THRESHOLDS AND ARTEFACTS IN JOSEPH CONRAD'S FICTION

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Abstract:The present paper deals with elements of the "Dwelling" trope in Greg Garrard's Ecocriticism, as it is present in Joseph Conrad's fiction: "thresholds" as viewed in Bakhtin analysis as spaces to the outside and to the inside. and "artefacts" in Object Oriented Ontology and in dark ecology as represented in the same literary works, standing for man-made second nature.

Keywords: threshold, artefact, ecocriticism, material culture,second nature

1. Thresholds

In *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*,(1929)Mikhail Bakhtin writes about "the threshold, the door, and the stairway" and their "chronotopic significance."(Bakhtin299): "The word 'threshold' itself . . . acts a metaphorical usage. . .is connected with the breaking point of a life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life (or the indecisiveness that fails to change a life, the fear to step over the threshold). " (248)Thresholds - liminal spaces of the buildings (windows, doors, stairs, corridors, balconies, fences) tell about the dwellers'contact with the external reality, the environment and the exchange of information with it.

As spaces enabling viewing the outside reality or dwellers being spied by the other, windows transcorporeally determine destinies in Conrad's fiction. In *Lord Jim*, the hero's inner turmoil as he is standing at the window of Marlow's room during the monsoon downpour is mirrored by a broken pipe swaying in the rainfall and he is compared to a wind-borne leaf. After the verdict, Marlow's room functions as a momentary heterotopy of crisis for the outcast that Jim has become, with "no place…where he could withdraw" "on all the round earth."The window marks the boundary between shelter and ruin. "As soon as he left my room, that bit of shelter, he would take his place in the ranks, and begin the journey towards the bottomless pit," (*LJ* 138) his chase from shame. The monsoon itself acts hostilely to stray Jim, diffractively echoing society's sentence.

In "Freya of the Seven Isles" the window is the place where the siren-heroine plays the piano to her lover"s brig sailing past, mocking at voyeuristic Heemskirk stealthy watching. The window becomes a site of message exchange: love declarations, coquetry, voyeurism, jealousy, mockery triggering the lovers'end. In *Chance*, the window of the ship salon is the place where Powell glances de Barral pouring the poison into Antony's glass; his accidental being there and then determines all the characters' subsequent lives. The window is the chance for Antony's survival and for de Barral's death.

Staircases are spaces of intrusion, ascent or descent. In *Under Western Eyes* the staircase to Razumov's room acquires a chronotopic significance as the threshold where subjects invade each other's spaces, as the place of Haldin's haunting, of Razumov's fall from normality into collusion to crime (either as an anarchist aid or as a police informer). The transitional space of the marble staircase of M-me de S's Chîteau Borel is read in its "crude whiteness" of marble and gold decoration as nobility, but also as "dusty" obsoleteness, stained by the only impure speck of Piotr Ivanovitch's black top hat, as M-me de S's descent into decay and of the parasite upstart Ivanovitch's ascent. In Conrad, hats stand for selves, stairs and landings stand for choices:

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"The landing was prolonged into a bare corridor, right and left, desolate perspectives of white and gold decoration. . .The very light, pouring through a large window at the end, seemed dusty; and a solitary speck reposing on the balustrade of white marble - the silk top-hat of the great feminist - asserted itself extremely, black and glossy in all that crude whiteness." (*UWE* 81) "On the balustrade of the first floor landing a shiny tall hat reposed, rim upwards, opposite the double-door of the drawing-room, haunted, it was said, by evoked ghosts, and frequented, it is to be supposed, by fugitive revolutionists. The cracked white paint of the panels, the tarnished gilt of the mouldings, permitted one to imagine nothing but dust and emptiness within." (76)

A place famous for being haunted as well as for fugitives'visits, it is uncovered to be neither. The bathos of dustiness and cracked paint stands for the protectrice's decrepitude, a grotesque combination of corpse rigidity, hoarse voice, hysterical laughter, and "Parisian dress," while the empty tall hat standing upside down is symbolic of her pampered protégé's hollowness. The black hat is mismatched with the chîteau, but it matches Piotr Ivanovitch's black magician glasses, debunking "the great feminist"'s artistry with words and his feminism as a swindle hiding his cruel nature revealed in his mistreating and overworking Tekla.

In "The Secret Sharer" there is a step ladder which can be pulled or lowered at the captain's wish, connecting or disconnecting the ship to the sea as nature and to Leggatt as its wilderness legate. As soon as Leggatt mounts into the narrator's liminal space, the latter begins to mirror him by mimetism, turning into his double. The limitrophe space of the window reflects the captain's progressive twinning with the fugitive into a Siamese persona-shadow pair, a welding of the captain's superego with his id double.

In *The Secret Agent*, the door of the Verlocs' house/shop is "ajar" every evening for secretive customers, in a brothel manner, and the shop-window contains books, magazines and photos "hinting at impropriety." "The window contained photographs of more or less undressed dancing girls; . . . a few numbers of ancient French comic publications hung across a string as if to dry . . .a few books with titles hinting at impropriety" (*SA* 3). Verloc's cover business is pornography trade, moreover, "the door of the shop was the only means of entrance to the house," (*SA* 15) transforming the whole household into a less than moral capitalist boarding-house or shop.There is, however, another door, closed between the shop and the living-room, through which Winnie overhears the conversation between Chief Inspector Heat and Verloc about Stevie's death, confirmed by the news she immediately reads in the newspaper. That door brings about the Verlocs' deaths in the next few hours. Taken to Vladimir, Verloc passes through the embassy doors and corridors to secrecy of higher ranks; the Assistant Commissioner is admitted to nobility higher social circles by passing through a villa doors and corridors to the same Vladimir, in an ironical parallellism doors connect anarchism as Counter-Empire with the police as Empire through globalizing embassies (*SA*).

In *The Nigger of the'Narcissus,'* five sailors cling to one another in a human chain to reach Wait in his close cabin and have to break doors and wooden walls to create a corridor to him, who is blocked inside, therefore they are they are viciously attacked, flooded and hurt by the carpenter's animistic nails guarding the ship's body.

Passageways are transitional spaces between interior ignorance and exterior reality. In *The Secret Agent*, when Verloc is taken to Vladimir, he passes through the embassy corridors and doors to secrecy of higher ranks. Similarly, the Assistant Commissioner, invited to the lady who fosters anarchist Michaelis, is admitted to higher social circles by passing through doors and corridors to reach the salon where he meets Vladimir, another guest, in an ironical parallel to Verloc, who connects the police to the anarchists through the embassies.

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In *Nostromo*, the town is full of *miradors* (balconies), typical for the Hispanic architecture as the ladies' contact with the exterior reality. Mrs Gould's balcony is a transitional space, the symbolic place under which the soldiers'convoy carrying the silver from the mine on its way to the port passes at dawn, with Don Pepe saluting her. Emilia's presence like royalty attending a parade is an irony as she hates the mine, her presence in the balcony is mere politeness, she is a victim of the silver as much as the poor miners who have extracted it, the soldiers carrying it at night, the *cargadores* who are brutally woken before dawn. The national asset looted from the mountain is taken to the port to be carried away from the colony every three months, in the ironic periodicity of Empire's plunder.

In the bathos of the grand Hispanic staircase with a bishop's statue in a niche, Don Pepe has "a disjointed staircase, guarded by a moss-stained effigy of some saintly bishop, mitred and staffed, and bearing the indignity of a broken nose meekly" (*N* 92). Stairs are the transcorporeal expression of their landlords: Don Pepe's is a caricature of would-be grandeur trying to emulate Mrs. Gould's effigy of the madonna in the niche, the upstart's model. He is also a poor imitator of Charles Gould's knightly image, a rider whose horse is a hammer-headed beast permanently asleep in the streets.

Fences telltale psychic disorders and act as boundaries. The half-a-dozen heads on stakes mark the border between Kurtz's hut and the external reality as a symbolic fence. Five of them face his windows as subjected rebels whose symbolic sight he prides. One faces newcomers as a warning of "something wanting" in Kurtz's surface eloquence, "a deficiency," lack of "restraint in the gratification of his various lusts," (*HD* 83) an understatement on his madness, also suggested by the unbalance of the "three square little window holes, no two the same size"(*HD* 82) making the earth hut look like a sub-human den.

In "To-morrow," the fence acts as an interpersonal boundary. Although old Captain Hagberd and Bessie have been neighbours for years, they have never crossed the fence separating their yards. He condescendingly allows her laundry drying as a maximal intrusion into his space. "For all their intimacy. . . they had never talked without a fence or a railing between them"(*Tm*6). There is a terrible rigidity in Hagberd's isolation from truth and he cannot pass beyond his fence to reality which transcorporeally expresses psychic disorder.

2. Artefacts as material culture

As part of their strategy of survival, material culture as Conrad's humans'second nature involves artefacts for furnishing and decorating dwellings. Clothes, jewels and weapons are armours against the natural elements, biosemiotic marks of a social status and adornment. Art creates an isomorphic nature enriching the universe, functioning as man-made new species adding to natural creations. According to Timothy Morton's "The Liminal Space between Things: Epiphany and the Physical,"(2014:269) art is the creative "*between*" things where human creativity demiurgically intevenes to complete the universe with its works as a result of what he calls "epiphany, " resulting from human creation dialoguing with nature. "Art happens in and at this liminal space, this *between* which is just what a thing is: a meeting place of other beings" (Morton 281). Conrad's heroes feel the need to manifest their fondness of art as clothes, jewellery, weaponry, all kind of decorations. Conrad writes in *Nostromo* about human attitude to the second nature of artefacts: "They invested it with a protecting and invincible virtue as though it were a fetish . . . for they were ignorant, and in other respects did not differ appreciably from the rest of mankind which puts infinite trust in its own creations"(*N* 329). He foretells material ecocriticism attributing agency to artefacts functioning as transcorporeally influent creations between their authors and their owners.

Clothes can be a decisive factor determining destinies. In *The Secret Agent*, the discovery of the coat label containing the Verlocs' address among Stevie's remains triggers Chief Inspector Heat's visit to Verloc, followed by Winnie's murdering her husband. In "The

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Secret Sharer,"at Leggatt's departure from the ship, the captain's sailor cap is "rammed" on his head as a farewell to the 'shadow' identity and endorsement of the captain's 'persona'. Lost by Leggatt while swimming, the animated cap leaves Leggatt's head to help the narrator as a clue to whether his ship is moving, saving him from stranding: "All at once my strained, yearning stare distinguished a white object floating. . . the saving mark for my eyes"(*SS* 142).

Indifference to outfits reflects despair of human efforts to survive weather extremities or the humility of a pariah's condition. The pauper Russian "harlequin" of *Heart of Darkness* wears a multi-colour patched outfit jocularly recalling the map of imperial Africa and cloth tied with strings as improvised sandals, as a sign of extreme poverty. At the other end of the temperature scale,in "The Duel," in the French army's retreat in the Russian winter, d'Hubert survives frost being reduced to another sartorial caricature,"his costume consisting of a sheepskin coat looted with difficulty from [a] frozen corpse. . .a woman's black velvet hood, over which was rammed forcibly a cocked hat. . . a couple of mats . . . made a. . . sort of stiff petticoat." **(***D* 76)

By contrast, high social status is defined by obsession with rich clothes in the eastern stories: In *Lord Jim* Doramin is portrayed as a "motionless body, clad in rich stuffs, coloured silks, gold embroideries; this huge head, enfolded in a red-and-gold headkerchief." (*LJ* 196) "Karain"abounds in exoticist descriptions of clothes and weapons, with natives in an anonymous mass of "variegated colours of checkered sarongs, red turbans, white jackets, embroideries; with the gleam of scabbards, gold rings, charms, armlets, lance blades, and jewelled handles of their weapons" (*K* 4). In another Malay piece, *Almayer's Folly*, Dain Maroola's royalty "sparkles" in his clothes, jewellery and weapons:"the lamp shone on the gold embroidery of his black silk jacket,broke in a thousand sparkling rays on the jewelled hilt of his kriss protruding from under many folds of the red sarong gathered into a sash round his waist, and on the precious stones of the many rings" (*AF*26). The Malay characters attach animist powers to jewels and weapons. In *Lord Jim*, the exchange of the symbolic gifts of the guns and the ring between Stein and Doramin exemplifies the eastern traditional marking of human relationships.

The pauper harlequin, "the man of patches," (88), is reified through his cartographic outfit like the map of colonial Africa, and begs for cartridges and an old pair of shoes. Footware standing for identity, his patches and improvised sandals being a sign of extreme poverty recommend him as Kurtz's apostle with a salvation role. He nurses Kurtz, supplies Marlow with wood, advises him to use the whistle instead of guns against the savages, he is so seraphically "improbable" that Marlow wonders whether he "had really seen him." (91) He reads and annotes in Cyrillic (standing for a code), a manual on navigation, on the ethics of work and a guide on sailing through life (standing for the Bible). On the other hand, this castaway is an ivory trader's nurse, a proselite and a subordinate who uses cartridges to live as a hunting coach. He teaches fauna killing for profit.

White and black outfits have various symbolic values. Jim is permanently dressed in white standing for light; being Jim's imitator, pure Jewel invariably dresses in white like him (*LJ*). In *Heart of Darkness* the accountant's impeccable white, designated ironically by "this miracle. . .a hairdresser dummy" means aimless insistence-"that's backbone" (*HD* 25) on keeping up western fashion standards in the wilderness, by teaching a black woman to the purpose. More than a year after Kurtz's death, the idealist Intended still wears black in perpetual mourning. The secretaries at the Company office are also dressed in black as if mourning for the candidates they send to Africa, whose yarns they feverishly knit.

Colours also define professional position. In *Nostromo*, although the miners lead dehumanized automaton lives, on Sundays they proudly wear uniforms of the mine colours - white with a green stripe - which saves them from the debasing lasso hunting of soldiers for the state's army to which other young men are subject, like wild beasts, "green, the colour of

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hope, being also the colour of the mine" (*N* 92). Green can be diffractively read as the colour linking both the palm tree forests and the waterfall, the snakes and their paradise sacrificed for the San Tomé mine, and the American dollars behind the mining business.

Conrad's characters' clothing style changes with social ascent.They are convinced that clothes make the man. Before "getting rich very slowly,"Nostromo wears the checkered shirt and re"*hombre fino*" failing image. For his visits to Emilia Gould, Dr. Monygham abandons his shabby poncho for a small jacket, his modest notion of dressing up. When he becomes the general director of the hospitals of Sulaco, he wears a black suit with an impeccable cut.When he becomes Minister of War, the bandit Ramirez also wears an elegant black suit, but he adds to it a "high-crowned *sombrero*"recalling his Hispanic origins and "a rosary with of wooden beads" revealing his catholic religion (*N* 395).

Clothes reveal people or are semiotic signs of cultural parts.Emilia's blue cloak recalls the madonna on her stairs as a sign of her compassionate nature, while in her salon, she is a good fairy presiding over bottles of perfume "in a cloud of muslin and lace. . . a fairy posed lightly before dainty philtres"(*N* 55).:"the clear, light fabrics and white lace of her dress appear luminous. . .added to the grace . . .the charm of art, of an attitude caught and interpreted for ever. Small and dainty, as if radiating a light of her own. . .she resembled a good fairy, weary with a long career of well-doing".(*N* 426) Emilia's clothes are costumes for her parts of a madonna and a fairy, which she has been learning to act to the extent of entering them as her second nature. Her permanently empty home and absent husband mean her comprehension of her necessary sacrifice for the good of society and for the connection of the social past with the future: "for life to be large and full, it must contain the care of the past and of the future in every passing moment of the present. Our daily work must be done to the glory of the dead, and for the good of those who come after" (*N* 427). However, she realises her effectless sacrifice as the degradation of the Goulds' ideals in a natural course when carried through as socially succeeding action:"There was something inherent in the necessities of successful action which carried with it the moral degradation of the idea," (427) as the failure of Charles's youth idealism and his later dual cynicism-idealism.

In *The Rescue,* Edith Travers, defined disdainfully by her husband as an eccentric, adores costumes and fancy dressing. Like Rita de Lastaola's Byzantine empress robe and large hat (*AG*), the Malay princess's agentive costumes enable Edith to act a part. In *The Arrow of Gold*, costumes and masks determine the heroine's character. The initial scene announces this theme as a Mardi Gras carnival "with a touch of bedlam" in a chain dance of people hidden by masks, dressed up as Pierrots and Pierrettes in cheap calico, dominated by a starry "Night"-costumed girl. In Rita's house there is a dummy, formerly used by the late painter Allègre for the costumes she wore as a sitter for his celebrated "Byzantine Empress"and "Girl in a Hat"portraits: the dummy in the living room is Rita's past reification. She now owns Allègre"s villa, vintage furniture and art collection: "treasures behind these locked doors, brocades, old jewels, unframed pictures, bronzes, chinoiseries, japoneries," (*AG* 17) and the house moulds her subsequent life. The title of the novel refers to a gold hair pin symbolic for her self-perception as a sitter and a dummy. Rita gives it to M. George as a love token but a sea storm steals it away symbolically as the wiping out of his youth memories.The frayed stockings of her first meeting with Allègre standing for her girlhood's poverty contrast with her later status of a commodificated rich mistress. She receives guests lying on a couch, costumed in an oriental gown, she does not touch the floor, her couch is her throne, she does not realize, to use Morton's phrase about nature, the "paradoxical act of sadistic admiration" (Morton 2007:5) that patriarchy has performed on her by social ascent.

Hats and shoes stand for identity. The difference between them is that hats stand for self-perception and sanity, while shoes express social status and the way the others perceive

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one. In *Lord Jim*, the hero loses his officer hat when jumping into the lifeboat abandoning the *Patna*, ominously of losing his inner balance and his professional status. In *Nostromo*, emaciated Dr. Monygham getting out of prison, walking with the help of two sticks, is wearing a poncho and a mocking soldier "rams a broken straw hat" on his head to complete his scarecrow image of a horrible traitor. In *The Secret Agent*, Verloc is inseparable from his hat indoors, as if he were permanently travelling. Preparing for widowhood, Winnie puts on a black hat with a veil before stabbing Verloc. His hat remains swinging for some time after he is killed: "A round hat disclosed in the middle of the floor by the moving of the table rocked slightly on its crown in the wind of her flight" (*SA* 214).

> But the true sense of the scene he was beholding came to Ossipon through the contemplation of the hat. It seemed an extraordinary thing, an ominous object, a sign. Black, and rim upward, it lay on the floor before the couch as if prepared to receive the contributions of pence from people who would come presently to behold Mr. Verloc in the fullness of his domestic ease reposing on the sofa. (*SA* 230)

The begging-like empty hat on the floor is perceived by Ossipon in delayed decoding as a semiotic clue ("an ominous object, a sign") that Verloc is not sleeping but dead.

Greg Garrard cites Heidegger's "On the Origin of the Work of Art" (1935), with a comment on Van Gogh's painting *A Pair of Shoes* (1886), noting that "in the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth" (Heidegger 1995:159, qtd. in Garrard 2008:111). In Conrad's fiction, shoes both link someone with the earth and confer social authority or transfer of identity, like in the idiom "to put oneself in somebody's shoes." In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow's shoes are filled with his helmsman's blood and he desolately throws them into the river.The shoes are buried with the dead black man in the Congo. The Russian harlequin begs Marlow for a pair of shoes. By throwing or giving away his shoes Marlow symbolically exchanges his identity with both the African helmsman and the harlequin as his doubles.

In *Nostromo*, the bare-footed Indians consider shoes a sign of authority: "Most miners being Indians. . .addressed him as 'Taita'(father) as these barefooted people of Costaguana will address anybody who wears shoes" (*N* 92). In the collective portrait of an Indian family going to the fair, the grown daughter, the family's pride, is walking bare-footed, carrying her sandals and guitar on her back as family cherished possessions. Charles Gould, frequently on horseback, is qualified by his tall riding boots as "El Rey of Sulaco," evoking the equestrian statue of Charles IV of Spain. He "rode like a centaur. Riding for him . . . was a natural faculty. . . looking thoroughly English even on horseback"(52). His English riding style characterises him as an Empire Hispanic-English centaur of composite nationality.

In *Lord Jim*, the eponymous hero loses his shoes when leaping over the stockade into Patusan, and this loss is his change of luck and social status. "This is my second leap. . .Thought I would leave my skin there. Lost my shoes struggling" (*LJ* 191). His narrow drowning in mud is a death-rebirth or a baptism. No longer in his old shoes, he acquires a new life, a second chance.

Beauty patterns as fashion are in Conrad's fiction biosemiotic signs used to ascribe heroines culturally patterned roles. All the women of Sulaco observe the fashion of making up with mother-of-pearl powder, therefore they look like moon-white masks: "the shocking manner in which the Sulaco ladies smothered their faces with pearl powder till they looked like plaster casts"(*N* 53) evokes the moon and the mother-of-pearl of the ocean in interspecies similes, and observes a custom of masques imported from Venice; culture requires wearing a mask, hiding plainness. Fashion corrects nature into convention and reveals racism: to be beautiful, women must ostensibly belong to the white race.The Indian and the half-caste are excluded from the Sulacan beauty standards. Antonia Avellanos is often defined as red lips behind a fan, a Hispanic typical beauty (*N*). Her rouge as a constant make up and her fan as a prolongation of her hand are her manner of being elegant in order to hide poverty, which she

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sees as a shame, a personal lack of decency. At war time she finds it necessary to apologise: "Forgive us our misery."

Hair style is a feature used as a biosemiotic definition of each heroine, for putting across a cultural role.The black mistress has " crimson spot on her tawny cheek" (*HD* 87) and helmet-like hair define her as a tribe queen-concubine. Felicia Moorsom (*PM*) has the same Athena-like helmet hair style, suggesting a monomaniac girl's intimidating power. A halo of blonde curls biosemiotically defines a *donna angelicata*, like the Intended (*HD*), Edith Travers (*R*), or Emilia Gould (*N*). Hermann's niece, with a rich rural plait, is a titanic innocent Gaia (*F*). Coquette Freya, with extremely long hair, is a musical siren (*F7I*). Giselle Viola,"the recognized beauty of the town" with bright golden locks, is a nymph, "she is a bit of a flirt," who "likes men's attention"(*N* 423), she "makes eyes" (*N* 423).Alice Jacobus, with wild curled hair, a prisoner amidst her garden's perfumes, is a luring nymph, too (*SF*). Rita de Lastaola's red hair and arrow of gold hair pin outline her as a *femme fatale* model-sitter (*AG*). Even old people's characters are revealed by hair style. Doramin's wife, wrinkled, with long grey hair, is a kind motherly witch (*LJ*). The bandit Hernandez has long curled grey hair falling on his shoulders like a folk legend hero (*N* 395).

Jewellery and weaponry are attached traditionally agency and status significance in Conrad's fiction.Agentive rings function in Conrad's fiction as adornment, credentials, messages, talismans, identification.In *Almayer's Folly* the beheaded body brought by the river wears Dain Maroola's clothes and has his ring on his finger, in order to mislead the Dutch officers.

In *Lord Jim*, Stein explains to Jim that "the ring was a sort of credential - 'it's like something you read of in books'. . Doramin would do his best for him."(*LJ* 178) IanWatt points out the silver ring'srole as a weak link between colonizer and colonized; the ring is "an ironic variation on the folk-tale motif of the poisoned gift," (Watt 347) because at the end, the ring which assured Jim's initial social ascent falls from Doramin's lap to Jim's feet with a deadly effect: "People remarked that the ring which had dropped on his lap fell and rolled against the foot of the white man, and that poor Jim glanced down at the talisman that had opened for him the door of fame, love and success"(*LJ* 312).The ring as a talisman does not help in *The Rescue* either. Entrusted with it as a desperate message to Lingard, Edith Travers does not pass it to him and he learns too late of the Malay princes'deaths. She throws the now useless ring into the sea and her yacht and Lingard's brig leave for opposite directions. Like in *Lord Jim*, the ring as a poisoned gift has brought ill luck and separation.

In *Nostromo*, Emilia Gould wears lots of gem rings, but they do not help her retrieve her husband from his obsession with the silver mine, which she fears more than a rival, considering that "The San Tomé mine stands now between these two people" (*N* 202). Similarly, in *Heart of Darkness*, the black concubine wears "brass gauntlets," "brass leggings" and "innumerable necklaces of glass beads" worth several elephants'ivory(*HD* 87), whose profusion cannot keep Kurtz to her, jewels being ineffective charms.

Bright metal objects fascinate primitives. Brutish Sotillo is fond "of jewels, gold trinkets, of personal adornment"(*N* 278). Nostromo is publicly requested by a gipsy to give her a love token and he cuts off his silver buttons which she proudly takes. In "The Inn of the Two Witches," a gipsy cuts off the brass buttons of killed Tom. Brass and glass are tantamount to gold and ivory in Conrad's irony on precious metals relative value. Significantly, he starts *Victory* with a jocular lesson, a reader trap on the relativity of diamonds worth, which, as every schoolboy knows, are nothing more than compressed coal:

> There is, every schoolboy knows in this scientific age, a very close chemical relation between coal and diamonds. . .Both these commodities represent wealth; but coal is a much less portable form of property. . .At the same time, there is a fascination in coal, the

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> supreme commodity of the age in which we are camped like bewildered travellers in a garish, unrestful hotel. (*V*1)

Thus, diamonds value more than coal on the mere merit of their portability. On the other hand, coal is the supreme valuable commodity fascinating the age, which is, however, only a vulgar camping site where humans are bewilderedly accommodated. Relativity and irony are threefold overturned.

Weaponry is invested with more-than-human power and historic significance.In "Karain" the hero addresses the sword in pathetic fallacy: "If there is virtue in the fire, in the iron, in the hand that forged thee. . .then we shall be victorious together!"(*K* 8) The sword is an animistic artefact, transcorporeally receiving the power of fire, of iron and of the human forger. On the way to Matara's sister, the two friends sell their adornments, dispensing with outer beauty but keep the blades with killing power: "We sold the carved sheaths of our krisses - the ivory sheaths with gold feules.. .But we kept the blades - for them." (13) When they find the princess, they interrupt her pearl stringing: "the pearls streamed at her feet."(14) Reifying them in antonymic metaphors, the pearls stand for her grace, while the kriss blade stands for her brother's violence.

In *Nostromo*, the Goulds'salon contains a bookcase, deploying the family's collection of weaponry, telling its history:"Winchester carbines, revolvers, a couple of shotguns, and even two pairs of double-barrelled holster pistols. Between them, by itself, upon a strip of scarlet velvet, hung an old cavalry sabre, once the property of Don Enrique Gould, the hero of the Occidental province" (*N* 69)The agentive objects present in the Goulds''salon are both the result of the humans' choices and determine their lives. The ore samples speak in storied matter of the silver of the mine and of the land's treasures looting and influence Gould Sr. and Charles's lives, the water colour sketch of the San Tomé mountain painted by Emilia is both the expression and the cause of her nostalgia for the destroyed wilderness and of her disagreement with her mining husband regarding the waterfall sacrifice and the deforestation for the underground assets boastfully deployed in the glass boxes.The various weapons tell of the colonialist armed violence history of the family, the saber recalls the late uncle-president's and Charles's separatist politics. The objects in the room reveal each Gould's manner of entanglement with Sulaco's nature and have influenced these porous characters' destinies, and this entanglement of the objects and the Goulds makes up the family's history.

In *Heart of Darkness*, the brickmaker never makes any bricks, he collects African mats and weapons instead: "Native mats covered the clay walls; a collection of spears, assegais, shields, knives was hung up in trophies,"(*HD* 34) the Westerner colonialist's hobby for weaponry, also apparent in "Karain," shows a certain anthropological interest for the local culture and determines both the brickmaker's staying in Congo and the Englishmen's search for weapons on the Strand.

Conrad's characters are obsessed with clocks and time. Time is a western trope ineffectual for Karain, perceived differently by the East and the West, a cultural boundary:"The silence became so profound that we could distinctly hear the chronometers in my cabin ticking along with unflagging speed against one another. . . three white men, looking at the Malay, could not find one word to the purpose."(*K* 45) The white men and their animistic clocks collude in their vain attempt to exorcise the Malay's obsessive haunting.

In a number of works clocks are presented animistically. In *Nostromo*, when Captain Mitchell is taken prisoner by Sotillo's men, they confiscate his watch, which he values so much that he "raves. . .like a tiger in a cage"(*N* 277). At Verloc's death, the clock on the wall stops. The same happens to Razumov's clock at midnight, at the moment of Haldin's arresting. Clocks are animistic factors of order, their stopping brings chaos. Anarchists know this about time zones, that is why they try to dismantle them, an impossible goal apparently

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missed by hazard, actually failed due to vibrant nature's intervention to preserve time zoning order.

Haunted Karain asks his white friends for charm protection from an object: "Give me your protection . . . A charm...a weapon!" (*K* 17) Inventive Hollis sacrifices the palm of a glove together with a Jubilee coin with Queen Victoria's profile and a blue ribbon from his box with souvenirs to make a ghostproof amulet, to which Karain stares in panpsychist respect. "She is more powerful than Suleiman the Wise, who commanded the genii, as you know" said Hollis."(18) The sight of Hollis's box with a girl's portrait makes the narrator think of "amulets of white men," (18) grasping the resemblance between the Malay and the western cultures, in Carl Jung's collective subconscious or in Kate Rigby's eco-theology collective consciousness . Karain comes swimming to the whites'schooner because the ghost haunting him "cannot abide unbelief."(24) Yet, he scorns the white atheists' lack of superstitions: he has an animistic perception of the world and can be appeased with an amulet.

In *An Outcast of the Islands*, Lingard, reassuring Almayer that they will find the secret gold ore, symbolically builds a toy-house of cards for little Nina, but the structure collapses "before the child's light breath." The ruined card house is ominous of the burning of the ambitious mansion at the end of the mirroring novel, *Almayer's Folly,* when Nina leaves it to marry the Balinese prince. The toy house, a replica of his real folly house, tries to warn Almayer of his vain ambitions misguided by Lingard's cornucopian promises.

Art is humans'creative, anthropocentric demiurgic capacity to add new species to the natural ones. Each work of art telltales its creator's self. In "The End of the Tether," Captain Whalley's wife paints such verisimilar species of the British flora on the walls of the *Diana* brig that lookers feel the scent of the flowers in the paintings."You could almost smell these roses" (*ET* 4). Homeland flowers painting expresses her biophilic art lover's covert longing for native England.

Paul Kirschner (1988:248) considers that in *Under Westen Eyes* Conrad uses places "topodialogically" to combat Dostoevsky. I find that Conrad tries to rewrite his own variation of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* in order to demonstrate that Dostoevsky's idea of atonement is ungrounded- Conrad considers that each crime has inevitable consequences retaliating on the perpetrator(as he states in his letter to Poradowska). Nature as well as second nature acts as God's executioner. In Prince of K- 's salon, Razumov sees a bronze statue of a running adolescent:"Filling a corner, on a black pedestal, stood a quarter-life-size smooth-limbed bronze of an adolescent figure, running. The Prince observed . . .'Spontini's 'Flight of Youth.' Exquisite.'"(*UWE* 16)Both characters unconsciously guess Razumov's entanglement with the statue. The animate bronze ominously warns him of his "youth's flight"stopping this very evening, by the choice of action he takes: by the end of the novel he will no longer be able to run or walk.

In the Preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus',* Conrad mentions that "all art. . .must strenuously aspire . . .to the magic suggestiveness of music, which is the art of arts"(*NN* 3). Music is a ubiqutous part of Conrad's humans' lives. In "The End of the Tether," Mrs. Whalley is a pianist and a gifted singer. Van Wyk regularly receives music scores from Europe, but his piano is ironically "out of tune . . .in the damp atmosphere of the forests" (41) although he tries to reterritorialize European culture in his Malay seclusion. In *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz's cousin in Brussels is an organ player, Kurtz's Intended has a grand piano in the room where she receives Marlow, Kurtz used to be a musical prodigy, a talented painter and a poet. He has painted a caricature of the blindness of the colonists'would-be enlightening mission in Congo, which we read as a bleak sarcastic allegory of the colonialist project and a self-irony of his own rhetoric in the Report.

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In "Freya of the Seven Isles," the heroine is a siren. The piano is her jocular reification, music is her speech: she plays "fierce Wagner music in the flicker of blinding flashes, with thunderbolts falling all round, enough to make your hair stand on end" (*F7I* 152) either as a love declaration to Allen or as a mockery at voyeuristic Heemskirk. Wagner's music is to Freya a reenchantment of art, her magic power to send various messages by playing the same piece to different listeners, her sonorous declaration of osmotical betrothal to the brig.

The old captain in *The Shadow-Line* is a terrible musician who exasperates the crew. Approaching his dying, his playing becomes worse and worse, till he throws his violin into the sea: "It's my belief he would have tried to take the ship down with him if it had been in human power"(*SL* 24). In the sailors'superstition, the shadow-line of his burial at sea after that of his violin is the demarcation of evil spell, materialised in the proximal sinister Koh-ring shore. The sailors perceive the porous identification between the late captain, the violin, Koh-ring and the latitude of 8d 20' north. In *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,'* the crew's cherished evening only entertainment, Archie's concertina playing, is interrupted by dying Wait's claim for quiet: sailors obey their sick fellow's selfish pretence.

Conrad's characters are bodily porous to music and rhythm. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow is impressed by the vigil kept by the blacks' tribe on the night of his departure on the steamer,and by the permanent drum beating, which he confounds with his heart, in identifying kinship: "And I remember I confounded the beat of the drum with the beating of my heart, and was pleased at its calm regularity."(*HD* 93) Reading the text in theeco-theology collective consciousness approach, we note Conrad seizing the kinship between the whites and the Africans, the common sensibility, the transitivity of cultural and religious values, transcending race and religion: "Perhaps on some quiet night, the tremor of far-off drums, sinking, swelling, a tremor vast, faint; a sound weird, appealing, suggestive, and wild - and perhaps with as profound a meaning as the sound of bells in a Christmas country"(92).

Collective consciousness explains art reterritorialization. In a comical scene, cruel Lakamba (*AF*) feels an oxymoronic simultaneous desire to poison Almayer and a fancy for operatic music: an aria from "Il Trovatore" exists in his hand organ as a reterritorialization of Verdi's music; he orders sleepy Babalatchi "to turn", because he cannot have enough of it."'Turn, Babalatchi, turn,' he murmured, with closed eyes. . . Babalatchi turned, at times dozing off . . . Nature slept in an exhausted repose . . . while under the unsteady hand of the statesman of Sambir the Trovatore fitfully wept"(*AF* 42). A funny fan of Italian bel canto, Arab Lakamba is sickly addicted to Verdi, as a living proof of music being an international language.

In a similar context, Conrad mocks fake melomania: in another reterritorialization of operatic music, in *Nostromo*, the president of a Sulacan province is a fan of Donizetti's "Lucia di Lamermoor""brayed"by the military band and he wrongly attributes the opera to Mozart: "The military band happened to be braying operatic selections. . . 'Exquisite, delicious!. . .'Lucia di Lammermoor! I am passionate for music. It transports me. Ha! the divine - ha! - Mozart. Si!'" (*N* 86). Music can even become exasperating. In *The Secret Agent*, it is present as the player piano at the Silenus bar, behaving as nonsensically as Conrad's parrots: "An upright semi-grand piano near the door, flanked by two palms in pots, executed suddenly all by itself a valse tune with aggressive virtuosity.The din it raised was deafening. . . .it ceased as abruptly as it had started" (*SA* 58)."The piano at the foot of the staircase clanged through a mazurka with a brazen impetuosity, as though a vulgar and impudent ghost were showing off. The keys sank and rose mysteriously. Then all became still" (63).The piano is an animistic whimsical character, playing valses or mazurkas in absurd disagreement with the humans' situations, starting and stopping unexpectedly, maddening psychotic listener Ossipon (*SA*).

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3. Conclusion

Liminal spaces, thresholds (windows, doors, corridors, staircases, balconies, fences) are spaces connecting interior spaces or individuals to the environment or separating them from it, revealing characters'centripete or centrifugal tendencies to reach or avoid reality, to ascend or descend on the social scale. Gardens are artificial, tame second nature, their owners' design and mirrors.

Material culture as artefacts, mainly represented by clothes, jewellery, weaponry and works of art, is a second nature of a special kind, involving creativity, man's demiurgic efforts of adding new species to nature, as a wordless language, biosemiotically expressing social status, personality or hollowness, sexual attraction, aesthetic standards and conventions, sublimated feelings, culture reterritorialization.

Conrad's sense for concrete details memorised from directly known places is modified by his imagination and literary associations. His constructionist built environments and artefacts are agentive, transcorporeal, they can be diffractively read as storied matter acting upon the porous characters and determining plots. His tendency to animate both natural and man-created objects expresses animism both as material relationism and as a reenchantment of the sacred and of art in a collective consciousness.

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