Community has long been one of the most important keywords in reading Conrad's works. This book offers a new approach to that old idea, endorsing recent sophisticated critical thought, notably that of Jean-Luc Nancy and Jacques Derrida, and probes into the question of one's being and one's relationship with the world. A traditional way to consider community derives from Tönnies's distinction of community and society, Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, which serves a basis for a classic work of Conradian criticism, Ian Watt's Conrad in the Nineteenth Century. Hence we have repeatedly encountered the word “community” in Conrad criticism to suggest the seaman's world, which is simple and trustworthy while it effaces individuality and faces extinction at the hands of the modern industrialized society.

Nancy’s concept of community, however, is drastically different. In the first place, he does not presuppose the existence of a self-sufficing subject. In Nancy’s terms, a person is always a “being singular plural”, and a community is “inoperative”, for lack of something that binds its members together. This radical stance (which also provoked a significant response in “the unavowable community” of Maurice Blanchot) is what Yamamoto relies on in arguing her case for a new Conrad, and she offers fresh readings of both familiar and neglected texts. The subtitle of the book, “strange fraternity”, is taken from The Rover, Conrad’s last completed novel, which is set in France in the Napoleonic era. This attractive phrase turns out to be strikingly appropriate in pointing out the Conradian version of the Nancean community as we read on.

Yamamoto deals with complex ideas, but her argumentation is well-arranged and clear. Introduction and Chapter 1, “Rescuing the Singular Plurality: ‘Who Comes After the Subject?’” delineate the central theme of community and pose accompanying
concerns including Conrad’s position as a modernist master, who is preoccupied with the single and central consciousness of the subject and represents the world through its point of view, often using the narrative technique called “impressionism”. As the superiority of sight over the other senses in modernism has been called into question these days, Nancy duly points out the importance of other senses such as hearing and touching.

The analysis of specific texts starts with Chapter 2, “The Deaf Russian Finn’s Secret Agency in The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’”. The Preface of this novel is regarded as Conrad’s manifesto as an artist, and the phrase declaring that his task is “before all, to make you see” (NN xlii, Conrad’s emphasis) is particularly famous. Yet along with sight, the sense of hearing — or rather the lack of it — characterizes the crew, which is presented collectively as a group. The fact that Wamibo is deaf excludes the noise of Donkin’s cries and his existence serves the novel to emphasize sight. This can be understood as a forerunner of the devices in later works, where senses other than sight are highlighted not through its lack but through the contrastive emphasis on them.

Among the following chapters, Chapter 3 on “Heart of Darkness” and Chapter 4 and 5 on “The Secret Sharer” deserve a closer look, since they epitomize the major concerns of this book such as the importance of senses other than sight, the consideration of memory and time, and the responsibility to the other. Once ambiguities in Conrad’s text perplexed earlier critics such as F. R. Leavis, but such multiple meanings came to be understood as a sign of modernist technique. Still, there remain ambiguous details which cannot be explained away with that convenient label. In Chapter 3, “Marlow’s Ear: Acoustic Penetration into the Heart of Darkness”, we encounter the question of “Marlow’s occasional excessive knowledge, or his mysterious power of seeing what is far away in time and space” (42-3), as in the case of his foreseeing the meeting with Kurtz when he has just arrived in Africa. His “dream-sensation” (HD 172) occurs repeatedly in the text, and it is mysteriously vague, accompanied by presentiment and uncanny vision, traversing time and space. Such descriptions cannot be called examples of impressionism, which presents “the protagonist’s immediate sensations, and thus makes the reader aware of the gap between impression and understanding” (Watt 176-77) and is linked to “the precarious nature of the process of interpretation in general” (179), delineated by Ian Watt and more recently by John G. Peters.

Moreover, there are various sounds in the text, from the powerful and hollow voice of Kurtz which fascinates Marlow, to “a continuous noise of the rapids” (HD 153) when Marlow sees the dying Africans. When he follows the escaped Kurtz into the
jungle, he confounds “the beat of the drum with the beating of [his] heart” (HD 232). A fundamental characteristic of sound as opposed to sight is that we often cannot specifically locate the place from which a sound comes and as a result it seems omnipresent. Here Marlow’s heartbeat and the sound around him are merged, as if the boundary between him and the world has collapsed. Marlow’s meeting with Kurtz’s Intended can be understood in line with this collapse, for he sees the young woman overlapped with the monstrous image of the deceased man. Two people simultaneously face Marlow, and the dead man’s presence is stronger than the living woman, creating “an impossible space that goes beyond time” (Yamamoto 50).

Marlow also hears, in addition to the voice of Kurtz, various sounds he heard while in Africa. Thus we find Marlow’s strange community which is both singular and plural, partly evoked through the sense of hearing. Kurtz’s African mistress is not included in this community, perhaps because the woman in the text is mute and this analysis focuses on the sense of listening. Yet considering the curiously overlapping image of the Intended and the African woman, we could add the woman to this community, for the image of haunting here, even when silent, is also beyond the ordinary boundaries of a subject, as we see in the later chapters of this book.

In Chapter 4, “Hospitality in ‘The Secret Sharer’” and Chapter 5 “(Dis)owning a Memory in ‘The Secret Sharer’”, the nature of community is analysed further. The ethical question whether the captain-narrator of “The Secret Sharer” should set Leggatt free has often been a target of dispute. The captain instantly trusts Leggatt, the murderer, and hides him against all odds, risking the lives of all the crew as well as himself. The uneasiness concerning his actions has sometimes been suspended in deference to the “double” or doppelgänger device, an emphatically foregrounded scheme of the story. Read in the light of this romantic or psychoanalytical approach, the story is about the captain’s narcissism and initiation through helping his double and surviving the experience. Yet this chapter, by applying the theories of hospitality of René Schérer and Derrida, examines the ethical aspect of the story while at the same time avoiding the black-or-white argument of the captain’s successful initiation or his betrayal of the community of sailors.

The captain is regarded as “eccentric” by his crew, and this is literally true, for he not only feels himself to be the odd man out owing to his solitude, as critics have noted; he also attempts to “surpass himself, to encounter the other” (Yamamoto 58), going beyond the supposed centre of his self. Yamamoto demonstrates his eccentricity by quoting the opening passage where both the borders (“fences”, “lines”, “stakes”) and their uselessness (they are “half-submerged” and look “as if abandoned forever”) are
implied. The captain incidentally finds Leggatt and unconditionally welcomes him, for whereas “hospitality in the ordinary sense is offered to a person identifiable by name, nationality, social position, and so on, unconditional hospitality, according to Schérer, . . . is an event that takes place beyond the interests of individual subjects” (62), and the host should not be conscious of his or her being the host, for the moment such consciousness arises the hospitality is caught in the net of personal interests. It is a matter of responsibility to respond to the other’s call, according to Derrida. The captain’s attitude on deck induces Leggatt to address him “as if you had expected me” (“SS” 188). Yamamoto then presents us with the uncannily parallel image of the host as depicted by Derrida: “the master of the house who ‘waits anxiously on the threshold of his home’ for the stranger he will see arising into view on the horizon as a liberator” (Derrida cited in Yamamoto 63). In French both the host and the guest are “l’hôte”, and the captain is more strained and anxious like a criminal, while Leggatt behaves calmly as if he were a captain. But this status does not last long, “because a pure hospitality is an impossible and contradictory event, in which the master of the house who is at home comes to enter his home . . . through the guest” (65). Although the captain in the last scene is confident, it is not a sign of maturity or the guarantee of his identity. Instead, it shows both the captain and Leggatt are exiles, but now “liberated from the same/other opposition” (67), forming a strange relationship of being both singular and plural.

Chapter 5 complements Chapter 4, and here Derrida’s theory of the gift, fundamentally similar to his theory of hospitality, is brought forth by considering the episode of the white hat, which the captain gives to Leggatt from his “sudden pity for his mere flesh” (“SS” 214). Neither the captain nor Leggatt, however, cares much about this symbol of their bond. As in the case of hospitality, “the donner or donee” should not “perceive or receive a gift as such, have no consciousness of it, no memory, no recognition, but he or she must also forget it right away” (Yamamoto 80), because the gift is soon to be involved in “the ritual circle of the debt” (81). At such a transient, or even impossible, point looms the strange fraternity of the captain and Leggatt. In other words, this strange relationship exists in this “paradoxical instant of decision that is madness” (Derrida cited in Yamamoto 81), and it is almost atemporal.

Unconditional hospitality or gift-giving might be hard for us to imagine in ordinary life, but the preference of such spontaneous and unquestioning reaction to the other, beyond logical causality or reasoning, is also sustained by many other clues Yamamoto points out. Leggatt impulsively jumps overboard to his escape without thinking of a plan, but a series of unexpected and accidental events saves him. There are as well the
caricatures of the first mate, who wants to explain everything, and these echo in the
captain’s remark toward the end of the story that Leggatt or he or both (the ambiguity
is symptomatic of singular plural existence) is/are “too proud to explain” (“SS” 214).
Chapter 5 is full of such insightful observations, which sometimes seem fragmentary
and difficult to link together. Yet this chapter also poses a “skeptical attitude toward
totalization” (77) and proposes that the reader may remain inoperative and leave
“the blank space . . . open for some mysterious arrival” (83), just as Conrad did while
waiting for this story to arrive during the tormenting writing process of Under Western
Eyes.

The latter part of the book challenges another common assumption about Conrad
by taking up his later works. After Thomas Moser’s influential study, Joseph Conrad:
Achievement and Decline, these works were regarded as showing a deterioration of
Conrad’s creative energy. This evaluation has been modified by critics such as Robert
Hampson and Richard Niland, though it is not yet easy to get a copy of The Arrow
of Gold or the unfinished last Napoleonic novel, Suspense. These historical romances
are told in a rather straightforward authorial voice and do not seem experimental, but
Yamamoto adopts an original view again drawing on Nancy, as well as Hannah Arendt
and Cathy Caruth.

In these analyses of historical novels and short stories, the issue of history as the
extension of responsibility is developed, although the motif had already emerged
in the consideration of time in early chapters. A fresh perspective is offered on the
problems of trauma, which are intertwined with the question of history. According
to Caruth, trauma is not limited to a victim’s personal experience but is collective,
thus constituting a history. The heroines of later novels, Doña Rita in The Arrow of
Gold and Arlette in The Rover, are conspicuously traumatized. In Chapter 8, “An Art
of Palpation: Plastic Imagination in The Arrow of Gold”, the relationship between men
and Doña Rita is analyzed in connection with another physical sense, that of touch.
Monsieur George, the double of the author, has fallen in love with Rita. She is treated
as the object of male desire, which has drawn feminist critics’ notice. Yamamoto,
however, while admitting this basic pattern, finds special significance in touching,
which makes George different from other male characters. The relationship between
Rita and George is often taken as melodramatic, but in contrast to the painter Allègre,
who tries to dominate her with his gaze, George can be regarded as a sculptor, and
his “grasp” of Rita “occurs in his giving up his ‘whole being’ to her” (Yamamoto
123). George thus acquires an immediacy with her, and this can be read as an echo of
Conrad’s “Author’s Note” to this novel, in which the author writes that it is an attempt
to “touch” his own untouchable past.

In Chapter 9, “Arendtian Action and ‘Strange Fraternity’ in *The Rover*”, we encounter the phrase used as the subtitle of the book. It directly refers to the band of “Brothers of the Coast”, to which Peyrol, the enigmatic protagonist of the novel, used to belong. The “Brothers of the Coast”, pirates of a sort, consist of people of any nationality or class, and their “fraternity” provides a sharp contrast with that held up in the French Revolution, whose famous grand slogans “did not upset . . . Peyrol” for they are “the invention of landsmen, of whom the seamen Peyrol knew very little — nothing, so to speak” (*The Rover* 8). The quotation recalls the binary opposition of land and sea in Conrad’s early works, but this is a community which is based neither on the modern nation-state nor on a nostalgic private bond. Moreover, “strange fraternity” can also aptly describe the relationship of the residents of Escampobar farm, who do not have an intimate bond in any usual sense. In the end, Peyrol, an old man, sacrifices his life in a dangerous mission to deceive the British Navy, saving the young Arlette and her lover. It is a heroic act, but critics have complained that the character of Peyrol lacks introspective reflections and his action is abrupt and even unconvincing. In the light of Arendt’s notion of the subject, however, the act need not signal Conrad’s deterioration; Arendt does not suppose a fixed subject, an “I”, as the origin of one’s actions but rather as “the product of an act” (Yamamoto 143). Staying in the Escampobar farm and the tartane, both of which are a complex “home” for Peyrol and other characters, Peyrol crosses “over to a nonhuman space” (145) beyond ordinary boundaries. Even after his death, his memory haunts the survivors and the community of the living, so that the dead continues to exist with them.

As we have seen in the analyses of “The Secret Sharer” and historical novels, the ideas of community and responsibility are closely connected, for in Conrad’s communities their members are responsible to other members in the sense of strange fraternity. Responsibility is literally a response to the other’s call: it is brought about by the sheer presence of the other’s body grasped by touching, or the condition of “being with”, or an actual voice uttered by the other, as in the case of Cosmo’s voice resounding in the dark bay in *Suspense*. Events are always traumatic according to Derrida (Yamamoto 152) and we cannot fully understand the call, but we cannot help responding to it, which leads to sharing the memory and the making of history. In Chapter 10, “Toward a Possible Partage of Memory: ‘History and ‘Solidarity’ in *Suspense*”, we come back to the Preface of *The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’*, noticing the call of the text itself. In the Preface, rather than the impressionist phrase “make you see”, the part which refers to the need for solidarity should draw our attention. It is “the
subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity . . . which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity — the dead to the living and the living to the unborn” (NN xl). This solidarity is not a traditional one but one looming and inconclusive. It is not necessarily a hopeful one, and Yamamoto does not fail to mention “the violence of this communal dissymmetry already inscribing the other person into the situation . . . and the violence at the heart of any ethical relation” (160 n). This reference to the essential presence of violence is disturbing but strangely convincing, and one hopes the author will have more to say about it. In any case, solidarity is simply inevitable, and the Preface shows that Conrad’s sense of “strange fraternity” has been latently present from the early stage of his career.

The earlier versions of most of Yamamoto’s chapters had been published in other books, such as Jiko no muko e, the author’s monograph in Japanese, and various journals. The essays are well-informed on three levels: concerning Conrad’s texts, Conrad criticism, and recent, mainly French philosophical critique. Few critics are equipped with such knowledge and insight on all these three levels, and her balanced style of writing is outstanding. Previously overlooked details in Conrad’s text are linked to the pressing call by Nancy or Derrida to reexamine our recognition of community. When the “impossible” and atemporal community in the former part of the book is connected with the larger community considered in the latter part, whose members share history, we have a feeling that time itself, as it were, begins to enlarge and extend to surround us. Other keywords such as responsibility, hospitality, touching, trauma and haunting are also intertwined and will invite further considerations in the future, both by the author and other critics. For example, the dark bay in Suspense reminds us of Decoud’s hapless voyage in silent darkness, which meets nobody’s response, unlike Cosmo’s, leading us to consider the nature of community in Nostromo. Traumatic experiences characterize Marlow, Jim, Razumov, Heyst, and many other Conradian protagonists, as well as the heroines of the later novels. One may examine Gothic elements in Conrad through the analysis of the representation of the uncanny and thus investigate their relationship with memory. Overall, this is a bold study and those interested in Conrad, the reconsideration of modernism, contemporary French critical theory, or the question of community in today’s world will find it truly rewarding to read.

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1 Page numbers are indicated in parenthesis. HD, NN, and “SS” refer to Heart of Darkness, The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’, and “The Secret Sharer”, respectively.
Haru Takiuchi, *British Working-Class Writing for Children: Scholarship Boys in the Mid-Twentieth Century*  
Reviewed by ARAI Megumi, University of Tokyo

In his introduction to *The Puffin Book of School Stories* (1993), the editor Bernard Ashley writes that when he was growing up, he never came across school stories which dealt with the kind of schools he was attending. The school stories which were available at that time were all set in boarding schools.

The boys I read about didn’t go home at the end of the afternoon, they went to their school Houses, where, instead of doing homework, they did prep; and at the end of term there were no school holidays for them, but vacations. And we identified with these remote characters and went around talking about doing our prep and having vacations — generally feeling inferior — because there was no alternative. (p. 2)

School Houses, ‘prep’ (short for preparation), and ‘vacation’ belong to the world of the public school (fee-paying independent school) where traditional school stories, from Thomas Hughes’ *Tom Brown’s School Days* (1857) to the popular Billy Bunter series (1908-40) have been set. In fact, the Billy Bunter series, which were originally published in the popular boys’ weekly magazine *The Magnet*, were written by Frank Richards, who himself had never been to public school, and were read, as George Orwell pointed out in his essay ‘Boys’ Weeklies’, by lower-middle-class and working-class children ‘whom