputation as a trader was employed in bribery, corruption,

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opium deals, and illegal gunpowder sales. The notion of 'sheer pluck' evokes the boy hero of romance and adventure: there is even a novel by Henty called *By Sheer Pluck* (1884). In this context, however, the expression comments ironically upon Willems's self-image.[5] The theft of Hudig's money is 'a very small matter', but Hudig sees it otherwise (*OI*, 11). In his delusions of wealth and power Willems exaggerates his own potential: 'A man of his stamp could carry off anything, do anything, aspire to anything' (*OI*, 9). Yet, as Mrs Vink observes, 'a man of his stamp' beats his wife.

Willems is no Quatermain, mourned by Sir Henry Curtis as a character 'as near perfection as any it has ever been my lot to encounter', and who had only two faults, one of which was 'excessive modesty' (*AQ*, 273–4). Nor is he one of Henty's plucky, upright Dicks or Neds. Yet woven into Conrad's tale of degeneracy and betrayal are unmistakable echoes of romance and adventure. Willems enjoys embellishing his history with the fact that 'he came east fourteen years ago—a cabin boy' (*OI*, 7). The boy heroes of Henty and Kingston leave the genteel poverty of their English homes for adventure and wealth in the East, as in the picture of the young hopeful of plate 11. Kingston's Ben Hadden, a cabin boy himself, discovers that the harmony and management of a ship depend on 'prompt and exact obedience to all laws and orders' (*BH*, 51). He 'soon learned all about a ship' and was as 'active and intelligent and daring as any of the boys in the ship' (*BH*, 54).

Lingard's first encounter with Willems even reads like boys' adventure fiction:

> He roused up his sleeping boat-crew and stood waiting for them to get ready, when he felt a tug at his coat and a thin voice said, very distinctly—
>
> 'English captain.'
>
> Lingard turned round quickly, and what seemed to be a very lean boy jumped back with commendable activity.
>
> 'Who are you? Where did you spring from?' asked Lingard, in startled surprise.
>
> From a safe distance the boy pointed towards a cargo lighter moored to the quay. (*OI*, 15)

And so Lingard takes Willems under his wing:

> 'There's not much of you for seventeen. Are you hungry?'
>
> 'A little.'

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> 'Will you come with me, in that brig there?'
>
> The boy moved without a word towards the boat and scrambled into the bows.
>
> 'Knows his place,' muttered Lingard to himself as he stepped heavily into the stern sheets and took up the yoke lines. 'Give way there.'
>
> The Malay boat crew lay back together, and the gig sprang away from the quay heading towards the brig's riding light.
>
> Such was the beginning of Willems' career. (*OI*, 16)

Like the boy in plate 12, Willems has acquired a benevolent father figure. But the opening chapter has already revealed the sordid outcome of this auspicious beginning. Furthermore, this account of his meeting with Lingard leaves out the fact that Willems has just deserted ship. Running barefoot along the decks of the *Kosmopoliet IV* and 'objurgating his immediate surroundings with blasphemous lips' (*OI*, 14), Willems's idea of heroism is to jump ship.

Conrad's method here for subverting Willems's heroic pretensions is to bring his narrative tantalizingly close to popular adventure fiction and then to undermine the expectations he has raised. Thus Lingard learns the whole of Willems's 'commonplace story' in half an hour. It is almost an exact reversal of the history of a typical Henty hero: Henty's boys are usually fatherless, with a loving mother and doting sisters to provide for. Their home background is poor but clean, and morally sound. Dick Holland's mother is sensible and loving. When her husband fails to return from India 'Mrs. Holland at once gave up her house and moved into a smaller one'. She is possessed of 'strong common-sense and firmness of character' (*TM*, 16). Willems is motherless: his 'shabby' and 'disconsolate' father shows foreign skippers around the seedy haunts of Rotterdam, returning 'sick with too much smoking and drinking', while his numerous brothers and sisters run wild. His credentials as a would-be hero are dealt the final crushing blow with the revelation that he 'was hopelessly at variance with the spirit of the sea': 'He had an instinctive contempt for the honest simplicity of that work which led to nothing he cared for' (*OI*, 17).

As Hampson observes, Willems operates through 'perverted forms of sea-virtue': '"Work" and "duty" appear as "the tasks of restitution" and "the duty of not being found out." Courage appears as "that courage that will not scale heights, yet will wade bravely through the mud—if there be no other road"' (*Betrayal*, 35). Courage, work, and duty: the necessary qualities of any would-be imperial hero, are, in Willems's

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case corrupted; his idea of courage, in fact, hovers perilously close to cowardice. No Ben Hadden, Willems rejects life at sea in favour of the life of 'those longshore quill-drivers' amongst whom, according to Lingard, he gets himself 'so crooked'. The sea is the only 'place for an honest man', says Lingard, but Willems 'never would; didn't think there was enough money in it' (*OI*, 41–2). For Lingard, and for Conrad, the discipline of life at sea offers healthy action, the subsuming of the self into the ship's community, and a safe alternative to the corrupting influence of trade and life on shore. Lingard echoes the words of Conrad's chief mate, Mr. B—, in *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906): 'Ports are no good—ships rot, men go to the devil!' (*MS*, 128). In 'Well Done' Conrad extols the virtues of a seafaring life. The tradition of 'sea-craft', he says, is an 'occupation in which men have to depend on each other. It raises them, so to speak, above the frailties of their dead selves' (*NLL*, 183). Willems becomes 'crooked' because he refuses the conditions of sea-life that the hero of adventure embraces. Even the spoilt and work-shy Harvey Cheyne of Kipling's *Captains Courageous* (1896) becomes an accomplished seaman: by the end of his time on the *We're Here* Harvey 'felt like the most ancient of mariners' (*Captains Courageous*, 278). The popular formula has been inverted in *An Outcast*: instead of rising above his 'frailties', Willems gives in to them.

Marriage, race, and ego

Willems's marriage to Joanna echoes Almayer's marriage. This relationship with a woman of 'mixed race' produces a sickly child, evidence that liaisons with 'native' women compromises racial purity. Again we cannot escape the fact that some of the nineteenth-century's more conservative attitudes towards race underpin Conrad's narratives. While his treatment of Willems may be ironic there lingers beneath the surface of his story the disturbing suggestion that Conrad actually endorses the notion of racial purity; and Willems's attempts to put a respectable gloss on that relationship thus appear even more pathetic.

Believing himself married to a submissive and obedient wife, Willems thinks he commands loyalty and respect as a husband. He casts himself as a nineteenth century male stereotype, like John Halifax in Mrs Craik's novel. Halifax is 'what all fathers should be—the truest representative here on earth of that father in heaven, who is at once justice, wisdom, and perfect love' (*JH*, 287). But Willems is no John Halifax, and he is certainly no gentleman. Picturing the revelation of his disgrace to his wife, Joanna, he fantasizes about his own power as the provider and husband while revealing an inability to

regard Joanna as anything but an extension of his own ego, a possession at best, a burden at worst:

> No doubt she will cry, she will lament, she will be helpless and frightened and passive as ever. And he would have to drag that limp weight on and on through the darkness of a spoiled life. Horrible! Of course he could not abandon her and the child to certain misery or possible starvation. The wife and child of Willems. Willems the successful, the smart; Willems the conf…. Pah! (*OI*, 24)

It is a curious blend of belief in male power and blatant egotism.

Ideal husbands in nineteenth-century romance honour and respect their wives; but then the wife in such literature is a 'pure' example of English femininity. The 'wife of Willems' is, according to her husband, a 'dismal woman with startled eyes and dolorously drooping mouth' (*OI*, 9).[6] Willems's 'passive' and 'obedient' wife is a sadly bedraggled spectacle: 'She trailed through life in that red-dressing gown, with its row of dirty blue bows down the front, stained, and hooked on awry; a torn flounce at the bottom following her like a snake as she moved languidly about, with her hair negligently caught up, and a tangled wisp straggling untidily down her back' (*OI*, 25). With her 'lean throat', 'obtrusive collarbone', her 'thin arm' and 'bony hand clasping the child', she is one step removed from the 'doubled-up crone' that Aïssa becomes at the novel's end. Such is the luxurious existence of the wife of the successful Willems. Yet he loftily outlines the gratitude due to him as a faithful, model husband:

> She had years of glory as Willems' wife, and years of comfort, of loyal care, and of such tenderness as she deserved. He had guarded her carefully from any bodily hurt; and of other suffering he had no conception. The assertion of his superiority was only another benefit conferred on her. All this was a matter of course, but he told her all this so as to bring vividly before her the greatness of her loss. (*OI*, 25–6)

This is hollow rhetoric: while it smacks of the literary tradition of chivalric love and mid-nineteenth-century ideals of marriage, under-lying it is a characteristic narrative irony. Joanna received 'such tenderness as she deserved': the patronizing arrogance of this statement reveals Willems as a cruel and heartless egoist – such is Joanna's 'loss'.

Assuming responsibility for their future lives, Willems' words have the emptiness of the stereotype: 'You have the money I left at home

this morning, Joanna?' he asked. 'We will want it all now'. These words made him feel that 'he was a fine fellow' (*OI*, 26). Willems assumes Joanna's acquiescence in his self-made fiction because she is a woman and his wife. But his delusions of grand romantic gestures are short-lived as Joanna, no doubt recalling the beatings, the neglect, and the tyranny meted out by her 'model' husband spurns him: 'You are less than dirt, you that have wiped your feet on me. I have waited for this. I am not afraid now' (*OI,* 27). She will not and does not conform to the passive role he creates for her.

While Willems clings to his illusory identity, Joanna and her family define his actual condition with venomous clarity. Joanna calls him a 'man from nowhere; a vagabond!' Leonard says, 'You are a savage. Not at all like we, whites' (*OI*, 28).[7] Both characters deny him the status of civilized European, a status that requires commitment to values to which Willems can only pay lip service. This is at variance with the literature of Empire. For, as White comments, the discourse of imperial fiction 'has not before revealed the representatives of European empires as having such easily corrupted and divided natures' (White, 140). The suggestions of Willems's domestic violence and the revelation of the Da Souza family's fear of, and disgust at, his behaviour cut through Willems's ego ideal as the nineteenth-century gentleman-husband. These 'degenerate descendants of Portuguese conquerors' whom he had imagined to worship him, in fact regard Willems himself as a moral degenerate. Thus we have an inversion of the standard stereotypes in imperial fiction where 'humble natives' worship the white man. Leonard tears at the veil of Willems' self-delusion but makes no impression because of Willems's over-reaching conceit. Furthermore, as John Stape observes, Willems 'refuses to ground himself, to set down roots in a cultural and social matrix', and ultimately 'his dream of a self capable of existing outside ordinary norms serves only to isolate him' (*OI* [World's Classics edn], x).

When Ignosi, the African king in *King Solomon's Mines*, accepts that Quatermain cannot remain in Kukuanaland he is acknowledging their racial difference: 'I do perceive that now as ever thy words are wise and full of reason, Macumazahn; that which flies in the air loves not to run along the ground; the white man loves not to live on the level of the black or to house among his kraals' (*KSM*, 339).[8] The non-Malay and non-Arab characters in Conrad's novel exhibit similar attitudes to those found in the literature of Empire. They measure worth in terms of race, vying with each other for moral superiority over the native people. Superiority is measured by each in terms of their distance from

the 'native'. When Willems returns to Almayer's campong dishevelled, in a sarong, and shouting, Almayer is outraged: 'Do you think yourself in the forest with your … your friends? This is a civilized man's house. A white man's. Understand?' (*OI*, 88). Yet moments later Almayer reveals his own lack of restraint when, with absurdly childish malice, he exhorts Nina to call Willems 'pig'. By denying Willems's status as a 'white', branding him a 'savage', and identifying himself and Joanna as 'white', Leonard claims their superiority. The native people also make their claims to superiority. At the climax of the novel, Aïssa, Willems's half-Arab half-Malay lover, reveals her contempt for Joanna. She is 'A Sirani woman. A woman of a people despised by all' (*OI*, 358).[9] The simple 'us and them' model of the imperial romance is thus muddied in this tale of moral delinquency. Conrad's specificity about the different groupings of native people implies a complex social order in the imperial East that is rarely, if ever, found in the imperial romance.

This is a story of one man's descent into moral chaos. Heroism, adventure, wealth: these tropes characterize the destinies of the heroes of Kingston, Henty, and Haggard. In *An Outcast* the promise of wealth and reputation that the East appears to offer is a fantasy of Willems's own making. As Said points out, speaking specifically of *Lord Jim*, the ideal which Conrad's heroes imagine for themselves becomes progressively clearer as they move away from it: 'Only in the domains of intention and fantasy to which Conrad's heroes have a fatal attraction can there be a completion for schemes of the kind Jim devises for himself; but such a place is apprehendable only during the constantly progressing narrative of his doom and failure' (*The World, The Text and the Critic*, 105). While in his imagination Willems fabricates a glorious, expansive future for himself, his actual progress is downward and inward. Willems descends into the depths of the Malay forest in a relentless retreat from the world of commerce and fame to which he aspires until his only companions are his rejected lover, Aïssa, and the shrivelled old serving woman. In this unromantic isolation he becomes the antithesis of the imperial hero. Willems's sordid death inverts the formula of imperial romance: the triumphant return to Europe and a virginal bride is denied him; instead he is carried back to Sambir, a half-clothed corpse, shot by his 'native' lover. Lakamba's clearing is Willems's private hell; his body is returned, not to Europe but to the place from which he yearned to escape, Sambir. He is confined forever to look down upon the scene of his disgrace from his grave on the hill across the Pantai. Even in death Willems is bitterly cursed by Almayer who wishes him to 'smart' in a place where there is 'no mercy' for him;

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a far cry from the noble death and glowing epitaph afforded to the imperial hero Quatermain by his countryman Curtis (see plate 6).

Lingard's fictions

Willems is a victim of his own delusions; but he is also, like Almayer, a victim of Lingard's misguided benevolence. Lingard's role as father figure in *Almayer's Folly* is repeated in *An Outcast* through his 'adoption' of Willems. We also learn more of Lingard's history and his legendary brig, *Flash*: 'They came north together—both young—out of an Australian port, and after a very few years there was not a white man in the islands, from Palembang to Ternate, from Ombawa to Palawan, that did not know Captain Tom and his lucky craft' (*OI*, 13). The exotic locations in which he is recognized positions Lingard as a romantic figure. Conrad may also have had in mind Sir James Brooke, the Rajah of Sarawak, when he created the character of Lingard. John Gordan mentions the 'romance of the man' and points to the similarities with Lingard: 'Like Brooke, Lingard, too, was an English adventurer who made himself a great power in a native state—Sambir. And both men were addressed by their Malay admirers as Rajah Laut, or King of the Sea' (Gordan, 618). Rumours of Lingard's daring exploits also recall Brooke's actual suppression of Malay and Dyak pirates: 'by his successful recklessness in several encounters with pirates, [he] established the terror of his name' (*OI,* 14). The emblem of Lingard's success is the fact that the locals dropped 'the ceremonious "Captain Lingard"' and began to address him 'half seriously as Rajah Laut—The King of the Sea' (*OI*, 14).

So far so good: Lingard looks set to re-enact the romantic role of his fictional predecessors and the imperial success of Brooke. Early reviewers warmed to the Lingard of *An Outcast*: James Payne in the *Illustrated London News* of 4 April 1896 saw him as 'a noble character' (*CH*, 67); the reviewer for the *Spectator* on 30 May 1896 described him as a character 'conceived on the colossal scale of primitive romance' who 'looms through the lurid atmosphere of crime and sensuality like a legendary type of rugged, incorruptible manhood' (*CH*, 78). But Conrad adds various qualifiers to his description of Lingard and his glorious reputation that undermine these definitions: his title, 'Rajah Laut', is conferred only 'half seriously'; we learn of his 'fierce aspect, his loud voice, his fearless eyes', but also of his 'stupidly guileless heart', and his 'absurd faith in himself' (*OI*, 13). Although he began by being feared for his violent temper he was soon found out, 'and the word went

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round that Captain Tom's fury was less dangerous than many a man's smile' (*OI,* 13–14). Lingard needs flattery, as Peter Knox-Shaw points out: 'the generosity which is his most remarkable trait often masks a compulsive need for applause, and furthermore … his habit of having his own way leads him to place a premium on deference among his acquaintance and friends' (Knox-Shaw, 130). Such is not the character of the true romantic hero: one of Quatermain's most striking features is his 'modesty', a quality Lingard singularly lacks. Thus Conrad swiftly subverts the romantic type he invokes. In the end Lingard is a pale and fallible reflection of the manly adventurers of imperial fiction: the real-life James Brooke was far more colourful and effective.

Paternalism and exploitation

Lingard persists in what Vernon Young calls his 'misguided chivalry' (Young, 525). He recognizes in Willems something of himself as a young man; in return Willems schemes to supplant Lingard and acquire his wealth. The romance and suggestions of success accruing to Lingard are the fantasies that fuel Willems's greedy ambitions, and Lingard blinds himself to his protégé's treacherous intentions. In rescuing Willems from the quay in Samarang Lingard sowed the seeds of his own destruction. While Lingard describes him as 'that clever young fellow', regarding him 'with innocent pride in his honest eyes' (*OI*, 17), Willems is plotting with Hudig to betray him.[10] The simple loyalties of the romance genre, in fact the loyalty that Lingard with his 'stupidly guileless heart' expects, are the fictions with which Conrad's characters delude themselves. In this story of betrayal and self-deception loyalty is given only to the self. Lingard foolishly believes in his own supremacy as 'father' and in Willems's undivided loyalty. But these are the simple assumptions of the fictions of romance and adventure; they are values and role models that Conrad empties of meaning. Despite Willems's moral disintegration, Lingard cannot abandon his role as surrogate father. Calling Willems 'my boy', he whisks him away to Sambir, giving the impression that, parent-like, he will make everything all right. Willems will be the beneficiary of Lingard's imperial power and wealth, the 'son' who will inherit the estate.

Filled with fantasies of power and reputation, Lingard casts himself in the role of benevolent imperial ruler, very much in the style of James Brooke. 'D'ye see, I have them all in my pocket. The rajah is an old friend of mine. My word is law—and I am the only trader', he confidently asserts (*OI*, 43). John McClure asks why the simple-hearted Lingard should admire a character as dissolute as Willems: 'The first

suggestion is that Lingard's virtues blind him to Willems's faults, but as the story unfolds another answer emerges: Lingard manifests most of these faults himself. The role he has created for himself at Sambir closely resembles that of Willems at Maccassar; the most significant difference is one of scale' (McClure, 109). Lingard's delusions of power and reputation are in fact reminiscent of Willems's fantasy as benefactor of the Da Souza family. Sambir is Lingard's imperial utopia:

> You see, Willems, I brought prosperity to that place. I composed their quarrels, and saw them grow under my eyes. There's peace and happiness there. I am more master there than his Dutch Excellency down in Batavia ever will be when some day a lazy man-of-war blunders at last against the river. (*OI*, 45)

This is Lingard's fiction, the fiction of the Empire. We are reminded of the many voices in Henty's novels affirming the beneficial effect of English rule in India, and contributing to the idea that imperialism brought 'light' to the 'dark places' of the world. It was the guise under which the Europeans invaded Africa and the East. Lingard, however, is motivated by more than an altruistic sense of imperial paternalism. His sense of possession is the key to his motivation: it is *his* river and *his* secret. Even before he outlines his utopian fantasy of Sambir and his benevolent rule he hints at the wealth available there with gleeful rapacity: 'Keep mum about my river when you get amongst the traders again. There's many would give their ears for the knowledge of it. I'll tell you something: that's where I get all my guttah and rattans. Simply inexhaustible, my boy' (*OI*, 43). It is in Lingard's own interest to keep the local population happy. The multi-layered discourses of imperialism are thus revealed. While the paternal eye of the white imperialist watches indulgently over its subjects it also watches over the systematic exploitation of the land's resources. This is familiar territory for imperial romance. Henty's Indian characters affirm the political, moral, and financial benefits of English rule and his boy heroes, apparently, effect nothing but good as they roam the Empire amassing fabulous riches.

Lingard, like Henty's boys and Haggard's heroes, believes in the beneficial effects of his rule, and Conrad gives qualified approval to his imperial venture:

> His deep-seated and immovable conviction that only he—he, Lingard—knew what was good for them was characteristic of him,

> and, after all, not so very far wrong. He would make them happy whether or no, he said, and he meant it. His trade brought prosperity to the young state, and the fear of his heavy hand secured its internal peace for many years. (*OI*, 200)

Bringing political stability to African or Eastern states is the prerogative of the white adventurer. Thus, as Quatermain, Curtis, and Good leave Kukuanaland they exhort Ignosi to 'rule justly, to respect the law, and to put none to death without a cause. So shalt thou prosper' (*KSM*, 338). Ignosi, under the influence of the English gentlemen, has restored order to a land where anarchy and tyranny prevailed. Brian Street notes that Haggard acknowledged 'the harmful aspects of contact' but ultimately believed in the beneficial influence of white invasion: 'Thus, whenever his characters have an inland "paradise", it is always under the improving influences of someone with Western ideals' (Street, 123). Lingard believes that he performs the same function for his 'little corner of the world' (*OI*, 200). There are undertones here of James Brooke: Steven Runciman comments that Brooke felt that too much association of native peoples with Europeans did them 'nothing but harm; he had himself remarked in India that the English-speaking Indians were the most unreliable and corrupt. He had no illusions about the native character. The Malays were given the epithet of treacherous, the Hindostanis lazy' (Runciman, 49–50).

Despite his paternalistic care, Lingard regards Malays as treacherous, but protects his little empire from incursions by other races. Like Brooke, and like Haggard's heroes, Lingard wishes to perpetuate the peaceful 'innocence' of the native life over which he jealously watches: he determines to keep out the traders to preserve his monopoly, but also the 'verminous breed' of Arabs with 'their lies and their intrigues' (*OI*, 45). Sambir is for Lingard an Arcadia 'which he loved to think all his own':

> He looked proudly upon his work. With every passing year he loved more the land, the people, the muddy river that, if he could help it, would carry no other craft but the *Flash* on its unclean and friendly surface. As he slowly warped his vessel up-stream he would scan with knowing looks the riverside clearings, and pronounce solemn judgement upon the prospects of the season's rice-crop. He knew every settler on the banks between the sea and Sambir; he knew their wives, their children; he knew every individual of the multi-coloured groups that, standing on the flimsy platforms of tiny reed

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> dwellings built over the water, waved their hands and shouted shrilly: 'O! Kapal layer! Haï!' while the *Flash* swept slowly through the populated reach … (*OI*, 200–1)

Lingard's ruminations evoke such images as we see in plate 12 where peaceful 'natives' in an exotic utopia discourse with a benevolent sea captain. But Conrad probes Lingard's subconscious to reveal the egotism of the man: 'His river! By it he was not only rich—he was interesting. This secret of his which made him different to the other traders of those seas gave intimate satisfaction to that desire for singularity which he shared with the rest of mankind, without being aware of its presence within his breast' (*OI*, 202). The simple tale of the imperial adventurer becoming wealthy and powerful, using his superior intelligence for the benefit of the Empire becomes in Conrad's hands the story of the immense vanity of humankind.

Lingard achieves none of the glory associated with the Rajah Brooke. Despite attacks on his methods from Parliament in England, Brooke maintained his control of Sarawak and passed his Empire on to his nephew. Unlike Brooke, Lingard is unable to hold on to his interests. Willems and Almayer were to inherit his wealth and reputation, but Willems, enveloped in his own egotistic world, is doomed, and Almayer is an incompetent, embittered fool. The romance of Brooke's career and the imperial successes of the fiction of romance and adventure are both suggested and subverted in Lingard's history. Such fame and glory as Brooke acquired were only possible in the early nineteenth century or in the romances of Empire; at the close of the century Conrad casts a more cynical eye over the whole imperial venture.

The serpent in 'paradise'

Immediately after Lingard pompously outlines his prestige to Willems we hear the voice of Babalatchi preaching intrigue and revolution to the indolent Lakamba. Babalatchi and Willems were originally to form the duo of vagabonds after whom Conrad was to name his book, before that is Mrs Wood published *The Vagabonds* in 1894 and caused him to rethink.[11] In the final version Babalatchi is the motivating force behind the take-over of Lingard's 'paradise'. Squatting by a fire fomenting unrest, our first view of Babalatchi in *An Outcast* emphazises his savagery:

> The burst of clear flame lit up his broad, dark, and pock-marked face, where the big lips, stained with betel-juice, looked like a deep

> and bleeding gash of a fresh wound. The reflection of the firelight gleamed brightly in his solitary eye, lending it for the moment a fierce animation that died out together with the short-lived flame. (*OI*, 47)

The seediness, uncleanness, and suggestion of danger about this description recall another, much earlier embittered 'native', Magua' in *The Last of the Mohicans*:

> [T]here was an air of neglect about his person, like that which might have proceeded from great and recent exertion which he had not yet found leisure to repair. The colours of the war-paint had blended in dark confusion about his fierce countenance, and rendered his swarthy lineaments still more savage and repulsive than if art had attempted an effect which had been thus produced by chance. His eye alone, which glistened like a fiery star amid lowering clouds, was to be seen in its state of native wildness. (*LM*, 11–12)

We are reminded also of the shrunken figure of Gagool with her 'sunken slit, that represented the mouth' and her eyes 'still full of fire and intelligence' (*KSM*, 157–8). Babalatchi clearly follows a tradition of deformed, malevolent 'native' villains.

Pock-marked faces or physical deformities indicate some degree of depravity or unhealthy living, as in Dr Jekyll's alter-ego, Mr Hyde: 'There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point' (*Jekyll and Hyde*, 22). Dr Lanyon describes Hyde as 'hardly human' and 'troglodytic' (*Jekyll and Hyde*, 37). Later Hyde brutally murders Sir Danvers Carew by trampling him under foot 'with ape-like fury' (*Jekyll and Hyde*, 49). Hyde is the primitive other self of Jekyll, the 'savage' part of his nature normally kept under control by his civilized self. Quatermain argues for a fundamental kinship between the 'savage' and the 'civilized' races: 'It is a depressing conclusion, but in all essentials the savage and the child of civilisation are identical' (*AQ*, 4). It is Quatermain's contention that human nature is nineteen parts savage and one part civilized: the one part civilized distinguishes the white man from the 'savage' (*AQ*, 6).[12] Despite his oratory skills, we are in no doubt as to Babalatchi's place in this evolutionary order: he is a 'savage statesman', and a 'barbarous politician' (*OI*, 214). Conrad, however, adds a new dimension to

Haggard's simplistic view of human nature: even a 'savage' is allowed a moment of emotional intensity. Thus upon the death of Omar:

> For the space of about thirty seconds, a half-naked, betel-chewing pessimist stood upon the bank of the tropical river, on the edge of the still and immense forests; a man angry, powerless, empty-handed, with a cry of bitter discontent ready on his lips; a cry that, had it come out, would have rung through the virgin solitudes of the woods, as true, as great, as profound, as any philosophical shriek that ever came from the depths of an easy-chair to disturb the impure wilderness of chimneys and roofs. (*OI*, 215)

In the urban jungle of Europe agonized grief has no more profound expression than that to be found in the Malay backwaters. Conrad stresses a common humanity; but the 'savage' mind can only maintain this level of 'human' feeling for thirty seconds. It is his nature to scheme, and duly Babalatchi abandons his grief and immerses himself in his plans, 'a victim to the tormenting superstitions of his race' (*OI*, 215).

Babalatchi's schemes, like those of Magua or Gagool, are designed to oust the invading imperialists. He is a savage threat like the half-clothed Malay pirate of plate 13, viciously handling the white-suited adventurer who, incidentally, bears a strong resemblance to Willems. But Conrad sets his narrative in opposition to the conventions of the imperial romance. Rather than being defeated, Babalatchi's schemes expose the delusions of both Lingard and Willems. In a deliberate inversion of the popular formula Malays defeat Europeans and install 'native' power. In Conrad's fiction the stability of European imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century, and claims for white superiority are in doubt. Lingard's dreams of Arcadian happiness for Sambir are shattered when, through the agency of Willems, Babalatchi brings Abdulla up the river. Willems's self-righteousness and protestations of white superiority are revealed as hollow rhetoric when Babalatchi, serpent-like, manipulates his obsession for Aïssa and thus persuades him to betray his 'father' and his race. The assumptions of racial purity and heroism, of 'good' defeating 'evil' that are the hallmarks of the romance are undercut by the reversals of Conrad's narrative where heroic action is a thing of the past. Babalatchi's history is one of heroic deeds, piracy and fierce battles against an invading race. As White comments, Babalatchi's story is 'more truly the stuff of adventure' than that of Willems (White, 148).

Furthermore, within the multi-voiced narrative of *An Outcast* Babalatchi's voice is as potent as any of the white voices we hear.

When Lingard protests to him of the benevolence of his enterprise Babalatchi has an equally persuasive argument:

> 'This is a white man's talk,' exclaimed Babalatchi, with bitter exultation. 'I know you. That is how you all talk while you load your guns and sharpen your swords; and when you are ready, then to those who are weak you say: "Obey me and be happy, or die!" You are strange, you white men. You think it is only your wisdom and your virtue and your happiness that are true.' (*OI*, 226)

This is a perspective that Babalatchi shares with Magua, but in Conrad's fiction it has a power never available in the imperial romance. The Malay subjects of Conrad's fiction, unlike Henty's or Haggard's grateful 'natives', perceive the imperial venture as one of exploitation and cultural blindness:

> What Babalatchi points out is the tremendous gap that separates culture from culture and that makes a mockery of European pretensions to enlightened rule. ... Thus even the most benign imperialist can never truly perform the function (advocated by Kipling and others) of protecting the colonized peoples from change. Whether such a program is advocated naively or with the ulterior purpose of protecting monopolies on psychological and economical exploitation, it is doomed to failure. (McClure, 112–13)

At the end of the novel Almayer bitterly outlines Lingard's failure to the Roumanian orchid-hunter. Babalatchi is the 'Shahbandar of the State', Lakamba 'calls himself a Sultan', and Abdulla has well and truly replaced Lingard:

> He lives here because—he says—here he is away from white men. But he has hundreds of thousands. Has a house in Penang. Ships. What did he not have when he stole my trade from me! He knocked everything into a cocked hat; drove father to gold-hunting—then to Europe, where he disappeared. (*OI*, 364)

'Natives' of imperial romance, like Magua, may dream of such an overthrow, but it is an impossibility because the European is always superior, intellectually, morally, and politically. Conrad, subverts these assumptions, undercuts the simple 'truths' of imperial romance, and presents alternative voices and alternative resolutions to racial conflicts. Babalatchi challenges the destiny of dissenting 'native' stereotypes by

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actually ousting white rule. He is the serpent in Lingard's paradise who, with cunning and eloquence, effects Lingard's loss of control of his Eden.

An oriental *femme fatale*

In a letter to Marguerite Poradowska, while he was still in the early stages of planning *An Outcast* Conrad mused half-humorously, half-seriously: 'Do you think one can make something interesting without any women?!'[13] Obviously he decided he couldn't. Aïssa is central to the novel as the temptation that leads Willems to abandon his 'father' and his racial identity. Like Babalatchi, Aïssa in many ways conforms to the stereotypes of nineteenth-century romance literature. She is a *femme fatale*, even more threatening to the male than Nina Almayer, perhaps because she is half-Arab. Aïssa is dangerous, like Hawthorne's Zenobia, in *The Blithedale Romance* (1852)[14] whose beauty 'sometimes compelled' the hero Coverdale to shut his eyes 'as if it were not quite the privilege of modesty to gaze at her' (*BR*, 44). Zenobia is an 'enchantress': the exotic flowers she wears seemed to have 'sprung passionately out of a soil, the very weeds of which would be fervid and spicy' (*BR*, 45). She is associated with magic, spells, and illusions as if there were something unearthly about her, or rather too earthy, in that this is profane rather than sacred magic: black not white.

The implicit danger of the *femme fatale* is more pronounced when she is Oriental like Ayesha in *She*; even the name Aïssa recalls that of Haggard's earlier creation. Stunningly beautiful temptresses, with masses of long black hair signifying their sensuality (see Ayesha in plate 7), they represent nineteenth-century popular notions of Eastern femininity: mysterious, half-perceived, never to be understood, but above all exotic, exciting sexual passion, and capable of destroying the male. While he was writing *Almayer's Folly*, Conrad drew the sketch of an exotic woman (plate 8). Flimsily dressed in a transparent top with a sarong wrapped loosely around the waist, and toying with a large snake, she is, as Kenneth Inniss notes, 'in accord with every Westerner's image of the desirable girl from *The Arabian Nights*' (Inniss, 39). The drawing depicts the same stereotype of Eastern female sensuality and danger that Conrad used in creating his Eastern heroines. Aïssa is even more in that mould than Nina. Willems's first glimpse of her is exciting and suggestive:

> As he approached her the woman tossed her head slightly back, and with a free gesture of her strong, round arm, caught up the mass of loose black hair and brought it over her shoulder and across the

> lower part of her face. The next moment he was passing her close, walking rigidly, like a man in a trance. (*OI*, 68)

Covering her face is a sign of Islamic modesty, but apart from that Aïssa has the same effect on Willems as Ayesha does on Leo and Holly; Aïssa could almost be the Ayesha of plate 7. Said pinpoints three features of Western perceptions of Oriental women to which both Aïssa and Ayesha conform: 'They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing' (*Orientalism*, 207). Their 'stupidity' is, in Aïssa's case, her 'savagery'; in Ayesha's, her naivety; their willing sensuality is expressed in the flowing hair and gauzy, revealing wrappings that invite the male gaze. The Eastern woman is visually sensual in her apparent physical abandon. Few English heroines would be seen in the position of Aïssa when Willems eventually finds her in Lakamba's campong: 'He rushed up the enclosure like a tornado, pressing the girl to his breast, her arms round his neck, her head hanging back over his arm, her eyes closed and her long hair nearly touching the ground' (*OI*, 108). This is the melodrama of imperial romance with overt suggestions of Oriental female sexual abandon. The typical English woman, chaste, tightly corseted, immaculately coiffured, is far from inviting sexuality; she must be chivalrously protected from any sexual threat. When young Ethel in *Out on the Pampas* is taken by the 'Indians' Mr Hardy is horrified: 'Carried off!…It is worse than death' (*OP*, 225). The English woman is emblematic of a known middle-class order, safe and inviolable.

Joanna de Groot indicates how, particularly in nineteenth century travel writing, 'women were presented as the *means* for imagining or finding out about the Orient' (de Groot, 105). The mystery of woman and the male desire to explore that mystery constitutes the romantic danger of the Oriental *femme fatale*. Thus Stott writes of Haggard's males: 'Desire, the natural impulse that begets curiosity to lift the veil on the mysteries of Woman and the mysteries of Africa or the Unknown, is the compulsion behind the quest and a compulsion which leads dangerously towards fatality' (Stott, 92). The mystery of the Eastern woman can even be evil, as when Holly beholds Ayesha's face: 'I have heard of the beauty of celestial beings, now I saw it; only this beauty, with all its awful loveliness and purity, was *evil*—or rather, at the time, it impressed me as evil' (*S*, 153). Once Ayesha lifts her veil to reveal her unearthly beauty Leo is enslaved:

> I saw him struggle—I saw him even turn to fly; but her eyes drew him more strongly than iron bonds, and the magic of her beauty

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> and concentrated will and passion entered into him and overpowered him … It sounds horrible and wicked indeed, but he should not be too greatly blamed, and to be sure his sin has found him out. The temptress who drew him into evil was more than human, and her beauty was greater than the loveliness of the daughters of men. (S, 223–4)

Aïssa has the same effect: as if she has cast a spell, her gaze compels Willems:

> He heard her rapid breathing and he felt the touch of a look darted at him from half-open eyes. It touched his brain and his heart together. It seemed to him to be something loud and stirring like a shout, silent and penetrating like an inspiration. The momentum of his motion carried him past her, but an invisible force made up of surprise and curiosity and desire spun him round as soon as he had passed. (*OI*, 68–9)

This recalls the fascination of another mysterious beauty: the Veiled Lady in *The Blithedale Romance* tempts Theodore, but warns of the consequences of her beauty:

> 'Dost thou hesitate,' said the Veiled Lady, 'to pledge thyself to me, by meeting these lips of mine, while the veil yet hides my face? Has not thy heart recognised me? … Still, thou mayst lift the veil! But from that instant, Theodore, I am doomed to be thy evil fate; nor will thou ever taste another breath of happiness!' (*BR*, 113)

The veil, the danger, and the irresistible beauty that enslaves also characterize Aïssa:

> He had been frightened by the vague perception of danger before, but now, as he looked at that life again, his eyes seemed able to pierce the fantastic veil of creepers and leaves, to look past the solid trunks, to see through the forbidding gloom—and the mystery was disclosed—enchanting, subduing, beautiful. He looked at the woman. Through the checkered light between them she appeared to him with the impalpable distinctness of a dream. The very spirit of that land of mysterious forests, standing before him like an apparition behind a transparent veil—a veil woven of sunbeams and shadows. (*OI*, 70)

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Having Willems associate the woman with nature and the jungle, Conrad insists upon her 'otherness', her strangeness and mystery, and the threat she poses to racial and masculine identity. The appeal of the woman is thus equated with the romantic appeal of the East, dark, alluring, and unfathomable, threatening a loss of the masculine self into the chaos of the jungle and the 'irrational' female temperament. The mid-to-late nineteenth-century view of the balance of male and female characteristics, that is, male rationality complemented by female sensitivity to produce a harmonious union, is threatened by the overly sensual nature of the Oriental female. Stott outlines the perception of Aïssa as part of the deadly anarchy of the natural world:

> Willems, in his attempt to comprehend the incomprehensible Oriental landscape of the Malay jungle, characterises its mystery as erotically feminine but also poisonous and deadly. In Conrad's early Malayan tale and in *Heart of Darkness*, the native women are framed and held by the jungle but are also inseparable from it; they are like carnivorous jungle plants—*fleurs du mal*—alluring and deadly. The contours of these women, pictured or framed against a 'riot of foliage', in twilight or in checkered green sunlight, dissolve into the erotic confusion around them. (Stott, 128)

The association of Aïssa with the untamed wilderness emphasizes her position on the evolutionary ladder: she is a 'savage', frequently characterized as a wild animal. She casts 'sidelong' glances, and has 'the expression of a wild and resentful defiance' (*OI*, 71). More than once Conrad mentions her 'distended nostrils', and Willems watches 'the gradual taming of that woman' (*OI*, 76). Like a timid animal she must be coaxed nearer, for Willems 'knew from experience how a slight movement of his could frighten her away' (*OI*, 76). Babalatchi holds her back from Willems like a dog on a leash: 'Fool!' muttered Babalatchi, looking up at Aïssa, who stood with set teeth, with gleaming eyes and distended nostrils, yet obedient to the touch of his restraining hand'. He releases her with the authority of masterly control, and like an arrow 'she flew down the enclosure, and disappeared through the gate of the courtyard' (*OI*, 107). Just as Ayesha inhabits her womb-like caves of Kôr luring Holly and Leo spider-like into her web of sensuality, Aïssa is the 'very spirit of that land of mysterious forests', manifesting its romance, its fecundity, and its threat to male self-control (*OI*, 70).

Deep in the caves of Kôr Holly watches Ayesha capturing the very essence of Leo: 'I saw his wonder and astonishment grow into

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admiration, then into longing, and the more he struggled the more I saw the power of her dread beauty fasten on him and take hold of his senses, drugging them, and drawing the heart out of him' (*S*, 222–3). There is a sense of horror, powerlessness, and deadly danger in Leo's fascination. Willems's surrender to his passion for Aïssa has the same effect. Losing his sense of reality in her embrace, Willems is vulnerable to Omar's murderous attack:

> Glancing upwards he saw the motionless head of the woman looking down at him in a tender gleam of liquid white between the long eyelashes, whose shadow rested on the soft curve of her cheek; and under the caress of that look, the uneasy wonder and the obscure fear of that apparition, crouching and creeping in turns towards the fire that was its guide, were lost—were drowned in the quietude of all his senses, as pain is drowned in the flood of drowsy serenity that follows upon a dose of opium. (*OI*, 147)

Aïssa acts to save him while Willems, like Leo, is left with a sense of complete loss of control, as if drugged: 'It was not death that frightened him: it was the horror of bewildered life where he could understand nothing and nobody round him; where he could guide, control, comprehend nothing and no one—not even himself' (*OI*, 149). Watts notes how frequently in Conrad's fiction 'a passionate sexual encounter seems, paradoxically, to emasculate the man, to be subversive, making him bewildered and self-doubting, and it sometimes results in his destruction' (Watts, 98–101). In the embrace of the woman and the Malay forest Willems's fantasy of himself as the imperial hero, master of himself and the conquered people, dissolves into the 'horror of bewildered life'. Willems comes face to face with the unfathomable nature of existence itself. Thus Conrad endorses the white male stereotype of imperial romance where women are treacherous: they are all Delilahs. The 'native' woman is especially dangerous: she may even carry disease, 'the pox'. On one level, Conrad subverts conventional assumptions of heroism in the imperial romance: at another he sanctions the fear of Oriental female sexuality as expressed in such literature.

A doubled-up crone

Another side to the characterization of Aïssa indicates Conrad's further endorsement of the conventional romance representation of Oriental women. Implying the transience of passion and the illusion of the ideal, Conrad juxtaposes Aïssa with the unnamed old woman who

constantly hovers in the background. This woman recalls the familiar hag-like creature of imperial romance, in particular of Gagool in *King Solomon's Mines*. She carries intimations of witches, of the strange and uncanny, vaguely recalling the weird sisters in *Macbeth*: 'The water in the iron pan on the cooking fire boiled furiously, belching out volumes of white steam that mixed with the thin black thread of smoke. The old woman appeared to him through this as if in a fog, squatting on her heels, impassive and weird' (*OI*, 348). While 'squatting over the fire', 'lifting up her bleared eyes to gaze', or stretching 'a tremulous and emaciated arm towards the hut', she embodies the decay and ugliness that is the underside of life in Sambir (*OI*, 99). She is a reminder that the glamour of Aïssa's loveliness and sensuality must inevitably fade. Willems notices her in the hut after Lingard's departure: 'A low moan ending a broken and plaintive mutter arrested Willems on the threshold. He peered round in the half-light under the roof and saw the old woman crouching close to the wall in a shapeless heap, and while he looked he felt a touch of two arms on his shoulders. Aïssa!' (*OI*, 285). The vision of the 'shapeless heap' and Aïssa's touch happen simultaneously, thus conflating the younger woman with the older one, for the reader and probably for Willems too.

Aïssa's fate mirrors that of the old woman: at the end of the novel she is 'tamed' by the indomitable Nina, who will herself become the Oriental beauty that Aïssa was. Her life becomes meaningless, and her once statuesque beauty gives way to the hag-like appearance of the old woman. Almayer has the final word on Aïssa:

> 'Now of course she lives with my serving girls, but does what she likes. As long as I have a handful of rice or a piece of cotton in the store she shan't want for anything. You have seen her. She brought in the dinner with Ali.'
>
> 'What! That doubled-up crone?'
>
> 'Ah!' said Almayer. 'They age quickly here.' (*OI*, 366)

Such is the destiny of women in Conrad's Sambir once they have lost their sexual attractiveness. Aïssa's life has little more value than that of a faithful old dog to whom Almayer is grateful for having once saved Nina's life. She has shrivelled up just as Ayesha did when she stepped into the flame of Life: 'She raised herself upon her bony hands, and blindly gazed around her, swaying her head slowly from side to side as does a tortoise. She could not see, for her whitish eyes were covered with a horny film. Oh the horrible pathos of the sight!' (*S*, 287).

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In nineteenth-century fiction female sexual precocity brings dire consequences. The fate of Caroline Brithwood in *John Halifax, Gentleman* is a warning to young women not to allow their passions to overcome their sense of propriety. Encountering Caroline years after she left her husband the Halifax family see, not a vibrant and elegant young noblewoman, but a degraded and queer parody of her former self. Phineas Fletcher views her with horror: 'And surely when, as she turned from side to side, I caught her full face—what a face it was!—withered, thin, sallow almost to deathliness, with a bright rouge spot on each cheek, a broad smile on the ghastly mouth' (*JH*, 500). The innocent young Maud is advised not to look at her for Phineas 'was sure this must be the wreck of such a life as womanhood does sometimes sink to' (*JH*, 500). Just as Aïssa is taken in by the Almayer household, so Caroline is cared for by the Halifaxes, but of course with more 'Christian charity' than is evident in Almayer's 'care'. Such is the destiny of nineteenth-century women who give in to their sexuality: beauty is defaced, promiscuity results in premature ageing, and the self-righteous of the community watch over the final days of the 'fallen woman'. Zola's Nana is the final word on the consequences of such female 'debauchery'.

Race and marriage

The woman 'with the steadfast heart' becomes the 'doubled-up crone' of the novel's end accepting scraps from Almayer's table. Almayer's comment, 'They age quickly out here', indicates the European man's sense of racial difference, and the male sense of woman's 'otherness'. The racial gulf that Willems perceives between himself and the 'native' woman Aïssa is central to the racial prejudices of imperial romance: miscegenation is taboo and brings with it only disaster. Conrad exploits this sense of racial and sexual 'otherness' in his exploration of the effects of Willems's decision to step from 'the straight and narrow path of his peculiar honesty', and in doing so endorses the assumptions of imperial fiction about 'native' women.

Retreating into the forests with Aïssa, Willems enters a moral wilderness that he comes to closely associate with the woman. It is crucial to remember, however, that Willems was a moral degenerate before he ever saw Aïssa. His 'peculiar honesty' had never involved a sense of loyalty to anyone but himself, as proven by his callous rejection of Aïssa once his passion is spent. His passion is the final chapter in the story of his self-destructive surrender to the demands of his own ego. His pursuit of her through the seductive veil of the Malay forest leads

to Aïssa's recognition that Willems was 'a man ready to be enslaved' (*OI*, 75). His boastful representation of himself, provides Aïssa with the material with which to fabricate her own fantasy: 'She could not understand all he told her of his life, but the fragments she understood she made up for herself into a story of a man great amongst his own people, valorous and unfortunate; an undaunted fugitive dreaming of vengeance against his enemies' (*OI*, 75). Neither her version of Willems nor his version of himself is the true one. The point is that through his romantic fictions of his own 'greatness' Willems has in fact enslaved Aïssa. Both are victims of romantic dreams of wronged manhood vindicating itself through heroic action.

Willems ignores Almayer's cynical warnings: 'But that girl. Hey! You stole her. You did not pay the old fellow. She is no good to him now, is she?' (*OI*, 89). In a rare moment of insight, Almayer recognizes that there is a racial and cultural gulf between Willems and Aïssa that neither race will tolerate. Almayer understands the conditions under which white men acquire 'native' mistresses. Willems doesn't play by the rules: like the Dutchman in 'Karain' who 'steals' Matara's sister, Willems invites Omar's murderous attack when he 'steals' Aïssa. In imperial romance such situations are avoided: either the 'dusky native' woman is fortuitously killed off, like Haggard's Foulata and Ustane, or she is resisted as when Kim resists the Woman of Shamlegh (*K*, 302–6). Miscegenation brings destruction, as Kipling's heroes Dravot and Carnehan discover in 'The Man Who Would Be King' (1888). Carnehan quaintly warns Dravot of the dangers of becoming involved with women: '"For the last time o' asking, Dan, do *not*," I says. "It'll only bring us harm. The Bible says that Kings ain't to waste their strength on women, specially when they've got some new raw kingdom to work over."' (in *Twenty-One Tales*, 69). Kipling is making a point here about the stability of the Empire. Martin Seymour-Smith claims that Kipling 'knew that an empire might fail if one of its founders has a defect of character' (Seymour-Smith, 196), a point Conrad endorses in *Lord Jim*.

The Indian girl whom Dravot tries to marry effectively brings about his death. Kipling's heroes resemble Willems in as much as they believe the 'natives' regard them as gods. But they at least have power and a fleeting 'greatness'; Willems's pretensions to power and greatness have substance only within his own imagination. Kipling's point was that the white race could maintain its hold over the Empire only whilst it remained detached from personal involvement with the Indian population; once Dravot 'sinks' to the level of contemplating a 'native' wife he is vulnerable and no better than the Indians themselves. Where

Conrad differs from Kipling is in his scepticism. Kipling's heroes are always superior even if at times it is only by virtue of being representatives of the imperial power. And Kipling's 'shady men', as Martin Green calls them are 'after all romantically large' (Green, 307). In Willems's case, however, whiteness and European identity are no proof against moral degeneracy. Effectively 'going native', Willems loses all claim on so-called civilized society.

Racial identity: dressing up for Empire

The hero of imperial romance consciously chooses to adopt the attire of the locals for the good of the Empire; it is only a pretence of 'going native'. So Dick Holland in plate 16 spends weeks practising to be an Indian in order to find his father and help defeat the 'wicked' Tippoo. He is even advised by his Indian uncle: 'After a week or two you must stain your face, arms and legs, and go out with Rajbullub in the evening. You must keep your eyes open and watch everything that passes, and do as you see others do' (*TM*, 176). Kim is similarly 'stained' to pass as an Indian. As Mahbub explains, the purpose is protection: 'Tonight we change thy colour. This sleeping under roofs has blanched thee like an almond' (*K*, 226). Kim and Dick disguise themselves as Indians for purposes of imperial espionage. There is never any doubt as to their allegiance, or to the fact that they can resume their white identity at will. It is as Brantlinger observes, the 'wish-fulfilment pattern' of the imperial romance where 'the civilized hero acquires a savage identity and yet remains civilized' (*Rule of Darkness*, 66). Even Fenimore Cooper's hero, Natty Bumppo, who chooses to live as a North American Indian, is rarely compromised when it comes to choices of loyalty. Indeed, as Green notes, Bumppo 'is a savage, except that he has the highest principles of civilization, in simple form' (Green, 133).

Willems has no such control either over his identity or his loyalties, if he ever had any. Returning to Almayer's campong, desperate to retrieve Aïssa from Babalatchi, he is a 'masquerading spectre of the once so very confidential clerk of the richest merchant in the islands':

> His jacket was soiled and torn; below the waist he was clothed in a worn-out and faded sarong. He flung off his hat, uncovering his long, tangled hair that stuck in wisps on his perspiring forehead and straggled over his eyes, which glittered deep down in the sockets like the last sparks amongst the black embers of a burnt-out fire. An unclean beard grew out of the caverns of his sunburnt cheeks. The

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> hand he put out towards Almayer was very unsteady. The once firm mouth had the tell-tale droop of mental suffering and physical exhaustion. He was barefooted. (*OI*, 87–8)

Romantic 'dressing-up' in the imperial romance as portrayed in plate 16 carries overtones of patriotic heroism and good clean fun for plucky young English boys. Not so for Willems: the glamour of his liaison with Aïssa gives way to a sordid physical decline that emphasizes his moral bankruptcy. He is a slave to his physical passion, and even that is all but spent, as indicated by the dying sparks of his eyes and his cavernous cheeks. Willems's physical disintegration is thus connected to his moral breakdown. He does not even have the dubious redeeming features of Kurtz's eloquence and reputation. Willems is not in disguise: he appears as what he is, a degenerate remnant of 'civilization'. In his impeccable white suit the imperial adventurer of the romance maintains his racial identity. Half of Willems's symbolic costume has been discarded; what remains is soiled and torn. From the waist down his identity is Malay, given to unrestrained physical passion. Willems's blatant parading of his 'depravity' disgusts that other would-be imperial hero, Almayer. Indeed Almayer articulates European censure of Willems's racial betrayal in 'going native'.[15]

Lingard's shame

Abandoned in the depths of the forest by Lingard, Willems fantasizes about escape to the land to which Henty's boys return, to the elegant lifestyle suggested by the dining room of Haggard's gentlemen in plate 3:

> The superior land of refined delights where he could sit on a chair, eat his tiffin off a white tablecloth, nod to fellows—good fellows; he would be popular; always was—where he could be virtuous, correct, do business, draw a salary, smoke cigars, buy things in shops—have boots … be happy, free, become rich. (*OI*, 329–30)

The trouble is, the hero of an adventure story would never betray his race and would certainly never take a Malay/Arab lover. Much of Willems's dream is a sanitized version of his circumstances before he 'stepped off the straight and narrow path of his peculiar honesty'. Escape relies upon action: Willems is even incapable of building a raft because all he has is a pocket-knife. The only two acts he effects within the novel are in themselves subversive: the stealing of Hudig's money

and the betrayal of Lingard to Abdulla. For the rest, Willems drifts into dissipation just as he drifts deeper into the recesses of the Malay forest.

The strong bonds of loyalty between white heroes are tested and often strained in the imperial adventure story. The fact that they survive the test and are thus fit to return home is evidence of racial superiority. So Ignosi tempts Quatermain, Curtis, and Good with all the benefits his race and country can provide:

> 'Ye who stood by me in rebellion and battle, will ye leave me in the day of peace and victory? What will ye—wives? Choose from among the maidens! A place to live in? Behold, the land is yours as far as ye can see … If there is anything more which I can give, that will I give you.' (*KSM*, 338)

On behalf all three Quatermain declines, proving his racial loyalty: 'Nay, Ignosi, we want none of these things … we would seek our own place' (*KSM*, 338). Haggard's heroes return to England as 'good fellows', racially and physically untainted having resisted the temptations of the 'dark continent'. It is this 'civilized' life for which Willems yearns. But Conrad reaches beyond the simple messages of the romance: the temptations that Haggard's heroes reject are the very ones to which Willems succumbs. Near the climax of the novel, in Lingard's eyes, he is 'not a human being that may be destroyed or forgiven', rather he is 'a something without a body and that must be hidden' (*OI*, 275). Echoing Leonard, Lingard denies him racial distinction: 'You are neither white nor brown. You have no colour as you have no heart' (*OI*, 276). 'Whiteness' does not automatically imply moral purity as Willems assumes.

Having no allegiances Willems is a renegade undermining Lingard's imperial scheme; in assisting Abdulla he forfeits the status of 'civilised white man'; by attacking Almayer's campong and usurping Lingard's 'Empire' Willems behaves like the Sulu pirates of old, so prominent in Babalatchi's fireside narratives. Unable to grasp that for his fellow Europeans he is now more 'Malay' than 'white', Willems appeals to Almayer's racial loyalty in words that echo the imperial romance: 'We are both white men, and should back each other up'. Almayer, however, identifies Willems with the Malays calling Willems a thief: 'but he never looked, and went away, one hand round that woman's waist, the other on Babalatchi's shoulder' (*OI*, 186). Willems has done what Quatermain could never do: he has turned his back on his own race and embraced the 'enemy'.[16] As Alan Sandison remarks, Willems 'is the reminder that a good man in this sense—a good chap, a fine fellow—doesn't really

exist; that he is nothing but a myth made corporate, raised in the interest of brotherhood and integrity'. He is 'the Judas of the Conrad system' (Sandison, 124).[17]

Henty's boys are physically more agile than his 'indolent' Indians; Ballantyne's young adventurers in *The Coral Island* are intellectually sharp in contrast to the sluggish intelligence of his Polynesians. The public school fraternal bonds, chivalry, and Christian ethics of the hero of adventure are the English characteristics that allow them to triumph over the 'inferior native'. Conrad too, makes racial distinctions: his Malays are indeed often 'savages' like the scheming Babalatchi or the indolent Lakamba but such distinctions are not straightforward. Willems's European blood is no assurance of 'superiority'. He tries despairingly to distance himself from Aïssa, citing her eyes as evidence of her 'otherness':

> 'Look at them! You can see nothing in them. They are big, menacing—and empty. The eyes of a savage; of a damned mongrel, half-Arab, half-Malay. They hurt me! I am white! I swear to you I can't stand this! Take me away. I am white! All white!'
>
> He shouted towards the sombre heaven, proclaiming desperately under the frown of thickening clouds the fact of his pure and superior descent. (*OI*, 271)

Willems has broken every rule in the book of imperial adventure. Lingard declares that Willems is 'not fit to go amongst people' (*OI*, 275). He might well have added 'people of any colour'. In a counterpoint to the conventional imperial hero, Willems is a 'tall madman making a great disturbance about something invisible; a being absurd, repulsive, pathetic, and droll' (*OI*, 271): he is Lingard's 'shame', a moral weakness, that must be hidden to sustain the illusion of white superiority.

Subverting the myth of heroism

Citing, among others, Haggard, Kipling, and Jules Verne, Said points to the 'exhilaration and interest of adventure in the colonial world' that informed the fictions of 'frank exoticism and confident empire' which, 'far from casting doubt upon the imperial undertaking, serve to confirm and celebrate its success':

> Against this optimism, affirmation, and serene confidence, Conrad's narratives … radiate an extreme, unsettling anxiety … Conrad's tales and novels in one sense reproduce the aggressive contours of the

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> high imperialist undertaking, but in another sense they are infected with the easily recognizable, ironic awareness of the post-realist modernist sensibility. (*Culture and Imperialism*, 227)

Some early reviewers of *An Outcast* seem to have recognized the 'aggressive contours of the high imperialist undertaking', but failed to see the ironic treatment of such material; perhaps they didn't want to. Conrad was doing something radically new with the motifs of imperial romance: he employed some of its strategies and endorsed some of its assumptions, but Conrad was not a writer of romantic adventure. Green points to the 'highly operatic' nature of the narrative in *An Outcast*. He cites the 'striking postures and gestures that are held unchanging over several pages', but concludes that 'the action is static': 'One feels that the central characters, who embody the story, are paralysed; they ought to move, but they can't and one feels that about Conrad often' (Green, 308–9).

That sense of paralysis is precisely the frustration felt by the reviewer in the *National Observer*. Used to a diet of imperial fiction that lionized its heroes, celebrated the Empire, and relied on action for narrative impetus, it is perhaps not surprising that some of Conrad's early readers were puzzled. Heroic action and paralysis did not belong in the imperial narrative. It is, however, very much part of Conrad's strategy that these two notions should coincide in his novel. The heroic, romantic action of the past is made to comment on the sordid reality of the present. Babalatchi, Aïssa, Omar, and, to some degree, Lingard, have a history of deeds of courage, endurance, fidelity, and romance which ironizes Willems's naive dreams of success, wealth, and reputation. The past is where heroic action is possible, in deed, or in imagination; the present is replete with inaction, treachery, and moral cowardice.[18]

The impossibility of positive action is made strikingly, and ironically, apparent as Lingard and Almayer ineffectually try to swat a bluebottle on Almayer's verandah. Lingard tries to strike it with his hat while Almayer dodges his head out of the way. The two are portrayed comically 'with heads thrown back and arms gyrating on high, or again bending low with infuriated lunges':

> But suddenly the buzz died out in a thin thrill away in the open space of the courtyard, leaving Lingard and Almayer standing face to face in the fresh silence of the young day, looking very puzzled and idle, their arms hanging uselessly by their sides—like men disheartened by some portentous failure. (*OI*, 169).

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No adventure hero would have been defeated by a fly, let alone made to look so foolish and inept; they had just been discussing Willems.

Romance, adventure, and positive action: these are things of the past, for which Conrad's characters yearn but can never achieve. Babalatchi's past is full of romance:

> He was a vagabond of the seas, a true Orang Laut, living by rapine and plunder of coasts and ships in his prosperous days; earning his living by honest and irksome toil when the days of adversity were upon him. So, although at times leading the Sulu rovers, he had also served as Serang of country ships, and in that wise had visited the distant seas, beheld the glories of Bombay, the might of the Mascati Sultan; had even struggled in the pious throng for the privilege of touching with his lips the Sacred Stone of the Holy City. (*OI*, 51–2)

This is the romance of the Orient, like *The Arabian Nights Entertainment*.[19] It occurred in the distant past, and even before the narrative present of the novel commences romance has died: The Sultan of Sulu rejects violence and insurrection, and Babalatchi accepts that 'There was nothing to be done. Times were changed' (*OI*, 54). The glorious adventures of Babalatchi, Omar, and Aïssa, end in exile in the backwater of Sambir. The prau that carried them there languishes on a mud-bank: it 'rotted in the rain, warped in the sun, fell to pieces and gradually vanished into the smoke of household fires of the settlement' (*OI*, 56). His once illustrious leader, Lakamba, is now a lazy, slow-witted figurehead, spending his days dozing on mats, or staring vacantly into the embers of the fire. Omar is a blind cripple. Aïssa betrays him in her liaison with Willems and becomes the 'doubled-up crone' of the novel's end. The heroic past is reduced to petty intrigue as Babalatchi plots, schemes, and betrays instead of indulging in the 'manly pursuits of throat-cutting, kidnapping, slave-dealing, and fire-raising' (*OI*, 52) like the Dyaks of plate 14.

Towards the end of his article, 'Well Done', Conrad gives his impression of the adventurer: 'A successful highwayman showed courage of a sort, and pirate crews have been known to fight with courage or perhaps only with reckless desperation in the manner of cornered rats' (*NLL*, 189–90). There is clearly no admiration for piracy. Writing this twelve years after the publication of *An Outcast*, it is possible that Conrad's opinions may have altered. Certainly he invokes the spirit of romance and adventure in Babalatchi's tales, but the underlying

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irony of 'manly pursuits' is unmistakable. About adventurers in general Conrad has this to say:

> I have noticed that the majority of mere lovers of adventure are mightily careful of their skins; and the proof of it is that so many of them manage to keep it whole to an advanced age. You find them in mysterious nooks of islands and continents, mostly red-nosed and watery-eyed, and not even amusingly boastful. (*NLL*, 190)

There is more than a hint of Lingard here. Ultimately for Conrad, adventure and the adventurer are hollow concepts with no human value: 'There is nothing more futile under the sun than a mere adventurer … Adventure by itself is but a phantom, a dubious shape without a heart' (*NLL*, 190). Time and again Conrad's characters discover the truth of these statements. Willems is one of a series of Conrad's heroes whose illusions are systematically shattered. Hampson says that 'Willems is the prototype of those Conradian heroes who betray an ideal conception of the self and "spoil" their lives' (*Betrayal*, 32): one thinks in particular of Jim and Nostromo.

One Conradian character does gain a kind of heroic status: the Captain of the *Nan-Shan* in *Typhoon*, MacWhirr. This dogged, uninspired nonentity of a man is a qualified hero because of his tenacity to one simple idea. He is no romantic hero: he neither possesses nor dreams of acquiring the characteristics that would make him so. As Conrad says: 'The mere love of adventure is no saving grace. It is no grace at all. It lays a man under no obligation of faithfulness to an idea and even to his own self' (*NLL*, 189). Faithfulness is what Willems singularly lacks and MacWhirr singularly possesses. Sticking doggedly to one idea, MacWhirr saves himself and his ship; Willems vacillates, deviates, betrays, and, ultimately destroys the lives of those who trusted him. Surrendering himself to the 'adventure' of his love affair with Aïssa, Willems loses his 'civilized' identity. This is emphasized when Willems witnesses, in a kind of dream, the retreat of part of himself: 'It was like an evasion, like a prisoner breaking his parole—that thing slinking off stealthily while he slept' (*OI*, 145). This returns us to the inaction, the paralysis that bothered the *National Observer*'s reviewer. The writer of adventure stories would not allow a fragmentation of the hero's self. At the first sign of moral dissolution the true adventure hero leaps to action and reaffirms his imperial purpose; Willems passively watches his own disintegration. Conrad's point is that 'There is nothing in the world to prevent a mere lover or pursuer of adventure from

sowed the seeds of his devotion to England' (Ford, 68). Watt discusses the genre and Conrad's knowledge of it in *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 43.

14. See Norman Sherry, *Conrad's Eastern World*, pp. 89–138, for a full discussion of both Lingard and Almayer.
15. Hereafter cited in the text as *Betrayal*.
16. White makes a similar point but links it to the 'native voice' of Almayer's wife, who perceives her 'capture' by Lingard in quite different terms than Lingard himself. See White, pp. 125–6.
17. Hereafter cited in the text as *LM*.
18. Although he implies that both men and women were engaged in this quest for 'Oriental sex', the writers Said mentions are exclusively male: Flaubert, Nerval, Burton, Lane, Gide, Maugham, and even Conrad. There thus seems to be some confusion as to who was actively seeking this experience.
19. See Berthoud ed., *Almayer's Folly* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992), Explanatory Note to pp. 72, 231. Berthoud also points out that the 'labial kiss' was an unusual experience for Malays at that time.
20. Ted Boyle mentions the fairy-tale in connection with Nina. See Boyle, pp. 31–3.
21. By contrast, Ayesha's white robe coyly disguises the fact that she is a 'sexually predatory' female.
22. Hampson notes how Nina learns her mother's lesson and gives a lucid account of how 'the representation of sexual passion as male enslavement elides into sexual passion as demonic possession'. See Hampson in *Tenggara* 32 (1994), pp. 108–9.
23. Berthoud, Explanatory Notes, 220. He explains that by 'European standards, Eastern houses are underfurnished, and their owners sit on mats or rugs'.

Chapter 4 *An Outcast of the Islands*: echoes of romance

1. In a letter to Marguerite Poradowska dated Saturday [18th? August 1894] Conrad outlines his vision for the novel and says: 'I am calling it "Two Vagabonds"'. See *Letters 1*, p. 171.
2. See Norman Sherry, *Conrad*: *the Critical Heritage*, pp. 62–81 for a selection of early reviews.
3. It is also a cliché that Conrad was fond of using: in a letter to Spiridion Kliszczewski in 1885 he expressed the hope that the Kliszczewski boys would 'walk straight in the path traced by their parents … for in the path of rectitude lies the true happiness!' (*Letters 1*, 17). In an article for the *Daily Mail* in 1910 Conrad recognizes that the temptation to stray from the path is a common human predicament: 'Most of us, if you will pardon me for betraying the universal secret, have, at some time or other, discovered in ourselves a readiness to stray far, ever so far, on the wrong road'. Reprinted in *Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 61.
4. It is interesting to note that as early as *The Tempest* (1623) there is reference to how travellers thus beguiled native peoples. Frank Kermode gives details of such instances in his introduction to the Arden edition (1994), p. xxxvii.

5. White notes the distinction between Willems and Almayer, commenting that while 'Almayer was unheroic in a pathetic sort of way, Willems is corrupt'. She goes further in suggesting that Willems is a 'contributing cause' to the 'disease imperialism proliferates' (White, 137).
6. The drooping mouth, of course, prefigures Willems's own much later in the novel when he is but a shadow of his former self. It also looks forward to Winnie Verloc's drooping lower lip, indicating her 'degeneracy' as she murders her husband in *The Secret Agent* (1907).
7. The comma here before 'white' is a curious inclusion perhaps designed to emphasize, or make an ironic comment upon, the fact that Leonard identifies himself with 'whites'. Or perhaps it suggests a hesitancy Leonard's part. But, as John Stape and Hans van Marle indicate in the Explanatory Notes to the World's Classics edition of *An Outcast*: 'in the Netherlands East Indies colony no legal distinctions were made between white and Eurasian inhabitants, all classified as Europeans from 1854'. See p. 374, note to p. 28.
8. White argues that Ignosi's comment is evidence of Haggard's 'insistence on the natural differences' that 'comfortingly, asserts the white man's superiority' (White, 79). Note how Ignosi's analogy is curiously close to the butterflies and beetles analogies in *Lord Jim*.
9. The Glossary to the World's Classics edition defines Sirani as 'Nazarene', in other words, Christian. This serves to further highlight the complex cultural conflicts in *An Outcast.*
10. In *The Mirror of the Sea* Conrad recalls a real-life character called Hudig who he describes as 'a big, swarthy Netherlander, with black moustaches and a bold glance' (*MS*, 51).
11. In a letter to Marguerite Poradowska dated Monday morning [29 October or 5 November 1894] [London] Conrad says: 'Mrs M. Wood has stolen my title. She has just published a book called *The Vagabonds* and now I am really furious. No! You would pity me if you knew how that annoys me'. See *Letters 1*, p. 185.
12. I give a fuller discussion of this comment in my paper *'Heart of Darkness* and *Allan Quatermain*: Apocalypse and Utopia' in *Conradiana* 31.1 (1999) pp. 3–24.
13. Letter dated Saturday [18? August 1894]. See *Letters 1*, p. 171.
14. Hereafter cited in the text as *BR*.
15. It should be recognized that the Islamic morals of the Malay Archipelago were extremely strict. They have their own rationale and their own internal validity, a fact of which Conrad was aware.
16. In *Allan Quatermain* the adventurers settle in Zu-Vendis where Quatermain eventually dies. But by this time they have created a democratic Christian paradise amongst a race of white Africans.
17. Robert Hampson goes further by exploring the psychological reasons for Willems's betrayals. Willems, says Hampson, 'lives in an amoral world where actions are dissociated from their consequences, whereas Lingard inhabits a world of responsibilities'. See *Betrayal and Identity*, p. 46, for further discussion of Willems's lack of conscience. For a fuller examination of Willems's struggle with his own identity see 'The Unshared Idea of Self', in *Betrayal and Identity*, pp. 32–66.

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18. Andrea White also points to the multiple tellings of the story, which she says 'effectively distances Conrad's work from the genre so many read him in' (White, 149).
19. The most celebrated and successful English translation of this is by Sir Richard Burton (1885–8). E. W. Lane had previously published his version in 1838–40.

Chapter 5 'Karain': constructing the romantic subject

1. I am grateful to Laurence Davies for his perceptive insights and suggestions on this matter. Much of what I have written here is inspired by his ideas. His private remarks to me are also worth noting:

> In commercial terms, you might say that Conrad (and Ford in the period of *Romance*) had crossover dreams of writing novels and stories that both conformed closely enough to certain features of popular fiction to be highly saleable and yet were artistically serious. Whether one sees Conrad as an inspired subverter of imperial attitudes from within the premier imperialist magazine or as a cynical collaborator with the forces of racism, reaction, etc., this doubleness (literary / popular) would play a significant part. To anyone in the business, such as Garnett, 'Karain' would seem perfect, 'destined for' Maga, a match made in Heaven so to speak. Conrad had assimilated the codes so thoroughly that he wrote a story that was a natural for *Blackwood's* (and as Garnett suggests, perhaps only for *Blackwood's*) without realising it. Then he woke up and found himself a *Blackwood's* author.

2. Laurence Davies's comments here, and the ones that follow, are from our private correspondence. I am also indebted to David Benyon for his insightful comments about Conrad and Cunninghame Graham.
3. T. J. Wise includes this information in his description of *Tales of Unrest*:

> Upon the flyleaf of a copy of the First Edition of *Tales of Unrest* Mr. Conrad has written the following interesting statement:
>
> *'This volume contains the first set of short stories I ever wrote. 'The Lagoon' is the earliest, and 'Karain' the latest, 1895–1897 … With the exception of 'The Return' they were all serialised; 'Karain' beginning my connection with Blackwood's Magazine.'* (Wise, 15)

4. See, for example, the unsigned review in the *Daily Telegraph* on 9 April 1898, reprinted in Norman Sherry, *Conrad: the Critical Heritage*, pp. 101–2.
5. Lawrence Graver says that this narrator's voice 'belongs to Charlie Marlow'. See Graver, p. 31. But, as Michele Drouart points out, 'this narrator lacks Marlow's perception and discernment; he has far fewer doubts and misgivings about his own approach to the world he enters'. See Michele Drouart, 'Gunrunning, Theatre and Cultural Attitude in Conrad's "Karain"', *Span*, 33, p. 137.
6. Hereafter cited in the text as *Tenggara*.
7. Compare this description to the image of Dick Holland dressed in Indian attire in plate 15.

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