

## Point of View in Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*: A Stylistic Perspective

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**Abstract.** The aim of this paper is to examine how point of view is signaled in Conrad's *Almayer's Folly* and how it is used to exercise control over the attitudes we have of characters and events in the story. Specifically, it aims to examine who sees and who speaks in the story, whose views or ideas are being expressed as well as how characters and events are represented. As regards the characters, the focus will be on the representation of the white European self vis-a-vis the native Other. In achieving this aim, the study will utilise Halliday's transitivity system, Fowler's point of view model and Said's *Orientalism* or discourse of Othering. Findings reveal that the features which indicate or control point of view include the system of deixis, vocabulary and transitivity structures, the use of modality as well as the various modes of speech and thought presentation. Almayer is the main focaliser in the text as the internal type of narration (narration within a character's consciousness) is mostly accorded to him. Prolonged intrusions into Almayer's mental faculties allow the reader to empathise with his victimised and helpless state and to distance the readers from the natives who have been depicted externally (narration from outside a character's consciousness) in a most unsavoury manner. To some extent, an internal perspective is also accorded to the natives as it is through their perspectives that the white man's duplicitous nature is revealed and the moral justifications for empire questioned. These are moments when Conrad registers his ambivalence towards the colonial project and empire, however his attempts are not fully realised as he invariably gets pulled back into the time-worn discourse of Othering in his representations of the Other.

**Keywords and phrases:** point of view, Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*, Halliday's transitivity system, Fowler's point of view model, Said's *Orientalism* or discourse of Othering

## Introduction

In literary criticism, the study of point of view tends to revolve around the use of authorial omniscience, multiple and shifting viewpoints, the stream of consciousness method, reliable and unreliable narrators, etc. There is little interest in the linguistic indicators of point of view and how viewpoint can be controlled in a story by providing a limited way of perceiving fictional reality (Short 1994, 172). This issue, however, has interested scholars working in the disciplines of narratology and stylistics. For instance, in the discipline of narratology, a comprehensive model of point of view was first proposed by Boris Uspensky in 1973 which was later revised and refined by Roger Fowler in 1986 and then Simpson in 1993. Fowler's model has helped to shape much scholarly work on point of view in the discipline of stylistics (Simpson 2004, 77). It has been used to study how viewpoint is controlled through the representation of characters and events as well as their speech and thought processes. Point of view has a "manipulative potential" which writers can exploit when representing characters, events and settings in a fictional text (Verdonk 2002, 30). In essence, point of view has to be understood not just in the literal or perceptual sense, but a metaphorical one as well as it is linked to attitudes, feelings and sentiments (ibid.).

With this in mind, it is the aim of this paper to examine how point of view is signaled in narration and exercises control over the attitudes we have of characters and events in a story. In achieving this aim, this paper will utilise Fowler's model to examine the language used to encode point of view in Conrad's *Almayer's Folly* in order to find out who sees and who speaks in the story, whose views or ideas are being expressed as well as how characters and events are represented. As regards the characters, the focus will be on the representation of the white European self vis-a-vis the native Other.

Joseph Conrad was selected because of the varied viewpoints that critics have of him. Some scholars regard him as a racist because of his negative portrayal of indigenous inhabitants vis-a-vis their white colonial masters (Johnson 1995; Zawiah 1994; Murray 1987; Achebe 1988). However, others such as Edward Said (1994) believed that Conrad's fiction was time specific, hence what he wrote with regard to imperialism was considered to be "normal" and acceptable. It was just not possible for him to visualise "an alternative to imperialism" at the time he was writing (Svensson 2010, 11). Benita Parry (1983), on the other hand, regarded him as an author who was ambivalent towards imperialism. Conrad's first novel, *Almayer's Folly* which was written in the late 19th century, tells the story of a failed Dutch trader, Kaspar Almayer, and his tumultuous relationship with his

native wife, Mrs. Almayer, and his contempt for his business rivals, the local natives. He dreams of amassing gold and settling in Europe with his beautiful half-caste daughter, Nina. Unfortunately, his hopes are dashed as Nina rejects him and marries Dain Maroola, a Malayan prince.

## Literature Review

Conrad is immortalised by various initiatives to study him and his oeuvre. In the past, critics such as Jocelyn Baines (1960), Norman Sherry (1966), Frederik R. Karl (1979), Zdislaw Najder (1983) and Cedric Watts (1989) focused on his biography and early life in order to understand the historical specificities that had shaped his life and his works. Dissatisfied with biographical research, other critics began to explore thematic issues in Conrad's works to better understand the messages that he was trying to relay in his works.

A shift from concern with content to form began with the publication of Jakob Lothe's (1989) book *Conrad's Narrative Method*. In this book, he utilised concepts drawn from Genette's narrative theory to show how successful Conrad's narrative technique is in shaping the thematic concerns in his fictional works. In a similar vein, Diana Knight (1987) also used Genette's concepts to evaluate their usefulness and relevance in her study of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Both Lothe and Knight broke new ground as they suggested a novel way of close reading that considered both form and content; importantly, their readings became much more theoretically informed. Prior to this, Conradian critics tended to be "theory-free" as they worked on the assumption that criticism began with the author, her/his text or her/his social and historical background (Tallack 1987, 2).

As time progress, the analyses of Conrad's fiction has also become much more interdisciplinary as critics began to draw ideas from structuralism, marxism and postcolonialism. Conrad has also been read from ecocritical, gender, psychoanalysis and political perspectives (Szczechak-Brewer, 2015). For example, David Murray (1987) and Zawiah Yahya (1994) employed marxist tools to analyse Conrad's fiction. Murray used Bakhtin's theory of dialogism to explicate the subtle workings of colonialist ideology in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* while Zawiah applied Althusser's notion of ideology and the interpellated subject and Foucault's idea of power as producer of "truth" and "reality" in her reading of Conrad's Malayan texts (Zawiah 1994, 70). Murray (1987, 129) discovered in his analysis that Conrad was not able to recreate the dialogue between the whites and African natives as information about the natives were obtained from written sources rather than the natives themselves. Zawiah found that the reader's role is defined when

she is constructed as a subject in the text via a process of interpellation. The reader becomes a subject in relation to the narrator's position of authority and consequently whatever is proffered by the narrator is accepted as truth and reality.

James M. Johnson (1995) demonstrated in his research how certain racist attitudes are uncritically reproduced in a number of Conrad's texts namely *Almayer's Folly* (1895), *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896), *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897), *An Outpost of Progress* (1897), *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and *Lord Jim* (1900). To him, Conrad's racist views coalesce with views endorsed by Victorian evolutionary anthropology. However, unlike Murray, Zawiah and Johnson, Benita Parry (1983) in her book *Conrad and Imperialism* argued that Conrad's works abound in contradictory meanings. Conrad, to Parry, is ambivalent towards imperialism. This is because whilst celebrating the virtues of service and patriotism, she found that he also rebukes the moral justifications for imperialism.

Linguistic studies on Conrad's works tended to focus on his grammatical irregularities as English was not his native language. While some studies regarded these grammatical irregularities as aberrations or deviations from the norm, others regarded them positively. This is because of his ability to integrate them into his "masterful styling of English" (Onishi 2017, 9). Controversy over Conrad's style continued for many decades. However, interest on Conrad's language or style waned and only peaked in the 1990's. During this period, much work on Conrad was contributed by Micheal Lucas. In 2000, he published a book on Conrad's literary style titled *Aspects of Conrad's Literary Language*. This book, which focused on grammatical and sentence structures, compared Conrad's writing style with English writers during that period of time (Onishi 2017, 11). Following Lucas, Onishi (2017, 13) in her study titled "Conrad's Pronoun Usage as a Stylistic Marker and Its Relation to His Density of Text and Themes" focused on pronoun usage, a feature that was left out by Lucas.

Using Halliday's transitivity model, Shakila conducted a study titled "Characterisation and Transitivity: A Stylistic Analysis of Conrad's *Almayer*" in 2002. In this study, she showed how Conrad attempts to question European superiority via his representation of the main character, Almayer. Almayer, in this story, is no swashbuckling hero; in fact, he is constructed as a weak, feeble and powerless European compared to the forceful natives. In another study titled "Language and Control: A Stylistic Analysis of Selected Works of Conrad", Shakila (2011) utilised Fowler and Simpson's model of point of view to study various selected passages from *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* in order to show the different types of perspectives, their linguistic manifestations and how viewpoint can be utilised to control reader response.

Stubbs (2005) conducted a corpus-driven study of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in order to show the literary value of using simple frequency counts and corpus data. In this study, he found that one of the frequently used words in Conrad's text is "seemed" which suggests his deep concern with uncertainty. In addition, he discovered that the word "grass" tends to collocate with "death, decay and desolation" (Stubbs 2005, 14). To Stubbs, a corpus-driven approach provides a much more objective analysis of a literary text than an intuitive reading as practiced in traditional literary criticism. It also provides a response to linguists and literary critics who show scepticism towards quantitative stylistics.

Drawing from linguistic stylistics and narrative theory, Werner Senn (2017) in his book *Conrad's Narrative Voice* identifies and characterises Conrad's verbal style. In this study, he was not concerned about offering a "new reading" of Conrad's texts or a complete stylistic analysis but was only keen to draw our attention to Conrad's literary language that has hitherto been neglected in order to allow a better assessment of his literary achievement (Senn 2017, 1). He discovered that Conrad was mainly concerned with how to tell a story accurately in his attempts to describe the external world and the inner consciousness of characters. In addition, he also found that Conrad showed a preference for externality, indirectness of presentation and psychical distance, in order to create "a sense of uncertainty, ambivalence and indeterminacy" (Senn 2017, 230).

In sum, linguistic studies on Conrad tended to revolve around his language and style, his grammatical irregularities, his enrichment of the English language, and frequently used words. In two studies, specific models have been used to show the linguistic construction of character, the encoding of different perspectives as well as the use of viewpoint in controlling reader response. This study extends the work done on viewpoint by providing a full-length stylistic analysis of Conrad's *Almayer's Folly* using ideas drawn from Halliday, Fowler and Said.

## **Theories and Methods**

### **Stylistics**

Stylistics is a rapidly developing area of linguistics (Solly 2017, 1). Ever since Roman Jakobson's seminal essay "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics" which was delivered at the *Style in Language Conference* in 1958, a number of diverse stylistic approaches had been proposed. Although both stylistics and practical/literary criticism rely on intuitive and interpretive skills in their attempts to interpret the formal features of literary texts, the difference is that stylistics tries to avoid vague and impressionistic statements by drawing on particular linguistic

models and terminology that are felt to be useful (Wales 1989, 438). Stylistics then refers to the practice of using linguistics in studying literary texts (Simpson 1993, 3; Carter and Simpson 1989, 5). With the passage of time, stylistics began to draw ideas from recent developments in literary and cultural theory. Contemporary stylistics is even more multi-faceted and adaptive as it has gained insights not only from numerous branches of linguistics (critical linguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, corpus linguistics) but also the discipline of social sciences (sociology, psychology, political science, feminism) in order to ensure the richest possible interpretation of a text for as Simpson (2014, 3, as cited in Sorlin 2014) says, “the more complete and context-sensitive the description of language, then the fuller stylistic analysis that accrues”. It is a discipline that courageously breaks down disciplinary borders or frontiers in order to create and enrich its own discursive space (Sorlin 2014). Given this, the stylistic analysis in this study has integrated ideas from linguistics and critical theory. Specifically, it draws insights from Halliday’s functional theory (in particular his transitivity system), Fowler’s point of view model and Said’s *Orientalism*.

### **Halliday’s functional theory**

Since its introduction in the 1960s, theoretical perspectives from Halliday’s functional theory or systemic functional linguistics (SFL) have made significant contributions by providing applicable frameworks to disciplines where language is the focus of study (Baklouti and Fontaine 2018, 4–5). These include stylistics, language learning and teaching, translation, media and communication studies. According to Halliday (1978, 112), a text is composed of three functional components or meanings which are then actualised as integrated lexicogrammatical features. These three functions are the ideational function, the interpersonal function and the textual function. They are simultaneously operative in any text.

The ideational function serves the expression of content and it represents the speaker’s meaning potential as an observer. It is via this function that a speaker embodies in language her/his own experiences of the real world. These include the speaker’s experiences of the internal world of her/his consciousness, perception, cognition, reactions, etc. While ideas are expressed through the ideational function, attitudes and feelings are encoded via the interpersonal function. The textual function serves to make texts cohere or hang together as a logical whole. These three functions are encoded in the grammatical structure of language, for instance, the ideational function is realised using lexical (vocabulary) and transitivity (clausal) structures. The interpersonal function is manifested in the modal structures and the textual function which is realised via cohesive links helps to ensure that the text coheres.

Essentially, lexical structures refer to vocabulary items, naming practices, category labels and epithets which people use to classify, categorise, organise and evaluate people, events and experiences. Since the system of classification that is used to represent the world is not natural or universal but social in origin, there is no neutral or impartial way for one to represent and comprehend the world. In this study, vocabulary items will be analysed to find out how natives and non-natives are depicted, labelled and categorised in Conrad's *Almayer's Folly* and their effects on the reader.

Transitivity is part of a broader, semantic network of relations involving processes (the verb phrase), participant roles (the noun phrase) and circumstances (adverbials). There are several patterns of transitivity and they facilitate the expression of a speaker's external and internal experiences. Basically, there are four types of processes:

1. Material processes or processes of doing (encoded in verbs such as “kicked”, “threw”, “broke”)
2. Mental processes or processes of sensing (encoded in verbs such as “saw”, “heard”, “felt”)
3. Verbalisation processes or processes of saying (realised in verbs such as “cursed”, “shrieked”, “declared”)
4. Relational processes or processes of being (realised in verbs such as “was”, “had”, “possessed”)

The participants involved in the above process types are analysed in terms of their semantic roles. Hence, they are either the Agents (subjects of material process), Sensers (subjects of mental process), Sayers (subjects of verbalisation process) and Carriers (subjects of relational process), and as the Affected (objects of material process), Phenomenon (objects of mental process) and Target (objects of verbalisation process). Essentially, transitivity concerns the relationships that are encoded by the verb and the accompanying participant roles in a clause. It is that part of the linguistic system that expresses “who (or what) does what to whom or (what)” (Simpson and Montgomery 1995, 144–145).

Halliday's transitivity model has been used to analyse narrative texts in particular narrative characterisation. “Actions and events” are the main modes of narrative characterisation (Simpson 2004, 74). The development of characters in a narrative text is reflected in the various semantic processes and participant roles. Character is revealed through one's active or passive involvement in the development of the plot. It is also revealed through the character's influence on narrative incidents or

their detachment from narrative incidents and the way they are positioned in texts: as active focalisers (the one who sees and perceives) or as passive observers of events around them (Simpson 2004, 74). Armed with these ideas, attempts will be made to analyse the various characters actions and linguistic roles in Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*.

### **Point of view**

Point of view is a complex term as it can be defined in more than one way. According to Wales (1989; 2014), this term which is also referred to as “perspective” or “orientation” could either mean the position from which something is observed or considered, in short, an angle of vision or method of narration or one's manner of viewing things. The latter entails not only the presence of a focaliser (the character who sees and perceives), but also a particular way of conceptualising the world: a world-view or ideology, as in the “point of a view of a native” or the “point of view of an imperialist”. Point of view also concerns the communication of attitude of the writer or narrator towards a character or an event that is being related (Wales 1989, 362–364).

In order to analyse point of view in Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*, Fowler's point of view model will be used. Fowler (1986, 127–146) distinguished between three senses of point of view: (1) spatio-temporal point of view; (2) psychological point of view; and (3) ideological point of view. The temporal perspective refers to the use of flashbacks (analepsis) and flashforwards (prolepsis) which function to disrupt the natural flow of time. Linguistically, the temporal perspective is signaled in texts via the use of time deixis such as the adverb “now” and “then”. The former refers to the actual time of speaking while the latter indicates that an event took place before the time of speaking (Simpson 1993, 14). The spatial point of view determines the viewing position of a character/focaliser or narrator who sees objects and people either close-up or from a distance. This viewpoint is constructed via quantitative adjectives such as “long”, “steep”, “steeper” that help to signify size and length; prepositional phrases indicating relationships and directions such as “under the ridge”, “from the wall”, “down to the open gate”; locative phrases such as “where”, “westward”, “here” and so on (Fowler 1986, 129).

Unlike the spatio-temporal point of view, the ideological and psychological point of view are more complicated as they tend to overlap. Ideology does not mean false consciousness or delusions but it refers to “the system of beliefs, values and ideas by reference to which a person or society comprehends the world” (Fowler 1986, 130). Essentially, point of view on the ideological plane refers to how

a set of values or belief system is communicated via the language of a text. In considering the ideological viewpoint, the following questions need to be asked (Fowler 1986, 130):

Who, within the compositional structure of the work, is the vehicle of the ideology? Is the author speaking through the narrative voice, or is a character or characters? And is there a single dominating world-view, or a plurality of ideological positions?

Linguistically, the ideological viewpoint is manifested in text via the use of modal auxiliaries (“may”, “might”, “must”), modal adverbs or sentence adverbs (“certainly”, “probably”, “surely”), evaluative adjectives and adverbs (“lucky”, “luckily”, “regrettably”), verbs of knowledge, prediction, evaluation (“seem”, “disapprove”, “dislike”), generic sentences (generalised propositions) and transitivity structures (participants, process verbs and circumstances) (Fowler 1986, 131–132). Fowler contended that the language of a text can be designed in such a way to show the conceptualisation of reality or world view of a particular character/narrator. For instance, in Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, one can hardly find transitive verbs with objects, a proliferation of intransitives and the use of circumlocution to designate objects. This is because the story is told from the viewpoint of a 33 year-old adult who has the mind of a young child. This character/narrator has little sense of action and its effects on objects and has yet to master a society’s classification of objects (Fowler 1986, 132–133).

The psychological point of view refers to the ways in which a story is mediated through the thought processes or consciousness of the focaliser or teller of the story (Simpson 1993, 12). It concerns the question of who is presented as the observer or focaliser of events; the narrator or participating character. Fowler (1986, 134–138) divides the psychological point of view into two broad categories: internal (narration within a character’s consciousness) and external perspective (narration which is outside a character’s consciousness). Internal narration by a first person narrator is indicated through the use of the first person singular pronoun, present tense, foregrounded modality that helps to stress the judgments and opinions of a participating narrator, *verba sentiendi* (words that denote internal thought processes, feelings and emotions) and particular transitivity structures. Internal narration also includes the stream of consciousness technique of narration or interior monologue. However, internal narration by an omniscient narrator (who claims knowledge of a character’s thought process) is signaled in texts through the use of deixis [demonstratives such as “here” (proximal deictics) and “there” (distal deictics)], modality and *verba sentiendi*. Transitivity patterns which are found are framed by authorial ideology. In terms of speech and thought presentation,

a fair share of free indirect discourse (see explanation in the following section) can be found. External narration is the most impersonal form of third person narration as it is neutral, impersonal and avoids the use of evaluative modalities. In external narration, the characters ideologies become inaccessible as the narrator's persona is highlighted. Linguistically, words of estrangement [verbs and adverbs of speculation, interpretation or tentativeness such as "seem", "apparently" and "as if" (Wales 1989, 156)], *verba sentiendi*, generic sentences, metaphors and comparisons can be located.

### **The techniques of speech and thought presentation**

In a study of point of view, it is important to identify the focaliser or the seer in the story as well as the speaker, the source of speech. The focaliser and speaker may be similar or different entities. The techniques of speech and thought presentation have been widely discussed in the discipline of linguistics and stylistics (see Pascal 1977; Rimmon-Kenan 2002; Leech and Short 1981; Simpson 1993). It is shown that there are a number of modes which writers can use to present the characters' speech and thought patterns. These range from direct speech/direct thought, indirect speech/indirect thought, and free direct speech/free indirect thought or, as popularly referred to as free indirect discourse/thought (FID/FIT). The choice of mode would serve certain stylistic purposes: it could foster empathy between narrator and character, create an ironic distance between narrator and character, or it might simply create ambiguity (Simpson and Montgomery 1995, 150–152; Leech and Short 1981, 318–351; Toolan 1988, 119–123).

The linguistic differences between direct and indirect speech are demonstrated below:

1. Direct speech (DS): She said, "I'll come back here tomorrow".
2. Indirect speech (IS): She said that she would go back there the following day.

When direct speech is changed to indirect speech, the comma after the verb of saying "said" and the inverted commas for the reported clause are removed. The proximal deictics "come", "here" and "tomorrow" are changed to their distal counterparts "go", "there" and "the following day". The first-person pronoun "I" is transformed to the third person pronoun "she" and the subordinating conjunction "that" is introduced to replace the punctuation marks that have been omitted. Finally, the modal "will" is converted to its past tense form "would". What is important to note is that the direct speech form represents a character's words and viewpoints and the shift to the indirect mode encodes a narrator's viewpoint.

Also, in direct speech the narrator represents faithfully the words and structures used by the character whereas in the indirect mode the narrator would have provided an interpretation of what the character might have said. Similar changes take place when direct thought is transformed into indirect thought.

In direct speech/indirect speech, the use of the reported verb and quotation marks reminds us of the narrator's presence. When these features are removed, a freer version of direct speech/indirect speech is produced. The altered version, free direct speech/indirect speech (and their thought counterparts), would enable a character to speak much more freely to the reader without going through an intervening narrator. For example:

3. Free direct speech (FDS): She said, "I'll come back here tomorrow". (DS)  
I'll come back here tomorrow. (FDS)
4. Free indirect speech (FIS): She said that she would go there the following day. (IS)  
She would go there tomorrow. (FIS)

When free direct speech is concerned, the second sentence represents the freest version of that mode. Here, the inverted commas and the reporting verb "said" have been removed. In the next mode, the second sentence represents the freest version. As regards this sentence, the subordinating conjunction "that" is removed but the proximal deictic "tomorrow", a feature of direct speech is not replaced with its distal counterpart. This is to allow parts of the original speech and flavour of the character to be retained (Toolan 1988, 124).

Finally, a narrator sometimes simply reports an act without giving any commitment to the sense of what is being reported. This is referred to as the narrative report of speech act which is best illustrated in the following example:

5. Narrative report of speech act (NRSA): She confided in him.

Analogously, the following are the five categories of thought presentation (Leech and Short 1981, 337):

6. a. Free direct thought (FDT): Does she still love me.
- b. Direct thought (DT): He wondered, "Does she still love me".
- c. Free indirect thought (FIT): Did she still love him.
- d. Indirect thought (IT): He wondered if she still love him.
- e. Narrative report of a thought act (NRTA): He wondered about her love for him.

### **Said's *Orientalism***

Inspired by Foucault's work on the relation between knowledge and power, Said's *Orientalism* was and still "remains a cogent critique of colonially conditioned modes of knowledge production" (Dabashi 2018). Essentially, *Orientalism* is "primarily a critique of figurative, tropic and narrative representations" (Dabashi 2018). Since it functions as a mode of representation, it can be dismantled or deconstructed. Said (1978) argued that Western writers tend to emphasise the "differences" between races in order that European behaviour be perceived as the norm and that the Other is seen as strange or queer for that is one way in which Europe can exert its superiority (cited in Mills 1991, 88). This process of "Othering" or *Orientalism*, Johannes Fabian (1983) demonstrated, can also be achieved by consigning the Other to another time sphere that is by relegating them to a European past via the use of temporal terms such as "primitive", "backward", "savage" etc. (cited in Mills 1991, 89). In addition, the Other is always featured as parts of a body – metonymised – and rarely depicted as full-bodied individuals. Their inferiority or uncivilised nature is further accentuated when they are portrayed as abhorrent smells and filthiness (cited in Mills 1991, 90). As such, it is vital to examine Conrad's *Almayer's Folly* in order to discern his linguistic and representational practices with regard to the natives and non-natives. Essentially, the aim is to find out whether such practices are endorsed or questioned, whether they help to evoke our empathy for the focaliser, characters and events in this story or do they, instead, create narrative ambiguity or an ironic or distancing effect.

### **Point of View in Conrad's *Almayer's Folly***

This section presents the analysis of the novel using ideas drawn from Halliday's transitivity system, Fowler's point of view model and Said's *Orientalism*. Essentially, it will reveal who sees and speaks in the text, from whose viewpoint is the story being told, the attitude of a focaliser/narrator towards characters and events, how characters are represented and how the text mediates values and beliefs through either the character or narrator.

### **Almayer and internal narration**

Almayer is the main focaliser since he is frequently depicted from the inside. More often than not, information about Almayer, in particular anterior information (for example, his convenient marriage to Lingard's protege, his hatred for the natives and his quest for gold) is relayed to us by the narrator introspectively that is via Almayer's focalising consciousness. This "internal" subjective type of narration accorded to Almayer helps to evoke our empathy for him. Basically, what this

means is that the narrator by virtue of his omniscience claims knowledge about what is going on in Almayer's mind by analysing, interpreting and reporting Almayer's mental processes, his feelings, intentions and perceptions (Fowler 1986, 137). These internal processes which are not directly observable to the naked eye are manifested in the text via special expressions or *verba sentiendi* such as "he thought", "he felt", "he realised", "he recognised", "he detected", "he watched", "he heard", "he wished", etc.

In fact, Almayer is the only character in the text who is never described externally; all we know about him physically is that he is large and has a beard. By employing an introspective style of narration, the narrator enables Almayer to be presented to us as he sees himself and as he sees others in relation to him. Events and setting are also described to us in terms of Almayer's own experiences and perspective. This, as Stephens (1992, 50) remarks, helps to construct a restrictive subject position for the reader to occupy, as on many occasions, Almayer, acts as a prism through which the natives' values and beliefs are scrutinised. It is observed that Almayer expresses views which tend to synchronise with Eurocentric perspectives and this may help to constitute a particular subject position for the reader to occupy.

Since it is the narrator who uses his own words to report to us Almayer's thoughts, deixis, modality, transitivity patterns and the system of lexical classification manifested in the text belong to the narrator. If this is the case, then we can safely say that when Almayer sees the natives as "savages" (Conrad 1976, 27); Mrs. Almayer as a "slave" (13); "a savage tigress" (25); a "savage intrusion" (30); Dain as a "savage" (144); both Lakamba and Babalatchi as "infernal savages" (62); and the Arabs as "wily" (32) and "lawless" (40); the narrator's choice of words betray not only Almayer's negative judgements of these people, but also the narrator's, especially when irony is not intended and when the narrator does not offer any evaluations on such myopic observations of Almayer's. Because Almayer himself had used the word "savage" on numerous occasions when referring to his wife or other natives in direct speech, we can conclude here that both Almayer and the narrator's phraseological point of view seem to coalesce. Needless to say, such vocabulary helps to "reveal the narrator's attitude towards the person, or suggest such attitudes towards the reader" (Senn 2017, 145). Hence, they become "a very subtle but efficient tool in the manipulation of reader response" (*ibid.*).

More importantly, the use of such epithets indicates that the natives are being evaluated by the Sensor and Sayer from a particular perspective, a Euro-bias perspective, and as such both Almayer's and the narrator's ideological viewpoints converge as well. This has the effect of further reinforcing the discourses of savagery and Othering that were circulating in society at that time. In some

instances, the narratorial reportings may temporarily fragment into passages of “inner monologue” whereby the narrator grants Almayer the opportunity to foreground his subjective feelings and perceptions without imposing any kind of narratorial intervention in the form of reporting verbs such as “he thought”, “he felt”, or linking conjunctions such as “that”, “whether”, etc. Here, the narrator attempts to preserve the subjective feel of the passage concerned by allowing certain characteristic phrasings of Almayer such as the use of exclamations, appellations and questions to be maintained (Pascal 1977, 17).

### **Almayer and free indirect discourse**

Moments of “inner monologue” which occur mostly with Almayer is termed free indirect discourse (FID). According to Pascal (1977, 26), FID is a technique of thought presentation that subtly fuses the vocabulary, sentence structure, and intonation of both character and narrator “by superimposing the primary’s speaker’s voice on a secondary speaker’s words” (Senn 2017, 211). Put another way, this kind of “dual voicing” can be viewed as a strategy of aligning the words, values and perspectives of the narrator with that of a character (Toolan 1988, 127). In such a situation, the narrator is not totally absent as he is always there with his angle of vision and moral evaluations. He has merely placed himself in Almayer’s experiential field and has adopted the latter’s temporal and spatial points of view.

In essence, this occurs when a character’s subjective feelings, transformed into the third person, are interwoven and framed by the narrator’s reports of the character’s internal state (Fowler 1986, 138). The intermingling of two viewpoints, in Almayer’s case, does create some narrative ambiguity as, at times, we are not certain as to whose viewpoints we are hearing, Almayer’s or the narrator’s. However, at other times, the narrator wishes to distance himself from Almayer’s views by casting Almayer’s views in an ironic light and by appending some narratorial commentary.

At this juncture, it would be most appropriate to analyse some of the FID passages that occur in the text. One important FID passage attributed to Almayer appears in the first page of the text. Part of the passage is reproduced below:

He shuffled uneasily, but took no further notice of the call. Leaning with both his elbows on the balustrade of the veranda, he went on looking fixedly at the great river that flowed – indifferent and hurried – before his eyes. He liked to look at it about the time of sunset; perhaps because at that time the sinking sun would spread a glowing gold tinge on the waters of the pantai; and Almayer’s thoughts were often busy with gold; gold he had failed to secure; gold the others had secured – dishonestly,

of course – or gold he meant to secure yet, through his own honest exertions, for himself and Nina. He absorbed himself in his dream of wealth and power away from this coast where he had dwelt for so many years, forgetting the bitterness of toil and strife in the vision of a great and splendid reward. They would live in Europe, he and his daughter. They would be rich and respected. Nobody would think of her mixed blood in the presence of her great beauty and of his immense wealth. Witnessing her triumphs he would grow young again, he would forget the twenty-five years of heart-breaking struggle on this coast where he felt like a prisoner. All this was nearly within his reach. Let only Dain return! And return soon he must – in his own interest, for his own share. He was now more than a week late! Perhaps he would return tonight.

Such were Almayer's thought as, standing on the veranda of his new but already decaying house – that last failure of his life – he looked on the broad river. (Conrad 1976, 7)

In the above passage, Almayer is the main focalising consciousness here and what he perceives and evaluates are the objects of focalisation. From the negatives that the narrator uses such as “indifferent” and “hurried”, “bitterness”, “toil”, “strife”, “heartbreaking struggle”, “prisoner”, “decaying house”, “last failure” and “angry and muddy flood”, one is left without doubt about Almayer's feelings for Sambir. Almayer registers his utter dislike for this place and is impatient to leave. Although it is the narrator who is reporting to us Almayer's inner consciousness, the latter's presence in the text is signaled by the use of proximal deictics such as “this” as in “this coast”; temporal markers such as “now” and “tonight”; the use of prominent modality markers such as “would” and “must”; modal sentence adverbial such as “perhaps”; the use of the exclamation “Let only Dain return!”; and by the use of the present tense forms of a number of verbs such as “grow”, “return” and “live”.

Here FID is also used by the narrator as a device to cast an ironic light on Almayer's views and perceptions since we know that Almayer will never get the gold, that both Nina and Dain will quash his dreams and that he will not survive long in Sambir. The narratorial explanation “Such were Almayer's thoughts” appended by the narrator soon after his revelation of Almayer's thoughts functions to distance himself from these views.

However, in a number of other FID passages, it becomes quite difficult to distinguish Almayer's voice from the narrator's. One of those passages is cited below:

Almayer stepped homeward with long strides and mind uneasy. Surely Dain was not thinking of playing him false. It was absurd. Dain and Lakamba were both too much interested in the success of his schemes.

Trusting to Malays, was poor work; but then even Malays have some sense and understand their own interest. All would be well – must be well. (Conrad 1976, 15)

Although there are indications of Almayer's presence in this passage such as in the use of "Surely", and the prominent modality markers "would" and "must", the view that Malays are untrustworthy can be said to belong to both the narrator and Almayer as there is insufficient linguistic evidence to indicate otherwise. In such a case, narrative ambiguity is created and this could be perceived as an attempt made by the narrator not to alienate Almayer's views from his, thus maintaining sympathy for the former. This kind of dual voicing represents a merging of views, mainly of the narrator and the character, so that when the reader is in the process of perceiving the feelings of the character, the reader is also seen to be listening to the intonation of the narrator (Uspensky 1973, 42). This makes perfect sense because the narrator, via non-focalised narration consistently portrays the natives as an unreliable and untrustworthy lot.

For instance, the transitivity structures (as shown earlier) construct them as victimisers vis-a-vis Almayer. The material action process verbs such as "exercised", "plotting" and "played upon" constitute them as schemers, and via non-focalised narration, we are informed of "...unscrupulous intrigues" in Sambir (Conrad 1976, 23), about locals who are "...unscrupulous and resolute" (24) and about Almayer who "...lay ruined and helpless under the close-meshed net of their intrigues" (26). In addition, the narrator uses appellations with negative overtones to categorise the natives. For example, Babalatchi is labelled as an "...unengaging individual" (Conrad 1976, 34), "...astute negotiator" (34), as the "...factotum Babalatchi" (35), as a "...one-eyed diplomatist" (50), the "...one-eyed crocodile" (51), "...the one-eyed statesman" (52), "...a casual cut-throat" (72), etc. In this text, the lexical selection complements transitivity as a conveyor of images of the world as sensed by the narrator and Almayer (Knowles and Malmkjaer 1996, 116). This also shows the narrator's attempts at greater monologic control. More than that, the consistent negative portrayal of the natives' serves to maintain hegemony as it unites the narrator and reader against the unpleasant characteristics of the Other.

### **The natives: "Internal" and "external" narration**

FID and an "internal" type of narration are also used to transmit the thoughts and perceptions of characters like Nina, Dain, Taminah, Mrs. Almayer and Babalatchi. However, with the exception of Nina, the omniscient narrator does not intrude into other characters' mental faculties long enough, but, instead, moves from one mind to another in a rather swift manner. Such continuous shifts in points of view would reduce chances of forging stronger bonds of intimacy between the reader and

the characters' concerned. Moreover, a reader may be quite apprehensive about accepting the viewpoints of the characters' mentioned especially after they have been depicted from an "external" vantage-point in a most objectionable manner.

For instance, an "internal" perspective is accorded to Mrs. Almayer, in Chapter 2, that is when she is about to be captured by Lingard on board the pirate ship. Here, Mrs. Almayer is made the subject/participant of mental process verbs such as "watched" (Conrad 1976, 21), "realised" (21), "heard" (21), "accepted" (21), "learned" (22), "nourished" (22), etc. A prolonged intrusion into Mrs. Almayer's mind results in FID, and it is via this manner of thought presentation that the reader learns of Mrs. Almayer's terrifying ordeal. Mrs. Almayer is given the opportunity to loosen the hegemonic hold of the text as the reader begins to sympathise with her lot, and especially when the reader discovers through her focalising consciousness the unsavoury and duplicitous side to Lingard and Almayer. The idea that the white man is "morally" higher or fitter than the natives is questioned by Conrad especially when both Lingard and Almayer exhibit their "uncivilised" and barbaric self to the seer, a young Mrs. Almayer. However, the reader's sympathy for Mrs. Almayer is not sustained as the narrator begins to probe into Almayer's mind revealing to us Almayer's struggle against the unscrupulous locals and of his wife's acts of savage contempt against him. In other words, sympathy for Mrs. Almayer is re-channelled to Almayer when the latter is encoded in the text as the victimised party (via transitivity structures as shown in the first part of the analysis). Strangely enough, she is also denied our sympathy when she requires it most. Although she must be emotionally traumatised after her daughter, Nina, is forcibly taken from her, the reader is not allowed access into the innermost recesses of Mrs. Almayer's mind as this crucial scene is focalised through Almayer's eyes, whilst she (Mrs. Almayer) is depicted from the outside as a betel-nut chewing native who sits all day in "stupefied idleness" (Conrad 1976, 26). This prevents the reader from establishing a closer attachment to Mrs. Almayer and her views. Also, in the following chapter, the intrusive journeys into Mrs. Almayer's mental landscape comes to a grinding halt as the reader now views Mrs. Almayer from an exterior position, that is as she is seen through a pair of Eurocentric lenses, from a definite vantage-point.

It is observed that Mrs. Almayer is evoked in various passages by the narrator, through references to her body. She is not only nameless but formless. She is first introduced to us as a "...well-known shrill voice" (Conrad 1976, 7). The narrator's descriptive focus is not on Mrs. Almayer's whole being but on "parts" of her body, in particular, her "...jealous eyes" (24), "...the armpits" (35), her "...lean bosom" (35), "...her scant-greyish hair" (35), her "...projecting cheek bones" (35), her "...lean arm" (35), her "...claw-like hand" (35), her "...claw-like fingers" (35),

her “...bony fingers” (44), etc. The meronyms voice, eyes, bosom, hair, cheeks, hand, fingers and the modifiers shrill, jealous, lean, scant-greyish, projecting, claw-like together conjure up a most unpleasant and predator-like physical image. Mrs. Almayer’s physical description reminds us of a cruel witch and that is one epithet that is used reiteratively by the narrator.

As Leech and Short (1981, 181; as cited in Knowles and Malmkjaer 1996, 121) attest, although the descriptive focus emphasises on the physical, the reader will interpret the “...physical in terms of their abstract significance”. By viewing Mrs. Almayer from an external position, the narrator portrays her but he (the narrator) does not identify with that image (Uspensky 1973, 91). In the same vein, by choosing not to embody himself in Mrs. Almayer’s psychological viewpoint, the narrator becomes less sympathetic towards her views and perceptions. Thus, the discourses of Othering and savagery are further fortified.

### **Centre-staging marginalised voices**

In this section, Conrad’s attempts to centre-stage marginalised voices and to offer alternative subject-positions for the reader to occupy will be examined. By giving the natives a chance to represent themselves, it appears as though Conrad is making an effort to redistribute power as the natives assume the role of addressers or the subjects of discourse. However, such attempts come to naught as the reader is consistently distanced from the natives and their views via the “external” type of narration that have been accorded to them and by the discourses of Othering that have framed their construction.

### **Mrs. Almayer and Babalatchi**

Marginalised voices are centre-staged once again when both Mrs. Almayer and Babalatchi challenge the discourse of racial superiority through direct speech and FID. As a consequence, the reader does not undergo total textual subjection as the dialectical relationship and the dialogical exchange between Mrs. Almayer and Nina, and between Babalatchi and the narrator enables the reader to learn about her/his own selfhood, the nature of the social relations between the European and the natives, and the society which produced the reader’s earlier subjectivity (Stephens 1992, 50). This is what Mrs. Almayer says to Nina:

“Give up your old life! Forget!” she said in entreating tones. “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 goods”. (Conrad 1976, 123)

Mrs. Almayer first reveals the white man's unsavoury side via her focalising consciousness, and then verbalises such thoughts in her dialogical exchange with Nina. These (Conrad 1976, 123) are Mrs. Almayer's views delivered in her own words in direct speech. Although the narrator allows opposing views to be woven into the text, they remain largely Mrs. Almayer's views. Since the narrator does not embody himself in Mrs. Almayer's perceptual viewpoint, and does not provide any comments on her critical views, it becomes possible for the narrator to distance himself from these views by assuming the role of an objective observer and to allow the reader to make her/his own stand. However, the reader may not wish to occupy alternative subject positions because such views are expressed by one whose construction has already been informed by the various discourses of Othering and savagery (as illustrated earlier).

Babalatchi's comments about the white man provide another good example. His comments are conveyed to us via FID. The following are his comments:

White men were strong but very foolish. It was undesirable to fight them, but deception was easy. They were like silly women – they did not know the use of reason, and he was a match for any of them. (Conrad 1976, 71)

Since the above thoughts appear in FID, it would mean that both the narrator and Babalatchi share the same psychological viewpoint as the narrator is reporting the latter's thought processes. However, this does not mean that their ideological viewpoints are in sync because the moral commentary "...went on Babalatchi with all the confidence of deficient experience" (Conrad 1976, 71) appended by the narrator soon after conveying Babalatchi's thoughts, functions to trivialise Babalatchi, to ridicule his harsh comments and to distance the reader from his views. Therefore, this shows that even though an "internal" perspective is chosen, it does not mean that alternative views will be duly supported.

Moreover, as in the case of Mrs. Almayer, the reader, by now, has already been positioned in the text in such a manner that she/he becomes less sympathetic towards this particular character. Babalatchi is not only a repulsive and unpleasant character but he is, as the narrator contends, "...the very picture of watchful ugliness" (Conrad 1976, 50). As regards this character, once again, the narrator's descriptive focus is on the different parts of his body, his "...one eye roving easily" (Conrad 1976, 50), his "...pock-marked face" (34), his "...horribly disfigured" nose and lips (34), his "...chin with its few grey hairs" (50), his "...lean arms clasped round his legs" (50) and his "...mishappen lips" (50). By perceptually dissecting both Mrs. Almayer and Babalatchi meronymically, the narrator depersonalises them, thereby distancing the readers from these characters' views and judgements.

## Nina

In relation to what has been discussed, Nina's poignant remarks about the universality of human nature and the sleek hypocrisy of the white man need special mention here. This is because these remarks can be viewed as Conrad's endeavour to destabilise the discourse of imperialism and European superiority. These are Nina's thoughts:

Her young mind having been unskilfully permitted to glance at better things, and then thrown back again into the hopeless quagmire of barbarism, full of strong and uncontrolled passion, had lost the power to discriminate. It seemed to Nina that there was no change and no difference whether they traded in brick godowns or on the muddy river bank; whether they reached after much or little; whether they made love under the shadows of the great tree or in the shadow of the cathedral on the Singapore promenade; whether they plotted for their own ends under the protection of laws and according to the rules of Christian conduct, or whether they sought the gratification of their desires with the savage cunning and the unrestrained fierceness of nature as innocent of culture as their own immense and gloomy forest. Nina saw only the same manifestations of love and hate and of sordid greed chasing the uncertain dollar in all its multifarious and vanishing shapes. To her resolute nature, however, after all these years, the savage and uncompromising sincerity of purpose shown by her Malay kinsmen seemed at least preferable to the sleek hypocrisy, to the polite disguises, to the virtuous pretenses of such white people as she had the misfortune to come in contact with. After all it was her life; it was going to be her life, and so thinking she felt more and more under the influence of her mother. Seeking, in her ignorance, a better side to that life, she listened with avidity to the old woman's tales of the departed glories of the Rajahs, from whose race she had sprung, and she became gradually indifferent, more contemptuous of the white side of her descent represented by a feeble and traditionless father. (Conrad 1976, 38)

Conrad uses Nina as a vehicle to deliver some scathing comments not only about the white man but also of other human beings. To Nina, all people are alike, it does not matter whether they are white or native, because as humans, they have similar aspirations and weaknesses. Nina's comments can be visualised as an attempt to dispel the myth about the white man's feeling of greatness and superiority vis-a-vis the "uncivilised" Other. In addition, her harsh judgements about the white man, in particular, their propensity to deceive and lie seem to echo the comments that have been made by her mother. However, unlike Mrs. Almayer, the reader may be more sympathetic towards Nina's views because of the positive manner in

which she has been represented and the consistent “internal” perspective that the narrator has accorded her. Having said this, one seems to sense a certain feeling of uncertainty or ambiguity on Conrad’s part as regards Nina’s pointed statements. The narrator’s reference to Nina’s “...young mind”, her inability to “discriminate” and her “ignorance”, unfortunately, seem to cushion the impact of her comments on the reader because it readily casts doubts on Nina’s ability to make the right decision and judgement.

From the introspective style of narration, the reader learns that Nina, who has lived amongst the Malays and the whites, prefers the native side of her descent because of the shoddy treatment she received from her European kith and kin. The white people’s inability to accept her half-caste status prompts her to reject them and her Protestant upbringing outright and this she does by deciding to choose Dain and the Malay part of her heritage. Although Nina’s rejection of the white inheritance of her father and her happy marriage to Dain can be viewed as Conrad’s attempt to erase any overtones of racial prejudice, as Watts (1989) suggests, however, this can also be read as an endeavour to endorse certain aspects of the discourse of Darwinism and evolution, in particular those that concern the categorisation of characters into a hierarchy of sorts. This is because Nina is, after all, a half-caste, and colonialist discourse, as Shohat and Starn (1994, 41) point out, “saw different races as different species, created at different times and therefore forbidden to interbreed”. With such a view towards miscegenation, especially in the society at that time, it seems only logical for Conrad to end the text on a “happy note”.

### **Concluding Discussion**

This paper has demonstrated the value of interfacing language and literature with particular regard to the study of point of view, a relatively under-explored concept in literary criticism. Linguistics provides access to literary texts through “established metalanguage” or linguistic terms which can help an analyst to discuss and support the views she/he may have of these texts (Simpson 1993, 4). As Simpson (1993, 3) succinctly puts it, “A text is a linguistic construct and we process it as a linguistic construct before anything else”.

Generally, the analysis reveals that there are a number of devices that Conrad uses to signal point of view and to exercise control over the reader’s attitude. The devices include the system of deixis, vocabulary and transitivity structures, the use of modality, as well as the modes of speech and thought presentation. This language of point of view is indeed important as it can position readers in a text in certain ways in order to exert some form of control on them. In short, these are strategies that are used to help shape the readers response towards views that are

being proffered in the text. Almayer is the main focaliser in this text and an internal narration is mostly accorded to him. Prolonged intrusions into Almayer's mental faculties allow the reader to empathise with his victimised and helpless state and to distance the readers from the natives especially Mrs. Almayer, Lakamba and Babalatchi who have been represented from an external perspective in a most unsavoury manner. To some extent, an internal perspective is also accorded to the natives such as Mrs. Almayer, Nina, Lakamba and Babalatchi. It is through their perspectives that the white man's duplicitous nature is revealed and the moral justifications for empire questioned. However, although there are moments when Conrad registers his ambivalence towards the colonial project and empire, his attempts are not fully realised as he invariably gets pulled back into the time-worn discourse of Othering in his representations of the Other.

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