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**THE SEA AS A CHARACTER IN JOSEPH CONRAD'S
SEA FICTIONS**

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ABSTRACT

The sea has always played a major part in the history of Great Britain; therefore, it has been extensively portrayed in both fine arts and literature. The sea has become one of the most important elements of English fiction. The English writers, including Conrad, have created various images and representations of the seas and they have employed these images and representations to depict human experiences of the sea as well as human experience in general.

The goal of the research paper is an analysis and interpretation of the sea in Joseph Conrad's sea fictions. The current paper will be based on the theories of modernism, short fiction, and Conradian narrative. Then, it will reveal the peculiarities and meanings of Conrad's representations of the sea in his four short stories, two novels, and in a compilation of essays. Finally, the paper will analyse the findings and draw relevant conclusions.

Conrad's fictional works abound in numerous and varied images of the sea. First, sea is the main element in Conrad's sea fictions, and it is not just an element of the setting; it is rather a character to be treated alongside Conrad's human characters. The heroes of Conrad's stories are mostly experienced sailors and even if they have tasted the bitterness of the sea, they perceive themselves as integral parts of the sea and they feel psychological necessity to return to the sea. Most importantly, Conrad mythologizes the sea by anthropomorphising it and by attributing to it qualities characteristic to mythological creatures. Indeed, he portrays the sea as a 'mythological creature' that at times even possesses the same characteristics as God, that is, he deifies the sea. However, generally, the stress is put on the sea's most evil side.

Key words: sea, short fiction, modernism, narrative discourse, Conradian narrative, mythologizing, anthropomorphism, deification

ANOTĀCIJA

Jūrai vienmēr bijusi nozīmīga loma Lielbritānijas vēsturē, tāpēc tā tika arī plaši atainota mākslā un literatūrā, tādējādi kļūstot par vienu no svarīgākajiem elementiem angļu fikcijā. Angļu rakstnieki, ieskaitot Konrādu, radīja dažādus jūras tēlus un nozīmes, un šos tēlus un nozīmes viņi izmantoja, lai attēlotu cilvēku pieredzi jūrā un cilvēku pieredzi kopumā.

Diplomdarba mērķis ir jūras analīze un interpretācija Džozefa Konrāda darbos. Darbā tiks analizēta teorija par modernismu, īso stāstu, un Konrāda stāstījumu. Tad, četros jūras stāstos, divos romānos, un eseju krājumā tiks atklātas nozīmes un īpatnības Konrāda jūras raksturojumos. Visbeidzot, darbā tiks analizēti atradumi un tiks izdarīti atbilstoši secinājumi.

Konrāda darbi ir bagāti ar daudziem un dažādiem jūras tēliem. Pirmkārt, jūra ir galvenais elements Konrāda darbos, kas nav tikai vides elements. Drīzāk tā ir jāuzskata kā viena no darbojošām personām, kas būtu jāaplūko kopā ar citiem Konrāda personāžiem. Darbu varoņi lielākoties ir pieredzējuši vīri, kas ir izbaudījuši jūras sūrumu, kas sevi uztver kā neatņemamu jūras sastāvdaļu, un izjūt psiholoģisku nepieciešamību atgriezties jūrā. Galvenokārt Konrāds mitoloģizē jūru, antropomorfizējot to, t.i. piedēvējot tai īpašības raksturīgas mitoloģiskām būtnēm. Tik tiešām, viņš attēlo jūru kā „mitoloģisku radījumu”, kuram reizēm pat piemīt tāda pašas īpašības kā Dievam, citiem vārdiem, viņš dievišķo jūru. Tomēr visbiežāk darbos tiek uzsvērta jūras vislaunākā puse.

Atslēgas vārdi: jūra, īss stāsts, modernisms, stāstījuma diskurss, Konrāda stāstījums, mitoloģizācija, antropomorfisms, deifikācija

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	5
1. Conrad and Modernism.....	7
1.1. Realist's eye.....	7
1.2. Victorian elements.....	8
1.3. Modernist elements.....	8
2. Short fiction.....	9
2.1. The epiphanic form.....	9
2.2. Aesthetic opportunities.....	10
2.3 Testing grounds for techniques.....	10
3. Conradian Narrative.....	12
3.1. The concept of narrative.....	12
3.2. Narrator's role.....	13
3.3. The narrative variations.....	13
4. Three Sea Stories: a brief summary and comparison.....	15
5. The Sea.....	18
6. The Images of the Sea.....	21
6.1 Typhoon.....	21
6.2. Falk.....	25
6.3. The Shadow-Line.....	28
6.4. Youth: A Narrative.....	31
6.5. Lord Jim.....	35
6.6. The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'.....	39
6.7. Mirror of the Sea.....	44
CONCLUSION.....	48
THESES.....	50
REFERENCES.....	51

INTRODUCTION

Joseph Conrad began his writing career in the beginning of the 20th century, the period when Modernism first appeared and, even though he wrote in that time, his works are not completely Modernist. In many of his works Conrad adopted some of the Modernist writing techniques, such as, ‘world-picture of fragmentation, contingency, provisionally,’ and many more. (Graham; 2004:206) Further, Conrad focused on a new genre called *short fiction*: controversial style of writing that is neither novel, nor novella, meaning—“a story that may be short either because it embodies a small action primarily scene or episode, or because, having a large action, it portrays that action on a condensed scale and/or with a significant omission of parts.” (Friedman; 1989:29-30) Furthermore, Conradian narrative presents and shapes the text in a way that requires the reader’s undivided attention. His narrative techniques and methods awake the reader’s interest in different characters and their actions. Moreover, all previously mentioned concepts and their usage can be observed in Joseph Conrad’s “Three Sea Stories,” where the image of the sea plays the most important role in human experience. Despite the numerous ‘national tales of ships and the sea,’ the sea is still a mystery.

The goal of the current Bachelor’s Paper is to analyse and demonstrate how the sea functions in Joseph Conrad’s stories. The sea functions as character and not just as an element of the setting.

The enabling objectivities are as follows:

1. to read and analyse the theory on modernism, short fiction, and narrative discourse
2. to set up a theoretical framework for the analysis of the selected works
3. to analyse the representations of the sea in Conrad’s sea fictions within the given theoretical framework
4. to examine the findings and draw relevant conclusions

The following theoretical methods of research will be used: textual analysis and interpretation, a study and contrastive analysis of the relevant theories, drawing analogies, making juxtapositions, generalising, and drawing conclusions.

The conclusions will be based on the patterns found in Conrad’s representations of the sea in the course of the analysis and interpretation of the selected literary works.

For the current BA paper the following works by Conrad have been selected are: four short stories: “Youth: A Narrative”, “Typhoon”, “Falk”, and “The Shadow-Line”; the two novels: “Lord Jim” and “The Nigger of the “Narcissus””; and a compilation of Conrad’s articles in “The Mirror of the Sea”. The theoretical part of the paper will be based mostly on the following books: “The Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad” edited by Stape; “Short

Theory at a Crossroads” by Friedman; “The Short Story: A Critical Introduction (London, 1983) by Shaw; “The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story” by Frank O'Connor and “Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination” by Ackroyd. In addition, the paper draws on a number of other published and internet sources listed in the bibliography.

The structure of the current BA paper is as follows:

First, the paper will try to find out whether Joseph Conrad’s works are characteristic of the period of Modernism. If the answer turns out to be positive, the paper will look for Modernist elements used in his short stories.

Second, the theoretical background for the genre *short fiction* will be introduced. Mainly, it will introduce the terms that characterize and identify short fiction as a testing ground for various techniques such as length, purpose, and form.

Third, the paper will analyze the theory of Conradian narrative. It will examine such ideas as the concept of narrative, the narrator’s role and the narrative variations.

Then a brief summary and comparison of the three stories will be introduced.

Finally, the most important chapter will deal with the images of the sea in Joseph Conrad’s sea fictions. In the beginning, the chapter will briefly introduce the historical background for the sea in Great Britain. Then it will examine the importance of the sea, the images of the sea, and the experiences of the sea in the selection of texts by Conrad. It will also discuss numerous stylistic devices used to represent the sea in: “Youth: A Narrative”, “Typhoon”, “Falk”, “The Shadow-Line”, “Lord Jim”, “The Nigger of the “Narcissus””; and “The Mirror of the Sea” – by Joseph Conrad.

In the end the paper will draw the relevant conclusions.

1. CONRAD AND MODERNISM

Conrad could be classified as Modernist, since his works “Typhoon” (1902), “Falk” (1903), and “The Shadow-Line” (1917) were written in the so-called Modernist period that dates from 1900 till 1930¹; however, his style of writing encompasses various elements of Realism, Victorianism and Modernism.

In the beginning of his career, many of Conrad’s works followed the 19th century realist tradition; “the presence of a pragmatic, observing, realist’s eye always persists in Conrad, even when so much of his tendency is to convey the underlying dream-effect that erodes the normal solidity of the world”. (Graham; 2004:204) Even if he could be called a Modernist in the sense that his heroes are “hypnotized and fatally becalmed”; nevertheless the “realist’s eye” allowed Conrad to display both the good and the evil in the world. (Graham; 2004:204) Moreover, Conrad claims to have depicted “the action”² of people around him from his individual point of view. The idea of action is a Realist technique acquired by Conrad and thus further developed in the Modernist tradition. The idea of action was shifted from Realist’s trust of action to Modernist’s distrust of it, which was both more appealing to Conrad and impressive to the readers. (Graham; 2004:204) Furthermore, Kenneth Graham remarks that Conrad “highlighted the horror and omnipresence of loss of will; the nineteenth-century image of the hero, the man of action”. (Graham; 2004:204-5) Consequently, Joseph Conrad wrote many stories that evolve around different protagonists who justified their heroism through “physical action”. (Graham; 2004:205) The connection Conrad made between Realism and Modernism is that he took the most striking concepts and techniques of Realism and adapted them for the benefit of Modernism.

Conrad’s strong interest in Realist ideas was not the only influence on his writings. The Victorian preoccupation with making a moral choice made an impact on Conrad’s fiction, more specifically, “individual moral choice” was what he and some other Modernists were interested in. (Graham; 2004:205) Many Modernist writers, including Conrad, developed the storylines around “crises of moral testing and were always concerned to analyze the underlying causes and widespread effects of a crucial act of decision on the part of an individual”. (Graham; 2004:205) Moreover, Conrad was also keen to elaborate on the difficulty of making a choice, especially when human existence is constantly constructed “by a moment of loss of nerve”; thus, Conrad put great emphasis on conscience and consciousness at crucial periods “of moral testing”. (Graham; 2004:205) Accordingly, Conrad’s fiction

¹ Graham, K. *Conrad and Modernism*, p. 203

² *Letters*, II, p. 418

embraces the beliefs of “destiny and doom”; he was fascinated by the theory that claims “the universe” to be “a hostile and irresistible force that makes mockery of the idea of independent responsibility”. (Graham; 205-6) The idea of fate can be observed not only in Victorian, but also in Modernist literature. Moreover, Graham claims that Conrad has bound together human “responsibility” and “determinism” for an individual’s destiny, and contrasted them sharply.

Challenging Realist and Victorian ideas connected Conrad more with Modernists than Realists or Victorians. One of the most principal Modernist ideas is pessimism – “based on a denial of free will” and “notion that the world itself is a malignant illusion”. (Graham; 2004:206) All that Modernism has been said to represent, for instance, scepticism, irony, parody, ellipsis, could be observed in Conrad’s writings. With these techniques he wanted to reveal the truth about human nature, in other words, “the world lacks a fixed meaning”. (Graham; 2004:207) In addition, to portray his personal viewpoints Conrad uses such devices as: “the ironic twists of plot and phrase, the use of anti-climax, the unexpected repetitions and encounters, the sudden only half-controlled moments of violence or melodrama, the switches of tone.” (Graham; 2004:217-8) In addition, very often Conrad’s characters suffer mysterious and inexplicable experiences, like hallucinations, and loss of will in dreamlike situations, like in “The Shadow-Line” where the young captain experiences inexplicable visions and nonexistent voices. This example shows that within the limits of language Conrad pushed the boundaries of the Modernist imagination beyond its reaches, besides he also revealed his personal distrust of, and fascination with, the mankind.

Like Modernists, Conrad likes to explore human consciousness; for him conscience and consciousness are of high value, and at times he does not separate these terms because, in his opinion, one could not exist without the other. Conrad also stresses human insensibility, selfishness, indifference, “animalism”, and “dreams”. (Graham; 2004:210) Additional tension is achieved from the contradictions between “order, duty, solidarity”, and a subconscious feeling that “some primary chaos” will destroy it all, in other words, it is the human intuition that there is always an interplay in the world between the good and the evil. (Graham; 2004:215) Kenneth Graham argues that “the fact that such inner contradictions are allowed, with hardly any mediation, to be expressed directly, and extremely, in the irregular, vital rhythms and incongruities of a new form is what differentiates between the contradictions common to artists of Modernism”. (Graham; 2004:217) Accordingly, Conrad’s works are full of pervasive irony that “goes far beyond the ethical”, yet the tension between the contradictions is accommodated by the “passion with which it is lived out”; therefore, the artistic effect is achieved through extremism.

To sum up, Conrad's contribution to Modernism is immeasurable, and if Modernism is about taking ideas to their extremes, then Conrad was an extremist in his language, form, and style.

2. SHORT FICTION

Conrad is known for both writing novels and short stories, nevertheless, he has defined neither of these forms as such; he refers to them as stories or tales. Gail Fraser claims that, "this blurring of generic boundaries reflects the organic evolution of many of his works". (Fraser; 2004:25)

When Conrad began writing stories, he "planned nothing more detailed than a 'sketch'", and then Conrad 'grew' them corresponding to the 'environment' around them; whereas when he wrote novels, he "began with an episode, situation, or 'moral pivot'". (Fraser; 2004: 26, 27) Moreover, when Conrad was really fascinated with some idea, he could write more than "8,000 words" per story, later deciding and organizing it according to what he intended the work initially to be; therefore, some scholars argue that Conrad had difficulties when writing in shorter form. On the other hand, the works which were intended to be novels and did not start from 'scratch' were "the most difficult of all to complete". (Fraser; 2004:27) Consequently, writing in a shorter form inspired Conrad, allowed him to concentrate on the topic, and stimulated his imagination.

There are very few writers who could claim to know the tiniest detail – from the beginning till the very end – of their works, but Conrad was one of those who could write a work within a specific amount of words, even if he did not approve of this type of measurement because the essence of the work is not in its length³. Conrad also published an article in a newspaper concerning the "demands of time and space" in short and long stories. (Fraser; 2004:26) Moreover, Henry James claimed that the short story has its limits and that such form would offer 'nothing more' than its length permits, thus implying that Conrad is forced to restrict himself to writing a certain number of words, to which Conrad replied that the shorter form has its advantage – predictability – that enabled Conrad to show forth his style and proficiency: "It takes a small-scale narrative to show the master's hand,"⁴ implying that the short story is more complex than the novel. Some of his best works are written in spite of the word limit. Gail Fraser also emphasizes that "his description of 'episode'

³ *Letters*, II, p. 49

⁴ *Letters*, I, p. 124

anticipates the epiphanic form taken by some of his best-known short fiction, for instance, “Heart of Darkness””. (Fraser; 2004:27)

Being born in the middle of the 19th century, Conrad belonged to those writers who “began their careers by publishing short stories, poems, or journalistic pieces in periodicals”. (Fraser; 2004:29) In 1896 Conrad tried to publish some of his stories; nevertheless, the stories – “The Idiots”, “An Outpost of Progress,” and “The Lagoon” – did not meet the requirements of the *Blackwood Edinburgh Magazine*⁵. A year later with no success, he came to a conclusion that serialization had its advantages and disadvantages. The advantage was that Conrad could earn ‘easy’ and sufficient money for living by publishing short fiction, which at times, like in Conrad’s case, was the only means of earning a living. At the same time, the inevitable disadvantage was the division of the stories into parts for magazines which often greatly damaged the artistic effect of the fictional works. Conrad argued with the publishers that the splitting up of the text would make the text lose its intended ‘ironic’ meaning; therefore, he tried to divide the stories himself so that the storyline would not be completely lost. Moreover, Conrad would be in favour of the contemporary theorists who argued that “memory functions in relation to quantity and duration”, meaning that the readers could remember more specific details in a shorter work of art.⁶ Thus, he argued that the short story as a form of art should be identified separately, emphasizing the effect of “images and motifs” critical for the story’s content and message, in an undivided short fiction. (Fraser; 2004:31)

Victorian people enjoyed a short story, since it was easier to obtain a story from a periodical than to get hold of a book. Moreover, a greater number of people could read the stories in a shorter period of time. Even if the “short story might be short”, still “the term is relative”. (Friedman; 1989:16) What matters is the value of a short fiction piece.

For Conrad, writing shorter stories was not an easy job to do, yet he had inspirational moments. Some of his greatest works were written: “when he had just finished a novel, was in the latter stages of writing one, or was unable to make headway”. (Fraser; 2004:29) Conrad developed literary techniques that made his works known as “Conradian”. (Fraser; 2004:28) Shorter and longer pieces of fiction were recognizable for their “disregard for the demands of the time and space”. (Fraser; 2004:26) Also, the story being short, the beginning and the end are blurry; therefore, it calls for: “more ironic conclusion” and/or a “finish with question”. (Friedman; 1989:18) Particularly in the short fiction, Conrad has proved that within the limits of its length “an extended time period” could be portrayed. (Fraser; 2004:37) Irony and even “scorn pity” was achieved with the help of “grotesque images and sudden shifts in

⁵ Fraser, G. *The Short Fiction*, p. 29

⁶ Friedman, N. *Recent Short Story Theories*, p. 25

perspective”. (Fraser; 2004:28, 36) Conrad also experimented with “creative cross-rhythm” and “disruptive shifts from a critical distance to a more direct engagement”. (Fraser; 2004:29, 36) Further, he developed an interest in “impressionist techniques”, such as “dual perspective” and “ellipsis”. (Fraser; 2004:38, 39) In literature, impressionism is used to describe the “transitory mental impressions as felt by an observer, rather than on the explanation of their external causes”⁷ by applying various techniques. Dual perspective was appealing to Conrad because he could explicate the dual nature of human beings, in which a person was in the middle of two encircling ideologies, like good and evil. At the same time, with the use of “ellipsis” Conrad omitted some unnecessary information; thus, inviting his readers to fill in the missing information with their own imagination. (Fraser; 2004:39) In “Typhoon” ellipsis occurred for the purpose of irony and in the form of understatement:

Before the renewed wrath of winds swooped on his ship, Captain MacWhirr was moved to declare, in a tone of vexation, as it were: ‘I wouldn’t like to lose her’.

He was spread that annoyance. (Conrad; 1998:69)

Consequently, the readers were able to connect with the text through their personal experience and knowledge, and the situation in the story is condensed and sometimes even some essential parts are left out, therefore each sentence was of importance. As a result, Conrad broke new ground in such a challenging genre of literature.

Conrad continued to experiment not only with style, but also with content. Images and symbols were used in an untraditional way; the emphasis was put on myth, mythical objects and dreams. Moreover, he was interested in pleasing the readers by writing about popular interests to promote solidarity. A great focus was also put on “how an object appears to an observer rather than how it ostensibly is in itself”. (Friedman; 1989:21) Norman Friedman in “Recent Short Story Theories” introduces the theory on the short story by Frank O’Connor, which is also relevant to understanding whose Conrad’s short stories:

[...] story typically presents lonely people on the fringes of society, and despite the fact that she argues that it is too narrow she develops an approach of her own which sees the story a dealing characteristically with the borderline between permanence and change, actual and strange, mundane and extraordinary, reality and dream, and which deduces from this supposed borderline feature the structural characteristics of story as embodying the tension between surface brevity and deep intensity, spontaneity and artifice, richness and concision, involvement and detachment, suggestiveness and hard outline. (Friedman; 1989:20)

⁷ Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms: *impressionism*

Conrad's short stories were also concerned with these ideas; additionally, many of his works also emphasized human isolation in a hostile world and; thus, raised important ethical questions.

Finally, Conrad's contribution to the genre of short fiction has been immense. For that reason Conrad has never described "short fiction as a lesser art." (Fraser; 2004:27)

3. CONRADIAN NARRATIVE

With the help of short fiction, Joseph Conrad developed and evolved his exceptional narrative technique. The narrator's role and narrative methods could be observed through his fictional characters, particularly, what they say and think. Jakob Lothe emphasized "the rhetorical persuasiveness, ideological tension, dramatic intensity, and continuing interest and relevance of Conrad's fictional vision" through which he created his individual narrative techniques. (Lothe; 2004:160) The narrative techniques that Conrad utilizes in his works are different in all his works and with every next work his narrative became more complex; therefore, it is difficult to trace an accurate progress of the evolution of his narrative.

In his first work (*Almayer's Folly*; 1895), Conrad used free indirect discourse to present his verbal thought in a flexible manner⁸. Later, in his next story (*The Nigger of the Narcissus*; 1897) Conrad's narrative has developed to a great extent and his narrative techniques are clearly visible. Conrad's notion of narrative defines and includes different fundamental features of his fictional creation, and with the help of narration he can introduce and form the idea on a rather general level of interpretation of "what *could* happen". (Lothe; 2004:161) Moreover, when Conrad generates his "fictional universe", he becomes an observer of this world, yet in his works there are hints of his personal "views, doubts, fears, hopes, and so forth", which indicates that Conrad's beliefs are presented in his fiction, particularly, that he is an "implied author". (Lothe; 2004:161) Nevertheless, Conrad is convinced that "no objective reality" could be depicted in literature and as Erdinast-Vulcan claims, "the dialogic dynamism of the novels operate... on more than one level: the form of the novel, the more of representation, is just ideologically charged as the explicit or implicit discourse of the protagonist".⁹

Furthermore, creation of literary texts requires a narrator or an interplay of numerous narrators, which is one of the most fundamental requirements for telling a story. 'Textual structures', however, do not isolate texts from history or culture, nor does the 'historical

⁸ Hawthorn, *Joseph Conrad: Narrative Technique*, p.1

⁹ Erdinast-Vulcan, *Joseph Conrad and the Modern Temper*, p.8

author' have to exclude his numerous narrators. (Lothe; 2004:165) These 'textual structures' and their developments define Conrad's achievements in narratology.

It is necessary to have a closer look at the first- and the third-person narrator usage in Conrad's narrative. Less frequently, Conrad's narrative is first-person, like in "The Shadow-Line", or more frequently, the third-person narrative, and at times even the combination of both, like in "Lord Jim"; the last variant is more complex, thus "complicating the presentation of the text". (Lothe; 2004:162)

In the beginning of the text, there is an introduction "to a narrative setting that establishes a peculiarly static frame around the main action". (Lothe; 2004:167) Further, the 'frame narrator' is established; then the protagonist, or another character, becomes the 'main narrator' who has the possibility of becoming also the '*narratee*' – the one to whom the narrator tells the story. (Lothe; 2004:167) The first-person narrator most often is the one who is knowledgeable, "designed to impress and persuade, a peculiar blend of personal and intellectual curiosity, and a tendency to generalize on the basis of individual experience" or "re-experience"; whereas, the third-person's role is to generalize and be unspecific. (Lothe; 2004:168,169) Nevertheless, Conrad's third-person narrative varies from limited-omniscient to omniscient and sometimes even the 'Conradian narrative' is depicted as if from an altitude or distance. Conrad's play with the narrators and their distance, or their interplay, often leaves the reader in confusion about how much knowledge about the plot the narrators possesses, thus the reader has to be especially observant and the parts where two narrators come into play, or the role of a narrator changes, might even have to be re-read.

"A literary text does not exist in a historical and cultural vacuum," argues Jakob Lothe¹⁰. Moreover, it is almost impossible for Conrad to leave his personal experience outside his literary work; therefore, Conrad experimented with fiction as a genre by using the narrative as "a distancing device that helps the author control and shape his fictional material". (Lothe; 2004:166) With the help of distancing devices Conrad was able to regard his ideas separately from his personal experience or affections¹¹; whereas, by using "temporal, spatial, and attitudinal distances" Conrad intentionally increases his audience's curiosity. (Lothe; 2004:166) Distancing devices call for attention; readers are intrigued by the combination of various narrators. Consequently, the temporal distance could be "closely linked to the protagonist's process of learning". (Lothe; 2004:175)

In addition, "thematic apposition" is a narrative technique that contrasts thematically connected topics; the 'thematic apposition' is also interdependent with narrative "omniscience

¹⁰ Todorov, T. *Introduction to Poetics*, p. 61

¹¹ Bullough, E. *Psychical distance*, p. 127

and mobility”. (Lothe; 2004:172) This combination affects and enriches the narrator’s resilience, liveliness and subject diversity, for example, irony is such a device. It diversifies the description and serves also as a distancing device. Then “chronological distortion” was introduced to produce another way of presenting history; it then “spiralled backwards” giving particular details about the past in a spatial manner. (Lothe; 2004:172-3) With this technique imaginary past events attain a surprising credibility, and a spatial dimension.

These and many other Conradian narrative techniques show significant similarities and also differences with other Modernist writers, but for Conrad experimenting with narrative is not only for the purpose of a general experiment, but also to intensify the “dialectical” correlation of the narrative and “thematics in his work”. (Lothe; 2004:176) Also, the narrator is interrelated with the implied author; thus, the two are inseparable.

4. A Brief Summary and Comparison of Conrad's Fictional Works

In this chapter, a brief summary and comparison of the four selected short stories – “Youth: A Narrative”, “Typhoon”, “Falk”, and “The Shadow-Line”; the two novels – “Lord Jim” and “The Nigger of the “Narcissus””; and a compilation of Conrad’s articles in “The Mirror of the Sea” – will be introduced.

The sea is not the only motif connecting all of Conrad’s fictional works. Some of the works were written successively like, ‘Youth’ (1898), ‘Typhoon’ (1899), ‘Lord Jim’ (1900) and ‘Falk’ (1901); however, the publication dates for some of the works are different. Then, ‘Lord Jim’ and ‘Youth: A Narrative’ together with two other works, which will not be discussed here, share the same frame-narrator – Marlow – who is “Conrad’s most important story-teller”¹² because he allows Conrad to distance himself from, and become an observer of, his own life experience as a sailor. The fictional works are also about men’s passions, their struggle at sea, and the violence of the sea. Another thing that Conrad stresses in his works is the solidarity and endurance of the seamen who experience the sea at its worst. The protagonists and other characters suffer a great deal; the sea tests them by making them suffer and by forcing them to make moral choices. This struggle is supposed to associate the readers with the people of the 19th century sea voyages. What all these short stories, long stories, novels and articles have also in common is the use of different Modernist ideas and techniques; besides, the short and long sea stories are of approximately the same length (roughly 30,000 words¹³), the shortest of the six is “Youth” (13,000 words¹⁴), whereas the longest is “The Shadow-Line” (44,000 words¹⁵); thus, they can be classified as short stories, or long short stories. Finally, for Conrad, the sea was more than just an element of the setting. In his fiction, the sea is depicted as a character, as one more cause of human suffering, and as a place where a huge range of emotions can be experienced.¹⁶

Even though these tales have many binding motifs, like human sufferings, sea, natural disasters, mysteriousness, psychological struggle, still in a way they are also completely different.

“Typhoon” is a sea yarn about captain MacWhirr who sails with his crew into a typhoon, yet, as Conrad claims, “this is my first attempt at treating a subject jocularly”¹⁷ by

¹² Dr. Carabine, K., ed. *Introduction*, p. xiii

¹³ *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, vol. 2, p. 441

¹⁴ Dr. Carabine, K., ed. *Introduction*, p. xii

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. vii

¹⁶ *Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 54, 53

¹⁷ *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, vol. 2, p. 304

applying “swift changes of perception”¹⁸, whereas the typhoon is described with the same intensity as the other characters. (Conrad; 1983-96:304) Then, imitating the storm’s spirit he said that “the typhoon is still blowing”, yet he admitted that, “I find it extremely difficult to express the simplest idea clearly”. (Conrad; 1983-96:307) Great emphasis is put on the detailed description of the typhoon, and the suffering and the language of the seamen. Norman Sherry praised Conrad, claiming this to be “the most amazing description of the utter madness of the sea when tormented by a force almost as great as itself that we have ever read”, and that the typhoon is considered to be “the most vital personality of the story”. (Sherry; 1973:143, 153)

In “Falk” the topic of cannibalism – a forbidden subject in the Victorian era – and the misfortune of the captain’s first command are discussed. The young and inexperienced captain who took over a ship with a sick crew is facing difficulties unless he takes the ship to the sea as soon as possible, the debilitated crew is going to die on board. Trouble is that the road to the open sea is blocked by a sand-bar and the only nearby tugboat belongs to Falk. Falk has had deep feelings for a German girl, Hermann’s niece; however, he wrongly presumes that the young captain also favours the girl. As a result, Falk refuses to help the young captain. Later in the story, “the captain is, like the reader, surprised and ‘enlightened’ by Falk’s account of his cannibalism, which disgusts the ‘squeamish’ Hermann and makes the silent niece weep”¹⁹. In the end, the captain gets “his sickly crew into the sea air” and Falk wins the bride. (Conrad; 1998:115)

“The Shadow-Line” revolves around a young captain’s first command of the ship and as Conrad claims is his “exact autobiography”²⁰; however, Sherry argues that “the facts of Conrad’s experience at this time” oppose his claim. (Sherry; 1973:212) The crew’s previous captain died and was buried at sea and “the phantom ship”²¹ becomes a “death-haunted command”. (Conrad; 1998:222) They sail an awfully long time until their supplies run out. Subsequently, the seamen suffer from malaria for which they have no medication. Conrad presents this story as an autobiography: “[it] is personal experience seen in perspective with the eye of the mind and coloured by that affection one can’t feeling for such events of one’s life”²², yet it was modified not only for commercial purposes, but also to directly “address a fictional audience with the tale” by embellishing some facts to show his passion for the sea, the seamen’s experience at sea, and the seamen’s adventures at sea. (Carabine; 1998: xxviii)

¹⁸ Dr. Carabine, K., ed. *Introduction*, p. xii

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xx

²⁰ *Life and Letters*, vol. 2, p. 182

²¹ Gibson, A. and Hampson, A. (eds.) *The Conradian: Conrad and Theory*, p. 164

²² *Author’s Note*, p. 152

“Youth: A Narrative” is another tale based on Conrad’s maritime experience. Already in the first sentence of the story the narrator claims that: “This could have occurred nowhere but in England, where men and sea interpenetrate” thus confirming Garnett’s words that the story is “a modern English epic of the Sea”²³. (Conrad; 1997:69) The story opens when Marlow begins to tell the story of his first voyage to the East as second mate. The seamen on the board of the ship ‘Judea’ had to suffer “a seemingly endless and insurmountable series of hazards or tests”. (Renner; 1987:302) In addition, the story reflects Marlow’s juvenile maximalism, “the feeling that I could last forever, outlast the sea, the earth, and all men”. (Conrad; 1997:91) Finally, Marlow claims that this voyage might be the kind of voyage that ‘stands for a symbol of existence’. (Conrad; 1997:69)

“Lord Jim” is a novel about a man who failed to live up to the moral ideals he had set up for himself. The central event of the story is the sinking ship that was abandoned in distress by its leaders when they were confronted by an awfully bad weather. The frame narrator, Jim, who is a romantic and a committed sailor, has not yet experienced the exciting life he has just read about in books. When he jumps from the ship, he loses the long desired opportunity to become a hero. Then, the plot twists when the passengers of the ship, which was reported to have sunk, are later saved. Consequently, “Jim lives under a self-imposed cloud, taking to an itinerant existence, craving anonymity, yet obsessively seeking a chance to prove himself”. (Jones; 2002: vi) Throughout the story, Jim, a British seaman who deserted the sinking ship, tries to come to terms with his past.

“The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’” is a novel about a black sailor, James Wait, who comes from West India and who is mostly referred to as ‘nigger’; however, the fact that Wait is black not only refers to racial discrimination, but also his blackness is used symbolically: “He emerges like a force from the deepest and most remote sources of the sea”. (Sterling, McParland; 2011:114) During the voyage, he becomes ill and is unable to fulfil his duties as a sailor; however, the crewmen do not believe that he is ill, some take care of him, and some threaten him with disdain. When the storm begins, the solidarity of the crewmen on the ship is lost; some men sympathize with Wait and rescue him, risking their lives; whereas, some men, like the captain and Singleton, did not concern themselves much with Wait’s condition, just with their primary obligations as sailors. The story is about heroism at sea and solidarity amongst crewmen.

“The Mirror of the Sea” is a compilation of several autobiographical essays, brief descriptions, and recollections that were initially published in various English magazines. In this collection Conrad contemplates upon his career as a mariner. Robert Foulke argues that:

²³ Sherry, N. *Critical Heritage*, p. 131

“Many literary critics have difficulty taking “The Mirror of the Sea” seriously because it seems to be a random collection of sea pieces, some of which are extravagantly overwritten”²⁴. However, Conrad himself says that “this book is a very intimate revelation”. (Conrad; 1936:7) He speaks about his connection with the sea,

which beginning mysteriously, like any great passion the inscrutable Gods send to mortals, went on unreasoning and invincible, surviving the test of disillusion, defying the disenchantment that lurks in every day of a strenuous life; went on full of love's delight and love's anguish, facing them in open-eyed exultation, without bitterness and without repining, from the first hour to the last. (Conrad; 1936:7)

While revealing his relations with the sea and the relationships between seamen, Conrad also dramatizes humorous incidents on ships. In the collection Conrad largely “defends his passion for sea [...] as a kind of piety”²⁵.

The modernist sea stories, novels, and essays capture the reader’s attention through Conrad’s sympathies for seamen’s lives, the accidents occurring on the ships and all the difficult conditions they have to survive while being at sea. Even if the sea is not the main element of the setting, it is still vividly described in all of the above mentioned works. Moreover, these fictional works and essays belong to the same period that in literature is defined as Modernism.

5. THE SEA

The sea played a major part in the history of Great Britain; therefore, it was greatly portrayed also in arts: the English paintings, music, and literature. The first who depicted the sea in their poetry were the Anglo-Saxons. In their poetry Great Britain was represented as the true “home or harbour”, whereas the sea itself was thoroughly involved in their imagination. (Ackroyd; 2002:263) The sea was pictured differently. On the one hand, the Anglo-Saxons thought of the land and its sea “as a calm and tranquil haven”; explorers, adventurers, and “exiles”, on the other hand, described the sea as cold, unpredictable, and dangerous. (Ackroyd; 2002:263) Britain’s native inhabitants stressed their fear of the sea, with its terrifying depths. At times, its depths were associated with desolation and “even of the hell itself”. (Ackroyd; 2002:263) Then in the Anglo-Saxon poetry the ship became a symbol for overcoming that fear. It was impossible to escape the sea and its sounds; therefore, the images of the sea are present throughout the next centuries. Moreover, the English writers continue to

²⁴ Foulke, R. *The Elegiac Structure of Conrad's 'The Mirror of the Sea'*, p. 154

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 155

write stories and tales about the sea, thus emphasizing the mystery and at times even melancholy of the sea. Most importantly, those sea stories and tales raised the “national spirit” and “solidarity” of Englishmen. (Fraser; 2004:34)

The sea then became one of the most important elements of English fiction. Numerous English writers, including Conrad, created various images and meanings of the seas and with those images and meanings they depicted human experiences of the sea. Writers portrayed “the native passion for seafaring”; they created emotionally charged stylistic devices to represent the sea; they depicted sailors who voyaged all around the world, highlighting the desire of Englishmen to see what else was there overseas. (Ackroyd; 2002:270) The fictional sea adventures continued to represent the mystical image of the sea. Then the “true condition of humankind” was portrayed, where the characters had to make important decisions and crucial choices by being isolated and surrounded only by the sea, sometimes even described as “hell itself”. (Ackroyd; 2002:265)

Another important aspect of the sea is the commercial focus of it. The sea played a major role in the historical development of Britain. Many significant discoveries were made during sea voyages by such famous explorers as Walter Raleigh and Francis Drake in the 16th century, Captain James Cook in the 18th century, and Charles Darwin in 19th century²⁶. In the 1880s²⁷, the seafaring was not that much concerned with preaching religion anymore, as with commercial activities. After “the opening of the oceans”, a great deal of goods were shipped all over the world, thus Britain became the leading country in foreign trading. (Kennerley; 2008:70) In other words, “the sea undoubtedly shaped the class and industrial politics of waterfront communities”²⁸. Nevertheless, very many ships were lost at sea during these voyages. The reason for that were the defective ships, but most importantly the weather at sea and the sea itself could not be predicted, which presented the greatest dangers. Consequently, the British perceive the sea as both “chaotic and divine”, since, on the one hand, it helps to build a nation’s wealth and prosperity, yet, on the other hand, it signifies death and resembles “a vision of God’s torment”. (Mentez; 2009:1001)

Moreover, the sea differs from the land not only physically, but also culturally. The sea is considered to pose a threat to human life “through its basic inhospitability”. (Mentez; 2009:1001) Steven Mentez in his article “Toward a Blue Cultural Studies: The Sea, Maritime Culture, and Early Modern English Literature” claims that: “the combination of hostility and fertility that the fishermen describe captures the sea’s role as a metaphor for contingencies of mortal life from classical and Biblical culture through (and beyond) the early modern period”.

²⁶ National Maritime Museum, *Ships, seafarers & life at sea*

²⁷ Kennerley, A. *Joseph Conrad at the London Sailors’ Home*, p. 70

²⁸Phillips J., ‘A Karachi stowage’: *dockers and the sea in twentieth-century Britain*

(Mentez; 2009:1001-2) Subsequently, writers who portray the sea, or the life at sea, tend to stress the idea of harmony between the human race and the sea more than the fact that human life is insignificant at sea. Accordingly, the phenomenon of Bermuda's Triangle emphasizes the "inhospitable nature" and the "supernatural powers" of the sea; therefore, the islands (Bermudas, Britain, and others) serve as an excellent setting for heroism at sea for many great writers, including Joseph Conrad.

Finally, "looking closer at the sea, [...], challenges established habits of thought"; for that reason, extensive research should be carried out on the sea as a subject, in order to "open up new analytical frames for scholars of early modern English literature" and to raise knowledge about the diverse aspects and the ambiguity of the sea. (Mentez; 2009:997) Further, a more thorough analysis and interpretation of Conrad's three sea stories and the descriptions of the sea will be introduced.

6. The Images of the Sea

In Joseph Conrad's sea fictions, the sea is rarely described using the same expressions; the only time repetition occurs is when the sea is said to be 'great', 'heavy', 'high', 'deep', or 'open' to emphasize its vastness with no positive or negative connotation, rather to establish the generally known facts about the sea. Moreover, four typical characterizations of the sea can be pointed out: a romantic view of the sea; the sea as indifferent to human beings; the sea as a destructive force; and the sea as life-giving and life-sustaining. Then, these characterisations can be further analyzed according to the linguistic devices Conrad employs in his fictional works, such as personifying or humanizing the sea (in its corporeal, emotional, and spiritual aspects); the use of human artefacts in Conrad's figurative language; animistic figurative language; the use of colours; and mythological allusions.

6.1. Typhoon

In "Typhoon" Joseph Conrad depicted seamen who experienced a typhoon and acquainted the readers with the violence and the terror of the sea. However, the subject of the typhoon in some passages is treated in a rather jocular way²⁹. The story grows around the "overpowering concussion and rush of great waters". (Conrad; 1998:36) Conrad puts great emphasis on the details while describing the storm and the sea, thus contributing to the significance of the entire story:

The *Nan-Shan* was being looted by the storm with a senseless, destructive fury: trysails torn out of the extra gaskets... weather-cloths burst, rails twisted, light-screens smashed - and two of the boats had gone already. They had gone unheard - and unseen, melting... in the shock and smother of the wave. It was only later, when upon the white flash of another high sea hurling itself amidships, Jukes had a vision of two pairs of davits leaping black and end empty out of the solid blackness, with one overhauled fall flying and an iron-bound block capering in the air, that he became aware of what had happened within about three yards of his back. (Conrad; 1998:36, 38)

In this passage, the sequence of the events and their precise illustration demonstrate Conrad's writing style, particularly its liveliness and creativity. Moreover, Conrad employs here such descriptive verbs as 'loot', 'burst', 'smash' and 'twist' to stress the fury and to highlight the mysterious force of the sea as well as its dynamics because as Rubenis explains in myths, the world itself communicates with human beings³⁰. Conrad anthropomorphises the sea because

²⁹ *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, vol. 2, p. 304

³⁰ Rubenis, A. (1994) "Mīts" in *Izglūība un Kultūra*, p. 26

the sea is portrayed as a furious and passionate person. The sea's emotional aspect is depicted: "but [Jukes] had never been given a glimpse of immeasurable strength and of immoderate wrath and fury of the passionate sea". (Conrad; 1998:21) The emotional aspect of the sea was also mentioned when the narrator spoke about a hurricane that could "madden the seas", or when the sea was "as if agitated by an internal commotion". (Conrad; 1998: 63, 69) Further, Jukes also recalled his terrifying experience when, as he put it: "he saw the head of the wave" and then next "his first irresistible notion was that the whole China Sea had climbed on the bridge" "large enough to break his neck for him". (Conrad; 1998:36, 37, 59) These examples serve as "the mirror effect between impressionistic language and the recreation of subjective experience dramatizes in the text the difficulty of translating the memory of visual and aural sensations into words". (Ambrosini; 1991:88) Linguistic devices render Conrad's personal experience as a sailor.

Next, when the captain decides to face the typhoon, the reader is also "made to see all it [the sea] may contain of perfidy, of violence, and of terror." (Conrad; 1998:22) To make the reader *see* the full power of the sea, Conrad alters the romantic view of the sea as something calm and beautiful. Another thing is that Conrad's fictions "emerged from his vision of things, and not from theories"³¹; thus he is a mediator between the world around him and his fictional works³².

In the work under discussion there is also an element of comedy which evokes "swift changes of perception", and by "the hilarity of the active opposition between MacWhirr and Conrad"³³. This can be seen in the example where Jukes uses a simile to tell how awful the weather is: "I feel exactly as if I had my head tied up in a woollen blanket". (Conrad; 1998:25) For that reason, the typhoon not only refers to the furious natural element the sailors are made to confront, but also to the "storm of words and images". (Carabine; 1998: xi)

Next, the narrator states that "[...] facts can speak for themselves with overwhelming precision" and these are the facts that he associates with the sea, in other words, the occurrences that he has seen or has experienced at sea. However, the dreadful conditions he and the crew have to endure, is something that he has encountered before. Juke's struggle with the sea fist began when he:

[...] saw the head of the wave topple over, adding the mite of its crash of the tremendous uproar raging around him, and almost at the same instant the stanchion was wrenched away from his embracing arms. After a crushing thump on his back he found himself suddenly afloat and borne upwards. His first irresistible notion was that the whole China Sea had climbed on the

³¹ Hynes, S. *Edwardian Occasions: Essays on English Writing in the Early Twentieth Century*, p. 51

³² Satpe, H. J. *Lord Jim*, p. 72

³³ Brown, C. *Creative Combat in 'Typhoon'*, p. 4

bridge. Then, more sanely, he concluded himself gone overboard. All the time he was being tossed, flung, and rolled in great volumes of water, he kept on repeating mentally, with the utmost precipitation, the words: "My God! My God! My God! My God!" Suddenly the water let them down with a brutal bang. (Conrad; 1998:36-37)

Here the sea is characterized in corporeal terms and its movements are described in the language of physical movements that are typical for human beings and some animals, for instance 'the head of the wave'; 'the whole China Sea had climbed', 'tossed', 'flung', and 'let them down'. As a result, the sea is mythologized and is continuously described in psychosomatic terms. Moreover, Conrad mythologizes the sea by endowing the sea with human characteristics: corporeal, emotional, and spiritual.

The power of the sea and its unpredictability caused the crewmen a great deal of suffering. The sea as a destructive force is indifferent to human beings; however, Andris Rubenis (1994) argues that the mythical world knows no freedom because there it is neither possible, nor necessary, since freedom is associated with risk, uncertainty, ignorance and horror³⁴. However, the sea as mythologized by Conrad is also free because it is full of risk, uncertainty, ignorance, and horror. This could be observed in the example:

Nobody – not even Captain MacWhirr, who alone on deck had caught sight of a white line of foam coming on at such a height that he couldn't believe his eyes – nobody was to know the steepness of the sea and the awful depth of the hallow the hurricane had scoped out behind the running wall of water. (Conrad; 1998:58)

The combination of water and wind fell over them; they were wet to the bone. Even then Conrad manages to be ironical. Through MacWhirr's speech Conrad depicts the threat the sea possesses, but the irony is that MacWhirr is more concerned about his hat than life: "Captain MacWhirr wiped his eyes. The sea that had nearly taken him overboard had, to his great annoyance, washed his sou'-wester hat off his bald head". (Conrad; 1998:51) Then "there came to them confused uproar, a tempestuous tumult, a fierce mutter, gusts of screams dying away, and the tramping of feet mingling with the blows of the sea". (Conrad; 1998:60) With these passages Conrad emphasizes the extreme situations at sea when the seamen had to make a choice: to fight or to surrender. The crew decided not to give up, but to fight with "teeth and claw" "if the ship had to go after all". (Conrad; 1998:65) Here Conrad brings irony into play, saying: "That would have been odious [if the sea would take their lives]. And in that feeling there was a humane intention and a vague sense of the fitness of things." (Conrad; 1998:65) Even though the sea is portrayed as a beast here, Conrad suggest that sailors should not loose their humanity in their fight with it: "men shall not be allowed to struggle like beasts

³⁴ Rubenis, A. *Mits*, p. 26

for survival, but that they shall face their fate with charitable regard for one another as human beings". (Kolupke; 1988:79)

Most of the time the seamen felt fear as it could be seen in the passage where Jukes fears that in the fury of the sea he might lose his sight, which refers not only to his bodily vision, but also to his mental perception and judgement, which made him miserable and desperate until he found his captain:

his sight might be destroyed in the immense flurry of the elements; "his wretched struggles ... become somewhat mixed up with a face, an oilskin coat, somebody's boots ... and finally was himself caught in the firm clasp of a pair of stout arms. He returned the embrace closely round a thick solid body. He had found his captain. (Conrad; 1998:36-37)

The crew did not lose hope and faith either; they resisted the events at sea thanks to MacWhirr's speech where he decided to face the typhoon: "Facing it – always facing it – that's the way to get through ... That's enough for any man". (Conrad; 1998:68) Days passed, and even if MacWhirr said that he "shouldn't like to lose her" and that "she may come out of it [typhoon] yet", at that point the captain began to think that there was no way out of that sea-rage and that the ship would not last "another hour in such a sea". (Conrad; 1998:66, 71) Consequently, captain MacWhirr "withdrawn from the very current of his own existence" began to talk to himself, as if losing his mind. (Conrad; 1998:66) Subsequently, MacWhirr's loss of mind is seen as a consequence of the torment forced by the sea.

Jason Fraser claims that the story "develops the implication of a single event, shaping it into an intensely metaphoric statement", namely, that the plot itself is a metaphor; the sea story was not just a conventional description of the experiences of the seamen, but it also served as a model of the world as a microcosm. (Fraser; 2004:37) Moreover, the sea has been described as something mysterious, even spectral, with its undiscovered chambers, its ability to resemble various colours and textures as well as its inconsistency; for instance, Conrad describes the sea in the following mysterious, even numinous, ways: "a black and secret chamber of the sea", "the ghostly glimmers of the sea", and "a wild scene of mountainous black waters lit by the gleams of distant worlds". (Conrad; 1998: 36, 39, 64) These quotations show that Conrad does not romanticise the sea and, in fact, his descriptions of the sea are rather realistic because this story, as most of his fictional works, is also partly based on his own personal experience.

Furthermore, in Conrad's "Typhoon" parallels with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" could be seen; Coleridge also mythologizes the sea. The plot revolves around the Mariner, who is going on a voyage. On its way, the ship encounters a storm, when out of nowhere appears an albatross. The bird is killed by the Mariner.

Subsequently, the spirits of the sea punish the crew and the Mariner. In the thematic analysis of Coleridge's poem, Bloom claims that poem

has been interpreted as both a tale of the supernatural, in the Gothic tradition of superstition, magic spells, gloomy atmosphere, and treacherous tourneys, and a religious allegory, a morality story embedded within the tale of the Mariner's fate after killing a divine bird. (Bloom; 2001:15)

Just like Conrad in "Typhoon", Coleridge introduces a detailed description of the setting, which is the sea. After the death of the bird, the sea becomes "a vision of hell, with the inversion of the natural phenomena". (Bloom; 2001:17) Coleridge portrays the sea as violent and furious: "And now the storm-blast came, and he Was tyrannous and strong," here the storm functions as an avenger of the people's intrusion into the natural habitat of the bird. (Coleridge; 1857:9) In the poem, the Mariner thinks of the sea as life-sustaining; however, after the incident, he realizes that the sea was indifferent to human needs: "Water, water, everywhere, Nor any drop to drink". (Bloom; 2001:17) Then, the sea is mythologized and is described as gods slave with its inexplicable and sudden changes: "Tell me what is the ocean doing? Still as a slave before his lord", and "But why drives on that ship so fast, Without or wave or wind?" (Coleridge; 1857:37, 38) Finally, in the poem, Coleridge describes the sea as indifferent to human needs, and the storm as a destructive force of nature, which is what Conrad stresses in "Typhoon"; accordingly, there one.

To sum up, the typhoon was made to be the most important character, even personality, of this story³⁵: Conrad emphasizes the tiniest details of the typhoon; and he describes the power of the typhoon and the greatness of the sea through the depiction of the seamen's suffering and their experience at sea, through their vision and comparison of the conditions at sea. With the same intensity as Conrad depicted the typhoon, he anthropomorphised and; thus, mythologized the sea. He also emphasizes the fact that human beings are naturally inclined to compare the developments in nature with themselves; thereby, trying to overcome the distance between human beings and nature.

6.2. FALK

"Falk" is a story about life at sea that encompasses two equally important events: one that is taking place at present and the other one that occurred with one of the main characters in the past.

³⁵ Sherry, N. *Conrad: The Critical Heritage*, p. 153

In the beginning of the story, the narrator claims that some people are “more or less connected with the sea”. (Conrad; 1998:81) Conrad emphasizes the fact that water is one of the most essential elements on earth and that the sea in particular has played a major role in the history of human beings. In the Bible, the sea stands for a symbol of evil, like in Jeremiah 5:22, where the sea is the means by which God shows his power and fury:

Do you not fear me? declares the Lord.
Do you not tremble before me?
I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea,
a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass;
though the waves toss, they cannot prevail;
though they roar, they cannot pass over it.³⁶

Then, in “Falk”, the sea does not poses any real danger to the sailors; however, just as the sea gives life, it can also take it away; therefore, the sea has the same power as God. When the narrator elaborates on the contrasting power the sea has over crewmen he emphasizes the fact that those who have experienced the anger of the sea shall never forget it; thus the ocean is not only life-giving and life-sustaining, but it also takes lives:

The flavour of salt-water which for so many of us had been the very water of life permeated our talk. He who hath known the bitterness of the Ocean shall have its taste for ever in his mouth. (Conrad; 1998:81)

Conrad again mythologizes the sea and this time he bases it on binary oppositions³⁷, for instance, the close and comprehensible means good; whereas the distant and inscrutable means evil. Despite the fact that Britain is surrounded by the sea, and that some of the seamen in the story have been sailing for most of their lives, the sea has always been incomprehensible and distant. In addition, the captain of *Diana* “seemed to know nothing of the wicked sea”. (Conrad; 1998:84) Further, the narrator discusses the sea and its mysterious works; he speaks about the sea-accidents and of heroism at sea and the narrator also stresses that ‘the sea never changes’, even though, the times have changed:

The sea never changes, and its works for all the talk of men are wrapped in mystery. But we agreed that the times were changed. And we talked of old ships, of sea-accidents, of break-downs, dismastings; and of a man who brought his ship safe to Liverpool all the way from the River Platte under a jury rudder. We talked of wrecks, of short rations and of heroism — or at least of what the newspapers would have called heroism at sea — a manifestation of virtues quite different from the heroism of primitive times. (Conrad; 1998:81)

Then, the narrator describes the sea in a sarcastic way by claiming that the sea can be ‘tragic and comic’, thus he is emphasizes the duality of the sea. The sea that gives life to so many

³⁶ Holy Bible, *Old Testament*, Jeremiah: Chapter 5, Verse 22

³⁷ Rubenis, A. *Mits*, p. 26

creatures, that provides wealth for the British Empire, and home for so many sailors, just as easily can cause death with its anger and the always unpredictable weather changes, and the sea water is not the same water which is so necessary for human survival:

There apparently no whisper of the world's iniquities had ever penetrated. And yet she lived upon the wide sea: and the sea tragic and comic, the sea with its horrors and its peculiar scandals, the sea peopled by men and ruled by iron necessity is indubitably a part of the world. (Conrad; 1998:88)

Moreover, the narrator stresses his former experiences at sea and his knowledge of the sea by stating that the sea has no 'respect for decency' and is indifferent to human needs, thus being a merciless natural element:

Her venerable innocence apparently had put a restraint in the roaring lusts of the sea. And yet I have known the sea too long to believe in its respect for decency. An elemental force is ruthlessly frank. [...] The ruthless disclosure was, in the end, left for a man to make; a man strong and elemental enough and driven to unveil some secrets of the sea by the power of a simple and elemental desire. (Conrad; 1998:88-89)

Interestingly, Conrad claims that the sea is 'frank', that is, neither good, nor evil, which emphasizing its unchangeable nature. Moreover, he argues that a human being is also 'elemental' enough, and driven by his desire to discover the secrets of the sea. However, when Conrad claims that the sea is "ruled by iron necessity and with a heart of ice", he characterises the sea not only as a cold-hearted creature, but also as a destructive force that is indifferent to human beings. (Conrad; 1998:141)

Furthermore, not only in this work, but also in many other of his fictional works Conrad mythologizes the sea to give us a chance to look more thoroughly at ourselves, and more importantly, to probe into the depths of our psyche³⁸. This question of human being's self-awareness is raised in all of his works where seamen face the fury of the sea, thus at the same time they are fighting their inner battles. One of such inner battles had to be fought by Falk.

The climax of the story is when Falk reveals that he had once (10 years ago) eaten human flesh. The people to whom the story was told were shocked and disgusted. They make assumptions that Falk had been involved in a shipwreck, thus the majority were of the opinion that "...no circumstance could excuse...such a crime. The duty of a human being was to starve. Falk therefore was a beast, an animal; base, low, vile, despicable, shameless, and deceitful". (Conrad; 1998:132)

³⁸ Ibid.

The reason for Falk's "cannibalism and suffering at sea" was that the ship on which he navigated was damaged beyond repair by storms at sea. (Conrad; 1998:135) Then the ship began to drift. The crew ran out of food supplies and soon after that they started to die or commit suicide by jumping overboard. Consequently, "the organized life of the ship had come to an end. The solidarity of the men had gone". (Conrad; 1998:139) Falk did what he had to do to survive, in other words, Falk tasted "the bitterness of the Ocean" that's taste he shall never forget. (Conrad; 1998:81)

To conclude, some of the seamen were acquainted with the horrors, the dangers, and the power of the seas, as Conrad has put it: "the confined space, the close contact, the imminent menace of the waves, seem to draw crewmen together, in spite of madness, suffering and despair." (Conrad; 1998:139) In the story, the emphasis was put on a different kind of experience at sea; the kind of situation when the ship is safe and the crewmen have no direct danger from the sea. However, when the ship has run out of food supplies and crewmen are starving to death in the middle of the ocean, it is still the pitiless sea that poses the greatest danger because it is indifferent to human needs.

6.3. THE SHADOW-LINE

"The Shadow-Line" emerges where the story of "Falk" ends, when the young captain navigated the ship into the sea. In the beginning of the story, a young protagonist, who has just left a ship, states that for some time he has broken his "connection with the sea". (Conrad; 1998:162) This 'connection' is clearly meant as a link to the previous story of "Falk" where the narrator asserted that all men are connected with the sea, some more and some less. Later, the young captain claims that he has been "freed from the sea for a time" and that as a sailor he is fully ignorant of "all land affairs". (Conrad; 1998:170) What the narrator means when he says that he is 'freed from the sea', is that he is now on land, not that he is psychologically free from the need to return to the sea. Not being at sea gives an individual a different perspective on life at sea. The experienced sailors at sea must always be sharp and observant, and the sea and the weather at it are always unpredictable. The individual awareness of his dependence on nature transcends the alienation between a human being and the world³⁹. Conrad's mythologization of the sea brings the human being closer to understanding the world of nature.

After settling in his room, from the window the narrator sees "the dark-blue sparkling sea"; he could also distinguish "the depths and distances of these blue tones". (Conrad;

³⁹ Ibid.

1998:177) It is possible that the sea is much more charming to look at than to be at. The admiring way the narrator describes the sea implies that he perceives the sea as something divine. Then he sees a ship arriving in the harbour; and again he characterises this process as something blissful and even angelic with the ship's 'white wings': "There is something touching about a ship coming in from sea and folding her white wings for a rest". (Conrad; 1998:177) In this passage the deification, or mythologizing, of the sea can be observed. Rubenis explains this phenomenon by stating that myth is the first universal perception and understanding of the world that the society has developed in its history⁴⁰.

Furthermore, for experienced seamen, life out of the sea is unimaginable; they perceive themselves as integral parts of the sea and they feel psychological necessity to return to the sea, as if it has enchanted them with its beauty and horror. Another captain (Captain Ellis) sees himself as,

a sort of divine (pagan) emanation, the deputy-Neptune for the circumambient seas. If he did not actually rule the waves, he pretended to rule the fate of the mortals whose lives were cast upon the waters. (Conrad; 1998:177)

This example shows that captains and seamen perceive themselves as servants of the sea, as its subjects, and if captains cannot actually affect the behaviour of the sea in any way; however, lives and fates of the shipmen depend on them and even at sailors may become victims "of evil spirits". (Conrad; 1998:199) These evil spirits may refer to the sea, the wind, and the weather that are always inconsistent and deceptive.

Moreover, sailors who have spent most of their lives at sea can sense the trouble coming by 'steady breezes' that have no logical explanation according to the season, year or any book on sea-life: "I felt on my face the breath of unknown powers that shape our destinies", namely he could sense the danger that the sea-wind blew, the wind that predicts the course of the sea. (Conrad; 1998:199) In addition, Conrad anthropomorphises the sea by attributing such corporeal faculties to the sea as 'breathing', which defines the very existence of human beings, such as "the evil from which we were escaping into the clean breath of the sea; if only that breath had been a little stronger," to emphasize the mythological effect the sea has on people. (Conrad; 1998:210) Then all of a sudden the sea calmed down:

Then just about sunrise we got for an hour an inexplicable, steady breeze, right in our teeth. There was no sense in it. It fitted neither with the season of the year nor with the secular experience of seamen as recorded in books, nor with the aspect of the sky. Only purposeful malevolence could account for it. It sent us travelling at a great pace away from our proper course; and if we had been out on pleasure sailing bent it would have been a delightful breeze, with the awakened sparkle of the sea, with the sense of motion and a feeling of

⁴⁰ Ibid.

unwonted freshness. Then, all at once, as if disdaining to carry farther the sorry jest, it dropped and died out completely in less than five minutes. The ship's head swung where it listed; the stilled sea took on the polish of a steel plate in the calm. (Conrad; 1998:215)

In this passage, the events at sea have taken a mysterious turn. The sea is mythologized through the descriptions of inexplicable sudden changes. Moreover, the rapid weather changes emphasize its mysteriousness. Then, the ship was taken back to the exact place in the sea where the crew's previous captain had died. In this part Conrad stresses the enigmatic and mysterious events that occur at sea that cannot be explained. In this passage myth is the product of a collective fantasy⁴¹.

Suddenly, most of the seamen on the ship become seriously ill. When they run out of medicine, the captain's only wish is that "I won't feel really at peace till I have that ship of mine out in the Indian Ocean", that "the sea [...] was pure safe and friendly" and "once at sea I was not afraid of facing anything; the sea was now the only remedy for all my troubles", and that "the first breeze would blow [...] away' the lingering malaria", all seems to be without substantiation. (Conrad; 1998: 186, 204, 205, 206) Conrad represents the sea, and nature in general, as indifferent to human concerns and needs. Since Conrad likens the sea to a mythological creature, he is also interweaving reality and magic. Both mythology and magic are connected by the idea of the dependence of human existence on supernatural forces and on divine will⁴². Moreover, the calmness of the sea and suddenly changing winds suggest a "purposeful malevolence". (Conrad; 1998:215) The situation comes to the climax when the captain expresses his delusive 'faith' in the power of quinine:

to break the spell by its medical virtue, make [...] the weather but a passing worry, and, like a magic powder working against mysterious malefices, secure [...] my first command against the evil powers of calms and pestilence. (Conrad; 1998:216)

The captain has this 'fixed idea' that the death of the previous captain has cursed the ship. Nevertheless, "the difficulties, the dangers, the problems of a ship at sea must be met on deck". (Conrad; 1998:217) Moreover, he was completely shocked that the curse "should have stretched its claw after us over the sea seemed to me an extraordinary and unfair license". (Conrad; 1998:210) The sea had no compassion for the men, "the intense loneliness of the sea acted like poison on [the narrator's] brain". (Conrad; 1998:218) The captain is now slowly going mad; he has a "morbid vision of her [the ship] as a floating grave". (Conrad; 1998:218) Furthermore, he can control neither his feelings, nor his vision:

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 27

⁴² Ibid.

for myself, neither my soul was highly tempered, nor my imagination properly under control. There were moments when I felt, not only that I would go mad, but that I had gone mad already; so that I dared not open my lips for fear of betraying myself by some insane shriek. (Conrad; 1998:224)

The destructive fury of the sea causes not only physical, but also mental calamity. In this passage the influence that the sea has over man can be observed. Seamen struggle to keep the ship in order at the same time as they have to deal with their inner thoughts and to get over their diseases.

At the point when the ship was not moving the captain said: “If the air had turned black, the sea, for all I knew, might have turned solid”. (Conrad; 1998:230) Crewmen were moving around the ship as shadows without uttering a sound. The captain described them as “the ghosts of themselves, and their weight on a rope could be no more than the weight of a bunch of ghosts”. (Conrad; 1998:230) Nevertheless, the captain is determined to save his crew; he suggests that the “best chance for the ship and the men was in the efforts all of us, sick and well, must make’ to get her to Singapore”. (Conrad; 1998:221) The story ends when the captain proves to be ‘elemental enough’ to face the mysterious sea.

To sum up, the bond between men and the sea is undermined. The sea is again mythologized and endowed with human characteristics; whereas, the wind, the sea, and the weather at sea together symbolize evil spirits. In this story, the sea is also deified; as a result, the seamen perceive themselves as servants of the sea. Moreover, the seamen encounter inexplicable occurrences at sea that make them suffer not only physically, but also mentally.

6.4. Youth: A Narrative

“Youth: A Narrative” begins with Marlow’s difficult voyage to Bangkok on a ship that was carrying a cargo of coal. This voyage happened some twenty years ago.

The story commences with an introduction to the setting, that is, to the sea:

This could have occurred nowhere but in England, where men and sea interpenetrate, so to speak—the sea entering into the life of most men, and the men knowing something or everything about the sea, in the way of amusement, of travel, or of bread-winning. (Conrad; 1997:69)

Here Conrad emphasizes the fact the Britain is an island, surrounded by the sea, and he also introduces the discourse of British Imperialism. This work is also considered to be autobiographical because “by the time Conrad began working in the British Merchant Service

in 1878”⁴³ the British Empire was already at its peak; whereas, “the sea served as a path to the world;” thus it is crucial to acknowledge its importance to the British people. (Sterling, McParland; 2011:145)

The narrator continues by saying that “between the five of [them] there was the strong bond of the sea, and also the fellowship of the craft”. (Conrad; 1997:69)

Marlow has an idealized view of youth and of his adventurous voyage; and he also has a romantic view of the sea:

The sea was polished, was blue, was pellucid, was sparkling like a precious stone, extending on all sides, all round to the horizon – as if the whole terrestrial globe had been one jewel, one colossal sapphire, a single gem fashioned into a planet. And on the luster of the great calm waters the *Judea* glided imperceptibly, enveloped in languid and unclean vapours, in a lazy cloud that drifted to leeward, light and slow: a pestiferous cloud defiling the splendour of sea and sky. (Conrad; 1997:80)

Youth plays a major role in this story; it completely changes Marlow’s perspective on the sea, the ship, and life in general. Marlow has not only a “romantic view of himself”, but also of the sea (Sterling, McParland; 2011:144) In this paragraph, the whole vastness of the sea is sparkling, thus reminding the narrator of a ‘jewel’. The sea is depicted as something divine and therefore mythical. Then, the narrator praises the “the serenity of the sea” that was “distinctly surprising”; nevertheless, he is also surprised because he “expected to see [the sea] convulsed with horror”. (Conrad; 1997:82) Moreover, Conrad has also described the beauty and the playfulness of the sea: “the luminous sea”, “at the sea sparkling round the ship”, “the sea blue like the sea of a dream, [...] the blaze of vivid colour – the water reflecting it all” (Conrad; 1997:88, 89, 93) Conrad describes a romantic view of the water to emphasize its dreamlike effect and to stress that everything is possible in the world of magic.

Next, on their journey Marlow and his shipmates encountered bad weather, so they were delayed. Later, another ship hit the *Judea* ship. As a result, they are delayed for another three months. The sea is unwelcoming and its works are becoming mysterious. The anger of the sea is emphasized by means of various epithets, such as “infuriated sea”, “the darkening sea”, “the malice of the sea”, “a terrific sea”, and also “the sea that gives it – the vastness, the loneliness”. (Conrad; 1997:71, 74, 79, 83) The quoted descriptive attributed allude to the sea’s evil spirit. Moreover, as in Conrad’s other works, such as “The Shadow-Line”, the loneliness of the sea affects the narrators’ minds in a way that makes them weak. Subsequently, experiencing the fury and the violence of the sea, when seamen have to

⁴³ White, A. *Conrad and imperialism*, p. 180

struggle hard to keep the ship safe, Conrad ironically describes their toil as “a hell for sailors”. (Conrad; 1997:74) Again, the sea is mythologized and characterized even as ‘hell’ itself.

Further on, they again encounter rough weather, only this time the ship begins leaking. After months of repairs, the cargo of coal is fired up. They tried to put out the fire with water, but after numerous attempts to extinguish the fire, the ship exploded. The crew abandons the ship and watches it burn. Moreover, Conrad compared the two completely contrasting natural elements – water and fire – and comes to a conclusion that the fire can be “more cruel, more pitiless, more bitter than the sea”. (Conrad; 1997:86) What Conrad does here is that he explores the two primal elements that are dissimilar in everything apart from being natural elements. For instance, “I could see the circle of the sea lighted by the fire” implies that water as an element is not always powerful enough to extinguish a fire. (Conrad; 1997:87) In this case also a binary opposition of elements is introduced; water stands for something good that gives life; whereas, fire symbolizes evil that takes life away.

Furthermore, Conrad mythologizes the sea through different examples of unusual comparisons and anthropomorphising. First, the narrator states that “the world was nothing but an immensity of great foaming waves rushing at us”; emphasizing the vastness of the sea. (Conrad; 1997:74) Then he describes the sea in a very picturesque way by saying that “the sea was white like a sheet of foam, like a caldron of boiling milk”, which in the next moment became “heavy [and] crashed aboard and swept clean over us.” (Conrad; 1997:74, 75) The irony lies in the example where the narrator comes to a conclusion that “with the water to our waists, to our necks, over our heads. [...] We had forgotten how it felt to be dry”. (Conrad; 1997:75) Conrad suggests that when the seamen confront the destructive force of the sea, they need to build a collective identity, in order to resist this force.

Next, Conrad anthropomorphizes the sea and endows with qualities characteristic to mysterious creatures. For example, the ship was “as if bewitched within the circle of the sea horizon”, “the good, strong sea, the salt, bitter sea, that could whisper to you and roar at you and knock your breath out of you”, and also “a disc of purple sea shot by the blood-red play of gleams; upon a disc of water glittering and sinister”. (Conrad; 1997:89, 90, 94) Finally, the ‘hissing water’ that ‘blows fresh with a drizzle’ can not only “stir like the sight of a glorious triumph”, but its ‘tumult’ can produce a ‘fiendish gale’ as well. (Conrad; 1997:71, 74, 87, 89) Clearly Conrad stresses that in the world of myths there is not yet known a marked boundary between fantasy and reality, man and nature, life and death; consequently, there will always be a ‘battle’ between nature and humankind. After many hours at sea, when they reach the land, the narrator concludes that “the sea [...] gives nothing, except hard knocks”; nevertheless, “all that's wonderful, it is the sea, I believe, the sea itself”. (Conrad; 1997:94)

Finally, the narrator's youthful vision on life will be analyzed in detail. Critics argue that "Marlow's associations and connections with his past say much about what he believes and values, what he regrets, and how he sees life and his profession as a man on the sea." (Sterling, McParland; 2011:140) In this work Conrad compares the sea to youth: "Ah! The good old time—the good old time. Youth and the sea. Glamour and the sea! The good, strong sea, the salt, bitter sea, that could whisper to you and roar at you and knock your breath out of you". The narrator perceives the sea and himself differently in the course of time. (Conrad; 1997:94) Conrad emphasizes that the indifference of the sea does not seem so significant at such a young age as the narrator was because when young, people are ignorant and naïve the same way as Marlow was, who was a sea-dreamer and did not perceive the actual events at sea as a threat, since at that time he thought he could 'outlast the sea'. (Conrad; 1997:91) However, being at a venerable age at the moment of telling the story, he realizes that it was just a romantic illusion of his youth. Then, there is "nostalgia in the memories" because man grows old and eventually dies; whereas, the sea will stay immortal. (Sterling, McParland; 2011:142) This is illustrated in the example: "[...] youth, strength, genius, thoughts, achievements, simple hearth – all die...No matter". (Conrad; 1997:72)

Later Marlow's outlook on life changes. At the end of the story, Marlow becomes aware that the past drifts away like the sea:

our faces marked by toil, by deception, by success, by love; our weary eyes looking still, looking always, looking anxiously for something out of life, that while its is expected is already gone – has passed unseen, in a sigh, in a flash – together with the youth, the strength, with the romance of illusions. (Conrad; 1997:92)

Moreover, "the voyage Marlow describes illustrates life [and] symbolizes existence". (Sterling, McParland; 2011:146) This is illustrated in the motto inscribed on the ship's stern: "*Judea*, London. Do or Die." (Conrad; 1997:75)

To conclude, the story of Marlow's youthful voyage is about nostalgic memories; the fact that all men eventually die, but the sea will always stay immortal. Also in this story, the sea is mythologized, and as a destructive force of nature describes it even as hell itself. Moreover, young Marlow's idealized and romantic view of life and the sea is vividly portrayed. The sea is depicted as divine; thus Conrad stresses that in the world of myths everything is possible and that there is no marked boundary between fantasy and reality, man and nature, life and death.

6.5. Lord Jim

The story of “Lord Jim” begins with an accident at sea. The ship hits something in the ocean and subsequently the water begins to fill in. The crew abandons the ship, regardless of the many ship’s passengers. Subsequently, the passengers of the ship are saved; whereas, the crew members decide to avoid responsibility and run away, except for Jim, who acknowledges guilt. Jim is a romantic who wants to be a hero, but he is highly vulnerable.

The topic of isolation is discussed when Jim afterwards seeks to belong somewhere; therefore, Sterling and McParland claim that they see “environmental determinants in Conrad’s work”. (Sterling, McParland; 2011:125) Moreover, Jim is constantly “surrounded by situations that are filled with moral choices”, for instance, to abandon a possibly sinking ship or not. (Sterling, McParland; 2011:130) Subsequently, he has to decide to save his own life.

In “Lord Jim” the romantic view of the sea, its indifference and its destructive force are depicted. First, the narrator has vividly depicted the various colour shades the sea can adopt; thus describing its divinity and its eternity. For instance, the narrator describes the sea as ‘calm’, ‘peaceful’, ‘still’, ‘placid’, ‘silent’ and ‘hazy’ with its ‘smooth’, ‘glittering’, and ‘glimmering surface’, the seamen “were attuned to the eternal peace of Eastern sky and sea”. (Conrad; 1993:10, 13, 17, 78, 105, 209, 86, 13, 151, 18, 9) These descriptive attributes characterise the sea as a mythical creature that is life-giving and caring, suggesting that at sea, man does not necessarily have to feel lonely and desolate. When writing about the various colours of the sea, Conrad “relies on the realism of visual impressions to convey the effect”⁴⁴ which the sea had on men, for instance, beneath them the seamen saw

the plain of the sea, of a serene and intense blue, stretched with a slight upward tilt to the thread-like horizon drawn at the height of our eyes. Great waves of glitter blew lightly along the pitted dark surface, as swift as feathers chased by the breeze. A chain of islands sat broken and massive facing the wide estuary, displayed in a sheet of pale glassy water reflecting faithfully the contour of the shore. (Conrad; 1993:207)

In this passage, the sea as a natural element symbolizes purity and goodness, and it does not seem indifferent at all, or it has not yet shown its power and anger.

Next, he emphasized the ‘blueness’ of the waters that “had changed to a gloomy purple under the fires of sunset” “with the hazy splendour of the sea in the distance, and the hope of a stirring life in the world of adventure”. (Conrad; 1993:209) Moreover, the water is the ‘dark-blue’ colour, and it changes its tone to pale with “yellow muddy waves”, or “of

⁴⁴ Ambrosini, R. *Conrad’s Fiction as Critical Discourse*, p. 88

sombre green undulating as far as the violet” and then again it is transformed to dark and smooth “like the inside of a cow” as Brown describes it. (Conrad; 1993:163, 207, 208, 222, 223) Conrad seemingly equates the sea’s various colours with the different emotional moods of men. This equation undermines alienation between human beings and nature.

Further, the seamen still have to face the dangers of the sea. Conrad provides a more detailed description of “the ominous spell the sea is casting on all of them [the sailors]”⁴⁵. “Conrad’s memory of a violent gale is connected with the fury of the wind”⁴⁶ and the sea:

Only once in all that time he had again the glimpse of the earnestness in the anger of the sea. That truth is not so often made apparent as people might think. There are many shades in the danger of adventures and gales, and it is only now and then that there appears on the face of facts a sinister violence of intention – that indefinable something which forces it upon the mind and the heart of a man, that this complication of accidents or these elemental furies are coming at him with a purpose of malice, with a strength beyond control, with an unbridled cruelty that means to tear out of him his hope and his fear, the pain of his fatigue and his longing for rest: which means to smash, to destroy, to annihilate all he has seen, known, loved, enjoyed, or hated; all that is priceless and necessary- the sunshine, the memories, the future, -- which means to sweep the whole precious world utterly away from his sight by the simple and appalling act of taking his life. (Conrad; 1993:7)

This elaborate depiction of the sea serves as a confession of “what he sees interact with the abstract feelings that the wilderness arouses in his imagination”⁴⁷. Conrad suggests that language limits the possibilities of our expression. Interestingly, Conrad describes the anger of the sea, emphasizing that the sea is essentially a destructive force of nature, despite the fact that it also gives and sustains life. Furthermore, the paragraph consists of three sentences from which one is especially long; Richard Ambrosini argues that:

Conrad seems to delight in the freedom the purely rhetorical discourse provides him, abandoning himself to the rhythm of the long sentences, the measure of which came naturally to him only when he wrote about the sea. As a result of this quintessentially rhetorical mode of expression, the author’s critical discourse illuminates, [...], the potentiality for the expression of his concern about art which the sea always had for him. (Ambrosini; 1991:35)

It is possible that Conrad can describe the sea and capture its inconsistency so skilfully because he writes from his personal experience as a seaman, who has spent twenty years of his life at sea experiencing all its wonders. Whereas, his literary knowledge and English language help convey the effect he wants to achieve, which is to touch something vital in his reader and to touch his audience’s emotions, such as sympathy, yearning, and joy.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 131

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 35

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 103

Next, the unpredictable nature of the sea and the threat posed by the sea are exemplified in the following lines: ‘the rush of water to take [the narrator] at the back and tossed him like a chip’, then the sea “whitened awfully by the desperate struggles of human beings, clamorous with the distress of cries for help”, and the water was “black and sparkling, and still – still as a pond, deadly still, more still than ever sea was before – more still than I could bear to look at”; consequently the narrator concludes that “the least disturbance of the sea would make an end of [the ship’s] instantly”. (Conrad; 1993:55, 56, 58, 64) These quotations clearly illustrate that the sea has no compassion for, and is indifferent to, human beings. It is a merciless natural element that takes away lives. Another thing that these examples introduce is that “[we] see this the world as objective, as something set over against [us] and not [ourselves] or related to [us] in any way”, in other words, nature and human beings will always be alien to each other. (Frye; 1984:585) Northrop Frye explains:

[the sea] has no morals and no intelligence, or at least none that [we] can grasp. It may have shape and a meaning, but it doesn’t seem to be a human shape or a human meaning. Even if there’s enough to eat and no dangerous animals, you feel lonely and frightened and unwanted in such a world. (Frye; 1984:585)

Frye accurately notes that a human being is a social being, accountable for his or her actions (as in Jim’s case when he went to trial for what he did), and most importantly, people have freedom of choice; whereas, the sea is, and has, none of those things.

Moreover, Conrad recollects his own experience as a seaman and through the narrator speaks about his struggle in the North Atlantic,

which is haunted by all the terrors of the sea,- fogs, icebergs, dead ships bent upon mischief, and long sinister gales that fasten upon one like a vampire till all the strength and the spirit and even hope are gone, and one feels like the empty shell of a man. But there- in those seas- the incident was rare enough to resemble a special arrangement of a malevolent providence, which, unless it had for its object the killing of a donkeyman and the bringing of worse than death upon Jim, appeared an utterly aimless piece of devilry. (Conrad; 1993:100)

Another interesting comparison is made by Conrad; he claims that the sea with its gales is similar to a vampire that ‘sucks’ the strength and the spirit out of seamen till there is no hope left; thus most of the time the sea inflicts on people only destruction.

The anger of the sea is also described in the following examples: “a violent and menacing uproar – of a heavy gale at sea”, and “the rush of water would tear her [the ship] away from the rail by and by and give him a show to save her”. (Conrad; 1993:108, 94) Conrad claims that the formerly described difficulties encountered at sea and caused also by the sea expose the true human nature: “without ever having been tested by those events of the sea that show in the light of day the inner worth of a man”. (Conrad; 1993:7) At the same

time, no man can prepare for the troubles the sea has planned for them, since it will be the sea that will decide the fate of the seamen: “he shall be fit to live or die as the sea may decree; and the man who had taken a hand in this fool game, in which the sea wins every toss”. (Conrad; 1993:29) Through these metaphors Conrad stresses that even though the sea is life-giving and life-sustaining and even though it provides paths for ships and brings well-being to many countries, it does not ensure people’s safety and understanding of the sea.

Furthermore, the sea has been mythologized also in “Lord Jim”. Conrad utilizes personifications and similes to emphasize “the thematic imagery which grounds the story’s symbolic structure”⁴⁸ – the interplay between the actual and the imaginary. In the example, “the new danger of the open sea which she so strangely survived to end her days in a breaking-up yard, as if it had been her recorded fate to die obscurely under the blows of many hammers,” the force with which the waves hit the ship are compared to ‘the blows of many hammers’. (Conrad; 1993:86) Conrad’s use of human artefacts in his descriptions of the sea serves to bridge the gap between human beings and the sea.

“The mirror effect between impressionistic language and the recreation of subjective experience dramatizes in the text the difficulty of translating the memory of visual and aural sensations”⁴⁹; therefore, Conrad utilizes different stylistic devices such as personification, simile, and metaphor to explore the behaviour of the sea and describe them as vividly as possible.

Through his narrator he highlight his personal point of view that “the Pacific is the most discreet of live, hot-tempered oceans: the chilly Antarctic can keep a secret, too, but more in the manner of a grave”. (Conrad; 1993:110) Here the sea is compared to an immense grave that for centuries has taken so many lives and is never going to stop because that is the sea’s natural instinct. When describing such a setting as the sea, Conrad also uses anthropomorphic similes and metaphors, such as “the face of the waters”, the sea that “calmed, [and] slept at last”, and, most importantly, “the sea with its labouring waves for ever rising, sinking, and vanishing to rise again – the very image of struggling mankind”. (Conrad; 1993:110, 77, 153) These quotations show that, on the one hand, the sea is destructive, indifferent, and at times even peaceful; on the other hand, it greatly resembles human beings or their way of life.

Secondly, Conrad uses human artefacts in his figurative language. In the example, “the gale had freshened since noon, stopping the traffic on the river and now blew with the strength of a hurricane in fitful bursts that boomed like salvoes of great guns firing over the

⁴⁸ Ambrosini, R. *Conrad’s Fiction as Critical Discourse*, p. 92

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 88

ocean”, Conrad depicts the dynamism of the sea. Likewise, in this sentence he expresses the liveliness of the sea’s mysterious power, like ‘stop’, ‘blow’, ‘burst’, and ‘boom’. (Conrad; 1993:5) Then, in the following example, Conrad attributes qualities of a ghost to the sea: “[the ship] left behind her on the water a white ribbon of foam that vanished at once, like the phantom of a track drawn upon a lifeless sea”. (Conrad; 1993:11) Conrad uses extremely colourful, eloquent, and emphatic language to portray the sea in all its variety: “the tremble of a vast ripple running over all the visible expanse of the sea, as if the waters had shuddered, giving birth to the globe of light”, “the sea lay outspread, offering all its immense stillness to the approach of the fiery orb”, and “the South Seas were getting too hot to hold gentlemen of his kidney”. (Conrad; 1993:77, 78, 209, 221) With the many impressive and at times even fantastic descriptions, comparisons, and similes of the sea, Conrad made a huge contribution to the representation of the sea in English literary culture. His narrator concludes that “there is nothing more enticing, disenchanting, and enslaving than the life at sea”. (Conrad; 1993:7)

To conclude, “Lord Jim” is a story about a person’s struggle with isolation, which the sea just emphasizes. Conrad tries to overcome gap between men and nature, particularly, by considering the various colours of the sea as different human moods, by regarding the sea’s dynamism as the very image of struggling mankind, and by using human artefacts to portray the spirit and temper of the sea. However, Conrad has also greatly stressed the differences between human beings and the sea, which are due to human intelligence and morality: two characteristics that the sea will never have.

6.6. The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’

“The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’” is a story about sea-adventures, where Conrad emphasizes the heroism and solidarity of the seamen, when the sea nearly kills them; therefore, it is “about the lessons that the sea teaches”. (Sterling, McParland; 2011:99)

The journey begins in India where the seamen of the ship ‘Narcissus’ are preparing to sail back to England. Already at sea, one of the crew member claims to be ill, possibly with malaria. This sailor, James Wait is also the only ‘black’ person on the ship, and is disrespectfully referred to as the ‘nigger’. Consequently, the other sailors doubt his illness. Moreover, on their way they are beset by a storm at sea that nearly capsizes the ship. At that very moment, some of the crew members nearly die from exertion, while trying to save Wait. This fictional work can be seen as an exploration not only of seamen’s solidarity, but also of human isolation. The crew can be considered as a microcosm of a society. Henry James described the story as “the very finest and strongest picture of the sea and sea-life that our

language possesses – the masterpiece in a whole class”⁵⁰. Commenting of “The Nigger of the *Narcissus*”, Watt writes that, “Conrad had developed the description of the environment and its human implication into an important and established feature of narrative”. (Watt; 1979:94)

The novel raises the questions of human isolation, solidarity, and community. Conrad’s portrayal of the sea gives the reader an insight into the lives of the seamen. Conrad stresses that all men ‘white’ or ‘black’ are equal when they confront the sea: “The faces changed, passing in rotation. Youthful faces, bearded faces, dark faces: faces serene, or faces moody, but all akin with the brotherhood of the sea; [...]”. (Conrad; 1947:318) Moreover, the sea as an indifferent natural element does not distinguish between good or bad men; accordingly, they have to face the struggle with the sea a group, and the solidarity of the men is in toil. Ian Watt argues that “Conrad’s aim is to awaken in the hearts of the beholders”⁵¹ “the feeling of solidarity which binds [...] all mankind to the visible world.”⁵²

Largely the crew members are strangers to one another and the fact that they are at sea emphasizes the problem of human isolation not only at sea, but also on land. Watt explains that

superstition is the way in which the archaic forms of solidarity are strengthened, particularly when, as in such dangerous and unpredictable occupations as the mariner’s, there is a special need to believe in the existence of an unattainable relationship between man and the power of the natural world. (Watt; 1979:124)

Being “far from home might reflect on their own current experience of their environment and consider the ways in which [ship’s] communities must be forged, as a microcosm of the larger world”. (Sterling, McParland; 2011:107) The challenges of the destructive force of the sea-storm compel the seamen to interact with one another to build a community and to work together in the indifferent sea:

On men reprieved by its disdainful mercy, the immortal sea confers in its justice the full privilege of desired unrest. Through the perfect wisdom of its grace they are not permitted to meditate at ease upon the complicated and acrid savour of existence, lest they should remember and, perchance, regret the reward of a cup of inspiring bitterness, tasted so often, and so often withdrawn from before their stiffening but reluctant lips. They must without pause justify their life to the eternal pity that commands toil to be hard and unceasing, from sunrise to sunset, from sunset to sunrise: till the weary succession of nights and days tainted by the obstinate clamour of sages, demanding bliss and an empty heaven, is redeemed at last by the vast silence of pain and labour, by the dumb fear and the dumb courage of men obscure, forgetful, and enduring. (Conrad; 1947:373-374)

⁵⁰ Simmons, *Introduction*, p. xvii

⁵¹ Watt, I. *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, p.94

⁵² Conrad, J. *Preface*

Then, Wait's sickness and near death is "a constant reminder to the men of their own mortality and death and how the community needs to work together for survival". (Sterling, McParland; 2011:108) Just as in "Youth", in "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" "Conrad depicts the dignity of the human and the plight of the infinitesimally small human life: one is small against the vast sea and the universe". (Sterling, McParland; 2011:115) Furthermore, Conrad depicts the struggle between James Wait as an individual, and the crew as a microcosm of human society, and the sea. The terrible conditions at sea test their loyalty and join them together as a crew: "The men turned in wet and turned out stiff to face the redeeming and ruthless extractions of their glorious and obscure fate". (Conrad; 1947:335-336) However, Wait unintentionally breaks this bond. Wait has an inexplicable influence over some men, just as the sea influences human lives. In "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*", Conrad shows that people fear the destructive power of the sea:

Three times a sea leaped over the high side and flung bucketfuls of water on our heads. Then Jimmy, startled by the shock, would stop his noise for a moment – waiting for the ship to sink, perhaps – and began again, distressingly loud, as if invigorated by the gust of fear. (Conrad; 1947:353)

In Conrad's novel, humanity appears insignificant in the world of the sea; however, their insignificance throws their heroism into high relief, and their fear emphasizes their courage. In a way, Conrad attempt to overcome the gap between the world of nature and human beings.

Conrad employs the setting of the sea in order to bring life to his work. The sea is changeable and so is the plot of Conrad's novel. Ian Watt claims that "visual presentation is used more precisely and consistently, and Conrad's emphasis on the determining power of the natural environment is applied in a much more persistent and symbolic way". (Watt; 1979:94) Moreover, Conrad makes the readers feel compassion for the crew which struggles with the force of the sea: "Cold and wet, we were washed about the deck while trying to repair damages". (Conrad; 1947:339) Conrad also emphasizes the physical harm that the sea, the sun, the wind, and the storm inflict on men:

With burning faces we shivered to the very marrow of our bones. Never before had the gale seemed to us more furious, the sea more mad, the sunshine more merciless and mocking, and the position of the ship more hopeless and appalling. (Conrad; 1947:356)

In the given quotation Conrad describes the gale as 'mocking', as if it were not indifferent and natural, but intentional; as a result, it determines its own conduct. In addition to fighting with the storm, some of the crewmen are battling with their own inner storms:

"The words, missing the unsteady hearts of men, rolled out to wander without a home upon the heartless sea; and James Wait, silenced forever, lay uncritical

and passive under the hoarse murmur of despair and hopes.” (Conrad; 1947:440)

Here Conrad anthropomorphises the sea by saying that the sea is heartless. He also emphasizes the distance between human beings and nature. As Watt suggests, ‘the unsteady hears of men’, and their ‘despair and hope’ show how miserable and isolated the men feel at sea; nevertheless, “none of the meanings of the natural world are intrinsic; they have all been created and named by men; and so natural description inevitably tends to involve attributing human properties, especially feeling, to natural objects:”.(Watt; 1979:96) Moreover, the men are tested by the storm. Sterling and McParland argue that the struggle

draws forth their connection with one another, their mutual effort against sea. Human dignity lives in endurance amid this indifferent sea. These ordinary men, with weaknesses, are confronted with the storm, the vastness of the sea that would overpower them”. (Sterling, McParland; 2011:115)

Moreover, this force provokes the crew to lose their self-confidence; the seamen have to overcome the confusion which arises on the ship as a result of the storm. Next, Singleton who is a thoughtful sailor describes how he sees the sea:

He looked upon the immortal sea with the awakened and groping perception of its heartless might; he saw it unchanged, black and foaming under the eternal scrutiny of the stares; he heard its impatient voice calling for him out of a pitiless vastness full of unrest, of turmoil, and of terror. He looked afar upon it, and he saw an immensity tormented and blind, moaning and furious, that claimed all the days of his tenacious life, and, when life was over, would claim the worn-out body of its slave. (Conrad; 1947:382)

Conrad suggests that they must learn from the horrible circumstances at sea; thus, the sea teaches them to be united and to sympathize with each other.

The storm at sea is emphasized and dramatized in the third chapter of the novel. However, Watt argues that, “Conrad’s presentation of the sea pays little attention” to the aesthetic qualities of the sea. Instead, the main focus is on the “imperative power which the sea, like other forces of nature, exercises on the lives of the men who sail upon it”. (Watt; 1979:96) Moreover, there are a lot of fury in the storm scene: “It was as if an invisible hand had given the ship an angry shake to recall the men that peopled her decks to the sense of reality, vigilance and duty”. (Conrad; 1947:406) In the preface to the novel, Conrad says that “he wants to direct his readers toward their senses”. (Sterling, McParland; 2011:112) Conrad writes, “My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you *see*⁵³.” With enviable confidence, Singleton, for whom duty is more important than anything else, decides to confront the sea.

⁵³ Conrad, J. *Preface*, p. xiv

He employs language that is “simple, straightforward, and stoic, as if to say that silent endurance is a virtue”; in contrast, Donkin’s language is “wordy and boisterous; he is unpleasantly garrulous”. (Sterling, McParland; 2011:113) The two completely contradictory descriptions of Donkin and Singleton enable the reader to analyze their different characters and their “approach to life at sea”. (Sterling, McParland; 2011:113) The language used by these two characters depicts the sea in two different ways.

Both, the sea and James Wait in the novel symbolize life and death⁵⁴; nonetheless, the crew members are influenced by Wait as much as they are influenced by the sea. Wait’s situation and behaviour threaten the lives of the other sailors; nevertheless, it does not necessarily imply that he is evil or even symbolizes it. In the above quotation, Conrad directly relates to the sea and describes it as ‘the image of life’. At the end of the novel, Conrad sums up Wait’s influence on the crew:

“Through him we were becoming highly humanised, tender, complex, excessively decadent: we understood the subtlety of his fear, sympathised with all his repulsions, shrinkings, evasions, delusions – as though we had been overcivilised, and rotten, and without any knowledge of the meaning of life”. (Conrad; 1947:420)

Next, the fact that Wait is black does not necessarily raise question of racial discrimination. It lends itself to a symbolic interpretation: “He emerges like a force from the deepest and most remote sources of the sea”. (Sterling, McParland; 2011:114) He then becomes the focal point on the ship; and the sea is another focal point at which a lot of action occurs:

He chattered at the setting sun, nodding his head, while the big seas began to roll across the crimson disc; and over miles of turbulent waters the shadows of high waves swept with a running darkness the faces of men. A crested roller broke with a loud hissing roar, and the sun, as if put out disappeared. (Conrad; 1947:360)

The way the crew members treat Wait, is analogous to the way the sea treats them, which is with indifference, force, and anger. By depicting the life on the ship, Conrad has created a miniature model of human society. In the novel, because of his ‘blackness’, Wait is a “mystery and threat”, just like the sea. (Sterling, McParland; 2011:114) Conrad describes the sea as an uncontrollable destructive force: “A big, foaming sea came out of the mist; it made for the ship, roaring wildly, and in its rush it looked as mischievous and discomposing as a madman with an axe.” (Conrad; 1947:343) Conrad mentions an axe, which is a human artefact, to emphasize the immense force and the power of the sea. Then, Conrad alludes to the world of myths, emphasizing the human fear of the inexplicable: “[...] the roar of the seas

⁵⁴ Miller, E. J. *Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’: A Reexamination* PMLA

seething far below them sounded continuous and faint like an indistinct noise from another world.” (Conrad; 1947:374)

To sum up, in the novel, the focus is mainly put on the lessons the sea teaches to human beings. Conrad also portrays the seamen as “children who have something to learn about life from the sea”. (Sterling, McParland; 2011:99) Conrad has also portrayed the endurance of the seamen in the struggle with the storm and the sea.

6.7. The Mirror of the Sea

“The Mirror of the Sea” is a compilation of fifteen essays, written by Joseph Conrad; thus it differs from Conrad’s fictional works analyzed in the paper. It is “a very intimate revelation”. (Conrad; 1936:7) Moreover, Foulke argues that: “Many of Conrad’s statements about “The Mirror” reveal his conception of it as a reverie which would celebrate his own past and commemorate a fading sea world, but they do not suggest much about its form”; therefore it could be said without a doubt that Conrad has created a sub-genre, defined by Foulke as “the sea meditation”. (Foulke; 1986:154, 155) Conrad says that this work: “is the best tribute my piety can offer to the ultimate shapers of my character, convictions, and, in a sense, destiny-to the imperishable sea, to the ships that are no more, and to the simple men who have had their day”. (Conrad; 1936:10)

The title of the collection indicates that Conrad’s revelation is going to be about the sea. In the ‘Author’s Note’ he writes:

I have attempted here to lay bare, with the unreserve of a last hour’s confession, the terms of my revelation with the sea, which, beginning mysteriously, like any great passion the inscrutable Gods send to mortals, went on unreasoning and invincible, surviving the test of disillusion, defying the disenchantment that lurks in every day of a strenuous life; went on full of love’s delight and love’s anguish, facing them in open-eyed exultation, without bitterness and without repining, from the first hour to the last. (Conrad; 1936:7-8)

In the given quotation, Conrad refers to the sea’s mysteriousness, which he explains as something gods have sent to test the inner worth of the mortals. Then, he also claims that the sea that defies the seamen is always unreasonable and, at the same time, invincible. He then goes on to say that, “This perhaps is enough for me to say on this particular occasion about these, my parting words, about this, my last mood in my great passion for the sea. I call it great because it was great to me”. (Conrad; 1936:8) In this work, Conrad mostly refers to his personal experience as a seaman and his passion for the sea and seafaring.

In his collection of essays, Conrad considers the possible age of the sea, regardless of the fact that the sea as an element that has been far longer on the planet than man. In his other works Conrad describes the sea as immortal, in other words, it cannot grow old; however, through his figurative language he still tries to determine its age together with the age of the earth:

But some of us, regarding the ocean with understanding and affection, have seen it looking old, as if the immemorial ages had been stirred up from the undisturbed bottom of ooze. For it is a gale of wind that makes the sea look old. (Conrad; 1936:80)

Conrad stresses that the sea's mortality makes it look old, together with its gales and winds that most of the time bring destruction and misery to the mankind.

In his essays Conrad also vividly describes the beauty of the sea, romanticising it. Conrad's persona describes a day at sea when the sea appeared charming:

A thin, silvery mist softened the calm and majestic splendour of light without shadows—seemed to render the sky less remote and the ocean less immense. It was one of the days, when the might of the sea appears indeed lovable, like the nature of a strong man in moments of quiet intimacy. (Conrad; 1936:149)

When the sea did not seem threatening to human beings, it also became enjoyable and even lovable. In a way, by describing the sea, Conrad also describes the nature of human beings, who are so often challenged by life and sea, but when something pleasing happens, all the experienced abuses are forgotten for a moment. Next, Conrad recalls the adventurous Mediterranean Sea with all its wonders: “indeed, it was terrible and wonderful; for it is we alone who, swayed by the audacity of our minds and the tremors of our hearts, are the sole artisans of all the wonder and romance of the world”. (Conrad; 1936:163) Conrad accurately observes that only human beings can appreciate the beauty, and judge the horrors, of the world.

Next, the just as in Conrad's other sea fictions, the sea is also mythologized in “The Mirror of the Sea”. Conrad dramatizes the sea saying that: “I could imagine no worse eternal punishment for evil seamen who die unrepentant upon the earthly sea than that their souls should be condemned to man the ghosts of disabled ships, drifting for ever across a ghostly and tempestuous ocean”, accordingly, Conrad stresses the human fear of the unknown and of the inexplicable occurrences at sea. (Conrad; 1936:74) Then, Conrad anthropomorphises the sea, claiming that the gales have not only their own personalities, but also their own physiognomy. Conrad writes:

Gales have their personalities, and, after all, perhaps it is not strange; for, when all is said and done, they are adversaries whose wiles you must defeat, whose violence you

must resist, and yet with whom you must live in the intimacies of nights and days.
(Conrad; 1936:81)

Conrad personifies the sea as a man who is wily, violent, and who is always present. Conrad's aim is to bridge the gap between the human beings and the world of nature. Moreover, the mythologizing of the sea does not so much reflect the world adequately, as it represents it symbolically because first of all, it is a means of consolidating the collective experience, emphasizing the need for solidarity. Then, Conrad argues that reflecting on their own experience, the seamen are able to distinguish the various physiognomies of the gales:

In this way gales have their physiognomy. You remember them by your own feelings, and no two gales stamp themselves in the same way upon your emotions. Some cling to you in woebegone misery; others come back fiercely and weirdly, like ghouls bent upon sucking your strength away; others, again, have a catastrophic splendour; some are unvenerated recollections, as of spiteful wild-cats clawing at your agonized vitals; others are severe, like a visitation; and one or two rise up draped and mysterious, with an aspect of ominous menace. (Conrad; 1936:86)

It is not with their intellect, but with their emotions and intuition that human beings perceive the world around them. Similarly, in his other (fictional) works, Conrad follows "the path of emotion" while describing the different feelings the gales in seamen. (Frye; 1984:586)

Furthermore, the sea is described as indifferent to human beings and their needs.

Conrad discloses his observations of the sea:

I knew it capable of betraying the generous ardour of youth as implacably as, indifferent to evil and good, it would have betrayed the basest greed or the noblest heroism. My conception of its magnanimous greatness was gone. And I looked upon the true sea—the sea that plays with men till their hearts are broken, and wears stout ships to death. Nothing can touch the brooding bitterness of its heart. Open to all and faithful to none, it exercises its fascination for the undoing of the best. To love it is not well. It knows no bond of plighted troth, no fidelity to misfortune, to long companionship, to long devotion. The promise it holds out perpetually is very great; but the only secret of its possession is strength, strength—the jealous, sleepless strength of a man guarding a coveted treasure within his gates. (Conrad; 1936:160)

In this passage Conrad claims that the sea does not distinguish between good and evil and therefore, all crewmen will equally taste its bitterness. Then, Conrad compares the sea with human beings, emphasizing all the qualities that a man has, but the sea will never have. Conrad stresses that a human being as a creature tends to perceive himself as a focal point of the world; as a result, he tries to see the difference between himself and everything around him. (Frye; 1984:586) Moreover, Conrad admits that the sea has not had and will never have certain human characteristics. For example, the sea, "has no generosity", "has never been friendly to man", "[is] faithful to no race", and "has no compassion, no faith, no law, no

memory”, all the qualities that human beings possess. (Conrad; 1936: 146, 147, 148) On the one hand, it is quite possible that through his portrayal of the indifference of the sea, Conrad emphasizes the greatness of the mankind, which can resist the destructive force of the ocean. On the other hand, he claims that: “He—man or people—who, putting his trust in the friendship of the sea, neglects the strength and cunning of his right hand, is a fool!” (Conrad; 1936:146-147) The reason for such revelation is that the sea is a destructive force that can easily take away human life.

The sea is not only indifferent to human beings, but also destructive. Conrad speaks about it as a force of nature whose ways are inexplicable:

The sea does not close upon the water-logged hull with a sunny ripple, or maybe with the angry rush of a curling wave, erasing her name from the roll of living ships. No. It is as if an invisible hand had been stealthily uplifted from the bottom to catch hold of her keel as it glides through the water. (Conrad; 1936:76)

The quoted shows that the sea destroys a ship with the help of its enormous waves as ‘an invisible hand’ that lifted it up to throw it down.

The condition in which human beings are challenged by the sea, Conrad calls ‘nightmarish’, and, since, nightmare is also a dream, the condition in which sailors find themselves at sea. Moreover, the figurative language Conrad uses relies heavily on the “words of action and movement”. (Frye; 1984:587) Conrad does not look at the world as it is, he looks at it from the viewpoint of human interest. Foulke argues that Conrad “is preoccupied with elegiac themes”; in other words, he attempts to find pattern that would be “compatible with human ambition and achievement and craving for performance, there is no consolation to be found in the sea itself”. (Foulke; 1986: 159, 160)

To conclude, throughout “The Mirror of the Sea” the sea is depicted either as indifferent or hostile to those seamen who sail on it. As it is disclosed in the title (which is also an epigraph) “there can be no true pastoral of the sea”⁵⁵; human beings together with their ships are “like images reflected from a mirror, leaving no record on the mysterious face of the sea.” (Conrad; 1936:147) That is why the sea, “unlike the land, can never be marked by human achievement or failure”⁵⁶; consequently, Conrad speaks from his own experience and draws on the memories of the seamen to extol their virtues, to bemoan their failures, and to find comfort in the continuing tradition of sea-fiction. Conrad fictionalizes his experience of the sea even in his essays.

⁵⁵ Foulke, p. 160

⁵⁶ Ibid.

CONCLUSIONS

The sea is the main element in Conrad's fictional works; however the situations and experiences at sea that Conrad depicts in his works are vastly different. Four typical characterizations of the sea in Conrad's works can be singled out: a romantic view of the sea; the sea as indifferent to human beings; the sea as a destructive force; and the sea as life-giving and life-sustaining. These characterisations can be further analyzed according to the linguistic devices Conrad employs in his fictional works, such as personifying, or humanizing, the sea (in its corporeal, emotional, and spiritual aspects); the use of human artefacts in Conrad's figurative language; animistic figurative language; the use of colours; and mythological allusions. The linguistic devices used by Conrad help him fictionalize his personal experience as a sailor because most of his fictional works are partly based on his own personal experience.

Conrad puts great emphasis on the tiniest details while describing the sea; and he describes the power of the storm and the greatness of the sea through the depiction of the seamen's suffering and their experience at sea, through their vision and comparison of the conditions at sea. Conrad's writing style, characterized by its liveliness and creativity, is a perfect medium for the portrayal of the sequence of events occurring at sea and their vivid illustration. Moreover, Conrad also emphasizes the fact that human beings are naturally inclined to compare the developments in nature with themselves; thereby, trying to overcome the distance between human beings and nature. However, Conrad also greatly stresses the differences between human beings and the sea, which are due to human intelligence and morality: two characteristics that the sea will never have.

In Conrad's sea stories, the sea as a natural element, which is indifferent to human concerns and needs; consequently, the sea has always seemed incomprehensible and distant to human beings. Throughout his sea stories, Conrad emphasizes the fact that the sea is a merciless natural element. However, human beings are shown to be daring enough to confront the ruthless sea.

The heroes of Conrad's stories are experienced sailors and even if they have tasted the bitterness of the sea, they perceive themselves as belonging to the sea and they feel a psychological necessity to return to the sea, as if enchanted by its beauty and terror. Conrad also suggests that when the seamen confront the destructive force of the sea, they need to build a collective identity in order to resist this destructive force. Moreover, Conrad equates the sea's various colours with the different emotional moods of men. This equation undermines the alienation of human beings from nature.

Conrad mythologizes the sea by attributing to it qualities characteristic of mythological creatures that at times even possess the same power as gods: just as the sea gives life, it can also take it away. Moreover, Conrad anthropomorphizes the sea to give us a chance to look more thoroughly at ourselves, and more importantly, to probe into the depths of our psyche. The question of a human being's self-awareness is raised in all of his works, where crewmen face the fury of the sea, at the same time fighting their inner battles. The individual awareness of his dependence on nature transcends the alienation of a human being from the world of nature. Conrad's mythologization of the sea brings the human being closer to understanding the world of nature.

Finally, Conrad stresses that in the world of myths there is not yet known a marked boundary between fantasy and reality, man and nature, life and death; consequently, there will always be interaction between nature and humankind. With the many impressive, and at times even phantasmagorical descriptions, comparisons, and similes of the sea, Conrad made a huge contribution to the representation of the sea in English literary culture.

THESES

1. The sea is the main element in Conrad's fictional works; however the situations and experiences at sea depicted in his works are very different.
2. Four typical characterizations of the sea in Conrad's works can be singled out: a romantic view of the sea; the sea as indifferent to human beings; the sea as a destructive force; and the sea as life-giving and life-sustaining.
3. The characterisations can be further analyzed according to the linguistic devices Conrad employs in his fictional works, such as personifying, or humanizing, the sea (in its corporeal, emotional, and spiritual aspects); the use of human artefacts in Conrad's figurative language; animistic figurative language; the use of colours; and mythological allusions.
4. Conrad emphasizes the fact that human beings are naturally inclined to compare the developments in nature with themselves; thereby, trying to overcome the distance between human beings and nature.
5. Conrad also greatly stresses the differences between human beings and the sea, which are due to human intelligence and morality: two characteristics that the sea will never have.
6. In Conrad's works, the sea is portrayed as a natural element that is indifferent to human concerns and needs; consequently, the sea has always appeared incomprehensible and strange to human beings.
7. Conrad anthropomorphises the sea by attributing to it qualities characteristic of human beings
8. At times Conrad portrays the sea as possessing the same powers as gods: just as the sea gives life, it can also take it away.
9. Conrad anthropomorphizes the sea to give us a chance to look more thoroughly at ourselves, and more importantly, to probe into the depths of our psyche.

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