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| Author(s)     | David Stewart Hull                        |
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THE FAIRBANKS WEEKEND FILM SERIES

AN OUTCAST OF THE ISLANDS  
(Great Britain 1952)

|                |                    |               |                  |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Tom Lingard    | Ralph Richardson   | Nina          | Annabel Morley   |
| Peter Willemas | Trevor Howard      | Mrs. Willemas | Betty Ann Davies |
| Almayer        | Robert Morley      | Ali           | Dharma Emmanuel  |
| Aissa          | Kerima             | Alagappan     | Peter Tilling    |
| Mrs. Almayer   | Wendy Hiller       | Bedavi        | A. V. Bramble    |
| Babalatchi     | George Coulouris   | Ramsey        | James Kenney     |
| Winck          | Wilfred Hyde-White | Mate          | Marne Maitland   |
| Hudig          | Frederick Walk     |               |                  |

Screenplay by William E. C. Fairchild, adapted from the novel by Joseph Conrad. Decors by Vincent Korda. Photographed by John Wilcox. Edited by Bert Bates. Music by Brian Easdale. Original length: 102 minutes. American release length: 93 minutes. A Lopert Film, released by United Artists. Directed by SIR CAROL REED

On the whole, the works of Joseph Conrad have been shamefully neglected by the motion picture world. While he enjoyed a short popularity in the silent period, few sound films have been made from his novels and stories, with a few notable exceptions.

Although one might think that the sea novels of Conrad would be a natural choice for moviemakers, this has not been the case in actual practice. The first major use of his work occurred in 1936 when two novels, which form a sort of duo of "international evil" as Conrad called it, appeared on the screen. One was Alfred Hitchcock's Sabotage which was based on the novel (and play) The Secret Agent (not to be confused with Hitchcock's film of the same name and year, which is based on Somerset Maugham). The other was Marc Allegret's Under Western Eyes.

In the more recent period, only two major Conrad-based films have appeared, although Lord Jim is currently being filmed. One was The Secret Sharer, which formed half of the film Face To Face (1952) and the other is An Outcast Of The Islands.

Tonight's film is based on a novel which Conrad wrote in 1896 as a sequel to one of his most popular works, Almayer's Folly. In this earlier novel, Conrad finished off his character as a hopeless dope addict living in the ruins of his trading post. In the film, we apparently go back to an earlier period in Almayer's life for a truly chilling story of the degeneration of character in the tropics.

One of the reasons why Conrad has been so little on the screen is the basic difficulty of transplanting his moody, dark world of the mind into terms of cinema. In An Outcast Of The Islands, a reasonably good attempt has been made, but the adaptation is far from perfect. The blackest of villains, Willemas, has been softened a bit, and a few of the more sordid touches of the story have been removed.

On the positive side, the ending of the film is an improvement over the original, which gets out of hand. Lingard and Willemss "have it out" in a beautifully directed and acted scene which neatly straightens out many of the tangled threads of the plot.

In order to do the film as well as possible, Sir Carol Reed took his actors to Ceylon. This director, whose supreme talent is the adaption of literary classics, also has a fine eye and ear for casting and selected three great performers for the central roles: Sir Ralph Richardson as Captain Lingard; Trevor Howard as Peter Willemss, the weakling crushed, less because he is wicked than because he is weak; and Robert Morley as Almayor, Lingard's selfish partner.

What is wrong with the film is what is wrong with the personality of the director. As one critic has written, "He is a great technician, but, it sometimes seems, a rather reluctant artist. Carol Reed has not strongly encouraged critics who try to trace themes running through his works. His most characteristic films are accounts of betrayals and loneliness; his preferred character the half-hero, the man on the run, the outcast or the solitary intriguer; his special talent is in achieving tension through atmospheric pressure."

It would be an exaggeration to say that the film does justice to Conrad's magnificent conception, but its success, in the final analysis, is greater than its failings.

David Stewart Hull

Filmography of Sir Carol Reed: The Stars Look Down (1939); The True Glory (documentary) (1945); Odd Man Out (1946); The Fallen Idol (1947); The Third Man (1948); An Outcast Of The Islands (1952); The Man Between (1953); A Kid For Two Farthings (1955); Trapeze (1956); The Key (1958); Our Man In Havana (1959); Mutiny On The Bounty (replaced by Lewis Milestone in mid-production).

We call to your attention the first of the seven Josef von Sternberg programs offered by the Dartmouth Film Society on Monday evening, The Last Command. This remarkable silent film featuring the great actor Emil Jannings will be projected at 8:30 p.m. in Spaulding Auditorium, which is air conditioned. Booklets with full information on the series are available at the Hopkins Center box office. Student memberships are available at a reduced rate of only two dollars for the entire series.