

UK FILM & TELEVISION PRODUCTION COMPANY PLC

SECRET SHARER SP Z.O.O.

POLISH FILM INSTITUTE

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

DE WARRENNE PICTURES & PREMIERE PRODUCTIONS

PRESENT

SECRET SHARER

A FILM BY PETER FUDAKOWSKI

INSPIRED BY JOSEPH CONRAD'S
"THE SECRET SHARER"

STARRING

JACK LASKEY

ZHU ZHU

LEON DAI

HSIA CHING-TING

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY **PETER FUDAKOWSKI**
PRODUCED BY **PETER FUDAKOWSKI, TOM WALLER**
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **MICHAL TYWONIUK**
EDITED BY **JAROSLAW BARZAN**
MUSIC BY **GUY FARLEY**
CASTING BY **CELESTIA FOX, PETER MOSSMAN**
PRODUCTION DESIGNER **PONGNARIN JONGHAWKLANG**
COSTUME DESIGNER **PREEYANAN SUWANNATHADA**
ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS **HENRIETTA FUDAKOWSKI,
NOAH WEINZWEIG**
CO-PRODUCER **MICHAEL KWIECINSKI**
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS **JOSEPH D'MORAIS, HAKAN KOUSETTA,
JULIA PALAU, RUPERT LYWOOD,
ALAN HOWDEN**

SECRET SHARER

Production Information

Synopsis

Konrad (Jack Laskey), who left Europe ten years earlier in search of fortune and adventure in Asia, has finally achieved his ambition of becoming a captain of a cargo ship. His first command is to sail an aging freighter to Wenzhou, where it will be scrapped.

New to both his ship and his crew, the young captain tries to cover up his own doubts about his capacity to fulfil his assigned duties with an authoritarian front that only alienates the weathered Chinese crew, who stand to lose their jobs if the ship is taken out of commission.

Suspecting that Konrad and the ship's wealthy, unscrupulous owner plan to scuttle the vessel in an insurance scam, one night after the vessel anchors in Chinese waters, the crew abandons ship, leaving the captain on board alone.

That night while waiting anxiously on deck, Konrad spots a naked woman in the sea below, clinging to the ship's rope ladder. Allowing her to climb aboard, Konrad is confronted by a young Chinese woman called Li (Zhu Zhu). "Hide me", she implores, in obvious distress.

Against his better judgement, the young captain allows Li to take shelter in his cabin. Dawn comes a few hours later and so does a search party, looking for a woman they claim is a murderer. The search party is led by Captain Wang (Leon Dai), whose ship is also anchored in the bay.

Li is revealed to be the wife of Wang, who accused her of murdering one of his crew, the son of a government official, during a storm at sea. To save his career, the Chinese captain plans to turn Li over to the Chinese authorities. However, Li had escaped her husband's imprisonment and, leaving literally everything of her old life behind, she swam naked across the bay to Konrad's ship.

Should Konrad continue to hide the alleged murderer, or give her up to be judged and executed by the Chinese authorities? When his crew finally return with food and supplies, they become even more suspicious and mutinous. Konrad has his career to consider, as well as a duty to his boss who will pay him well for sinking the ship and claiming insurance.

Konrad decides to take a risk, and on the voyage up the coast of China, he shares his clothes, food and bed with Li, whispering intimacies with his secret sharer, playing Polish songs for her on his accordion and sharing his love for Cuban music to lift her spirits. In return, she instructs the young captain on how to win the respect and confidence of his crew and, thanks to her guidance, Konrad eventually manages to befriend them. In the tight and

steamy atmosphere of the captain's cabin, a passionate relationship develops between the captain and his stowaway.

Their discovery by the crew would be fatal for both Konrad and Li, and she has to be hidden at all costs from the crew. As Captain Wang had warned him earlier, "You know what we Chinese say about women on board ships? They bring great misfortune."

In the meantime, Konrad comes to realise that the decrepit old ship is his crew's only home. Can he bring himself to betray his fellow sailors for the large bonus the ship's owner has promised him?

As passion and romance take their course in the captain's cabin, a daring night-time passage through a perilous rocky strait turns this great dilemma into a supreme one – risking freedom, love and life itself.

About the Production

About the film

Laced with suspense and eroticism, *Secret Sharer* is a contemporary fable about human relationships at sea, inspired both by Joseph Conrad's early 20th century novella of the same name, and by the legendary Polish author's adventurous globe-trotting life.

Fudakowski spent six years creating *Secret Sharer*. Taking inspiration from Joseph Conrad's early 20th-century novella of the same name, he developed an original story set in contemporary times. By adding modern twists, Fudakowski has created an absorbing feature film that preserves the spirit of Conrad's work while appealing to cinemagoers today.

"I've always been attracted to stories where characters are struggling to function outside of their home culture", says the film's screenwriter and director, Peter Fudakowski.

"The ship's crew members in *Secret Sharer* are stereotypically inscrutable, cold and hostile when our hero first comes on board. So although Konrad speaks Chinese and is able to converse with his crew, he doesn't really understand them."

Winner of the 2006 Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film for [Tsotsi](#), which was developed and produced by Fudakowski and his wife Henrietta, the director penned dialogue for *Secret Sharer* in Mandarin, as well as Polish and English.

"I could have used English-speaking actors, but as the crew is Chinese, we leant towards authenticity and had them speak Mandarin", says Fudakowski, who also made abundant use of South African slang in [Tsotsi](#).

“That also helped with the emotional side of performances for those actors who were Chinese.”

Most of the film was shot in the Gulf of Thailand aboard a working cargo ship which was itself destined to be sent to a scrapyard in Bangladesh at the end of the production.

Using a cast comprised of Thai, Chinese, Mongolian and English actors, bolstered by both British and Polish sources, the international production paralleled the intriguing cross-cultural interzone found in Fudakowski’s script.

From Script to Ship

Once the script was complete and the cast and crew selected, the search began for an authentic cargo vessel on which to shoot. Luckily, producers found the CTS Pacific, an aging cargo vessel moored in the Gulf of Thailand. Built in 1973 and arriving at the end of its long career, the 110-metre, 4,600-tonne freighter was a veteran of many seas. Not unlike its film counterpart, the ship was scheduled to sail to a scrapyard for demolition.

Temporarily rescued for the purpose of filming, the old ship was perfect for *Secret Sharer* in every way, bringing a strong sense of authenticity to the staging. When the filming reached an end, the CTS Pacific continued its journey and was dismantled in Bangladesh in April 2012.

Censorship Issues in China

Although filming was originally scheduled to take place in China, a combination of factors meant that the film’s production had to be moved to Thailand. As Fudakowski explains: “It’s a long and amusing story if it weren’t also a sad reflection on Chinese censorship.”

“It’s difficult to imagine that a Conradian story could have anything that might offend Chinese censors. But every film, Chinese or foreign, has to go through the censorship wringer if it is to get distributed in China.

“After three years of working with the censors in Beijing, and believing that our screenplay was making progress up the chain of command at the Ministry of Film, we received formal notification that our project could start filming – so long as we used the Ministry’s version of the screenplay.”

Unfortunately for *Secret Sharer*’s production team, the Ministry of Film had extensively altered and re-worded the original script – so extensively, in fact, that it now differed significantly from Fudakowski’s initial script. He was now faced with a dilemma. One option was to betray his original vision, in return for a substantial state-provided grant and permission to film on Chinese territory. The only apparent alternative was to terminate the project.

“You can imagine my surprise and then feelings of total disbelief when I finally read the screenplay translated into English from its approved Mandarin version. It was one of the hardest decisions of my life to decline the Ministry’s offer of a sizeable grant for making the film in China. The project on which we had been working on for so many years lay in ruins.”

After months of despair, another possible course of action materialised, as Fudakowski recalls: “My wife Henrietta suggested that I go to Thailand, where an old acquaintance in the film business, Tom Waller, was working as a producer. He turned out to be the man of the moment. Tom threw his support behind *Secret Sharer* and facilitated its filming in Thailand. He came on board as the co-producer of the film and gave the project a new lease of life!”

Filming in the Gulf of Thailand also proved to be a subtle and relevant nod to Joseph Conrad’s original novella, which was set entirely in the Gulf of Thailand.

Secret Sharer’s Soundtrack

Fudakowski collaborated with world-renowned British film score composer and musician Guy Farley on the production of *Secret Sharer’s* original soundtrack.

“I cannot imagine making a film which does not have a strong musical theme and score. As with [Tsotsi](#), the musical score is a character, a major part of the movie for me”, the director reflected.

“*Secret Sharer’s* setting posed a challenge because it’s difficult to find or compose Chinese music that suits the dynamics of film. So I had to invent a credible reason to have western songs and score in my film.”

The protagonist’s Polish roots provided the filmmakers with the ideal opportunity to integrate a western-influenced soundtrack into a film set in the Far East.

“I had always adored the melody of the theme song which I decided to use in *Secret Sharer*. It’s a romantic, patriotic Polish song; the sort of song I imagined could have been played to our hero captain as a child by his patriotic and principled father. That song is part of our hero’s psychological baggage, as it turns out in the film. So it’s a deliberate homage to the film’s hero’s father, rather than homage to my ancestors.”

About the Cast

Jack Laskey - Konrad

Jack Laskey, a British actor trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA), has appeared in many stage and screen productions and is fast emerging as one of the most promising young actors of today.

Most famously to date, Laskey played the role of Carruthers in *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011), directed by Guy Ritchie and starring Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law.

He made his Royal Shakespeare Company debut in 2008, playing Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*, Biondello in *The Taming of the Shrew* and Robert Hooke in *The Tragedy of Thomas Hobbes*. He is also a founding member of The Factory Theatre Company.

In 2007 Laskey worked with Punchdrunk Theatre Company, creating the role of Roderick Usher in *The Masque of the Red Death*, an Edgar Allan Poe adaptation that appeared at London's Battersea Arts Centre.

At Shakespeare's Globe Laskey strolled the boards as Bernard of Clairvaux in Howard Brenton's critically acclaimed *In Extremis* and portrayed Octavius Caesar in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Zhu Zhu - Li

Zhu Zhu is a multi-talented actress and musician who made her big-screen debut in the Chinese remake of *What Women Want* (2011), playing the secretary of Andy Lau's character. A rising star in China, she has also had roles in a number of other films, including *The Man With The Iron Fists* (2012), directed by RZA, *Shanghai Calling* (2012), directed by Daniel Hsia, and *Cloud Atlas* (2012), directed by The Wachowskis and starring Tom Hanks, Halle Berry and Hugh Grant.

Zhu Zhu became renowned as a host for MTV China and edits a number of fashion magazines. She has also recently featured in TC Candler magazine's Annual Independent Critics List of the 100 Most Beautiful Faces 2012, ranking higher than all the other Chinese entrants and winning 22nd place overall.

Leon Dai - Captain Wang

Leon Dai is a prominent Taiwanese actor, director and screenwriter. His film *Cannot Live Without You* (2009) won Best Director, Best Film, Best Original Screenplay and Outstanding Taiwanese Film of the Year in the 2009 Golden Horse Awards in Taipei. He won another Golden Horse Award for Best

Supporting Actor in 1999 for his role in *A Chance To Die* (2000). Leon Dai also has an illustrious television career for which he has earned two Golden Bell Awards for Best Leading Actor in 2002 and 2000.

Hsia Ching-Ting – Mong Lin

Having starred in a number of popular cinema and TV productions to date, Hsia Ching-Ting is one of Taiwan's most pre-eminent actors. His career in acting spans more than three decades and he most recently featured in *KO One Re-act* (2013), *KO One Returns* (2012) and *Jump Ashin!* (2011). He was nominated for Best Supporting Actor in the Golden Horse awards for his role in *Hidden Whisperer* (2011).

About the Filmmakers

Peter Fudakowski – Producer / Director / Writer

Peter Fudakowski graduated with a Master's degree in Economics from Cambridge University and an MBA from The European Institute for Business Administration (INSEAD) Fontainebleau.

Peter was the sole producer of *Tsotsi* (2006), which was adapted from the novel by Athol Fugard and directed by Gavin Hood. The film won the Academy Award® for Best Foreign Film in 2006 and Peter was nominated for the Carl Foreman Award for Most Promising Newcomer (Producer) at the 2006 BAFTA Awards.

Secret Sharer, inspired by the life and literary genius of Joseph Conrad, is Peter's first feature film as director.

Peter's first love has always been feature films, so in 1979 he joined the First National Bank of Chicago with the thought that financing features films would be a good place to start his career as a producer. Working in the film financing department, Peter helped fund many independent American movies over his three years with the bank.

Disillusioned with the quality of the projects the bank was being asked to fund, Peter left to set up his own production company with his wife Henrietta as script editor and head of development. Their company, Premiere Productions Ltd, celebrated its 20th year in the film business with the Academy Award® winning film *Tsotsi*.

Peter acted as Executive Producer on *The Last September* (1999), starring Maggie Smith, Fiona Shaw and Michael Gambon; TV movie *Trial By Fire* (1999); and three episodes of *Helen West*, an ITV crime series starring Juliet Stevenson and Amanda Burton.

As executive producer for Premiere Productions, Peter played a crucial role in the creation of such features as: *Keeping Mum* (2005), starring Rowan Atkinson, Kristin Scott Thomas and Maggie Smith, and *Picadilly Jim* (2005), starring Brenda Blethyn, Tom Wilkinson and Sam Rockwell.

As CEO of The UK Film & TV Production Company PLC (UKFTV), Peter was instrumental in the making of *Bugs! In 3D*, a hugely popular IMAX film about the microcosmic life of insects that is projected to continue screening around the world for years to come.

Peter has been the creative mind behind projects working with talent such as Jonathan Pryce, Miranda Richardson, Lindsay Duncan, Bill Paterson and clients including Pricewaterhouse Coopers, the Bank of England, Ford, The European Investment Bank, Lloyds and TSB, yielding award-winning results.

Tom Waller - Producer

Tom Waller graduated from the Northern Film School in England with a PGDip in Film Production. In 1996 he launched De Warrenne Pictures with the aim of developing high-quality feature films. His feature film debut, *Monk Dawson* (1997), based on an award-winning novel by Piers Paul Read, received much critical acclaim and was distributed on television worldwide.

After completing the MEDIA Programme's EAVE Audio-Visual Production and Co-Production scheme in 2000, Tom eventually moved back to Thailand where he was born. He has been working as a feature film producer there now for almost 10 years, associated with acclaimed titles that include *Butterfly Man* (2002), *The Elephant King* (2006) and Thomas Clay's *Soi Cowboy* (2008) which was selected for the Cannes Film Festival in Un Certain Regard.

Tom still administers and manages De Warrenne Pictures, which provides production services in Thailand on international films, as well as playing a pivotal role in managing production and location shooting, such as on Jon Amiel's *Creation* (2009), for which he served as a line producer, and *Elephant White* (2011) for Avi Lerner's Millennium Films. He also returned to his passion for directing recently with the award-winning *Mindfulness And Murder* (2010), his Thai-language cinematic debut.

Michal Kwiecinski - Co-Producer

Michal Kwiecinski was born in 1951 in Warsaw, Poland. He received his PhD in organic chemistry in 1981, before graduating from the National Drama School in Warsaw, where he majored in directing. He has directed several plays for TV and theatre as well as three operas for the Warsaw Chamber Opera. He is founder of Akson Studio, Tilsa and Arka Film companies, specializing in producing plays for TV and theatre, as well as documentaries, feature films

and TV series. His companies have been involved with more than 150 titles such as drama, adaptations, outdoor and studio projects. He has worked with such luminaries as Andrzej Wajda, Barbara Sass, Leszek Wosiewicz, Filip Zylber, Teresa Kotlarczyk and Izabella Cywinska.

In 1998 he was awarded the Minister of Culture and Art Award for directing the play *Tailor* by Slawomir Mrozek. Since 2005, he has been Vice-Chairman of the Polish Film Institute Council.

Michal Tywoniuk – Director of Photography

Michal Tywoniuk studied at the Leon Schiller National Higher School of Film, Television and Theatre in Lodz, Poland. His first two feature films as Cinematographer were *UFO In Her Eyes* (2011), directed by Xiaolu Guo, and *The Butcher, The Chef And The Swordsman* (2010), directed by Wuershan, both filmed in China, before working on *Secret Sharer*.

Jaroslaw Barzan – Editor

Jaroslaw Barzan was born in Skierniewice, Poland in 1969. He has edited more than 30 titles including TV series *Pitbull*, for which he was nominated for a Polish Academy Award for Best Editing in 2006, and *Lejdis* in 2009. He also edited the box office hit *Letters To Santa* (2011) and *The Winner* (2011).

Guy Farley – Composer

Guy Farley, born in 1963 in Haslemere, England, is one of Europe's most prominent film score composers and musicians. To date he has scored many productions including *Tula: The Revolt* (2013), *Cashback* (2006) and *L'uomo che sognava con le aquile* (2006).

Farley is a musically versatile composer and performer, and his soundtracks have included compositions of orchestral, world music, contemporary and pop genres.

As well as being an internationally recognised and much-respected composer in the film industry, Farley has also enjoyed a long career in the music industry and is famous for collaborations with acts such as Duran Duran, Amy Winehouse and Charlotte Church.

Badi Badi – Postproduction Animation

Badi Badi is an animation studio based in Warsaw, Poland, that rose to prominence through its highly successful work in advertising, short films and music videos.

The studio came to Peter Fudakowski's attention by showcasing their talent in high-profile advertising campaigns for clients including HBO, Ferrero and T-Mobile. Although *Secret Sharer* is the studio's feature film debut, they rose to Fudakowski's challenge of producing CGI special effects of aquatic phenomena in one of the film's climactic scenes.

Despite their relative inexperience in the field of feature films, the animators coped admirably with simulating these effects, impossible to film using live action techniques. In a stroke of good fortune, the software used to simulate similar effects in *Titanic* (1997) had recently become publically available, and Badi Badi was able to put these newly available tools to full use, convincingly animating the dramatic storm and water effects.

Pongnarin Jonghawklang – Production Designer

Pongnarin Jonghawklang was born in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand in 1973. He studied at Rangsit University in the Faculty of Fine Arts, majoring in Product Design. He worked as a freelance Interior Designer before turning to work on films such as *Tom Yum Goong* (2004) and music videos like Tata Young's celebrated "El Nin-Yo!" in 2006 for Sony BMG Music Entertainment. He followed this with assignments collaborating with producer Tom Waller on *Soi Cowboy* (2008), *Creation* (2009) and *Bitter/Sweet* (2009) as Art Director, as well as both *The Prince And Me: The Elephant Adventure* (2010) and *Mindfulness And Murder* (2010) as Production Designer. In 2011 he worked as a local Art Director on *The Hangover 2* for Warner Bros.

For the Conradians

“I’ve been fascinated by Conrad’s life and stories since the early ‘90s”, Fudakowski recalls.

“I came across his short story ‘[The Secret Sharer](#)’ early on in my readings and was fascinated by its autobiographical nature. It’s a tale from Conrad’s youth, a story of a young man’s personal growth into a leader of men, a true captain. It’s a moral struggle with the matter of life and death of another human being, a romantic tale of adventure in the days of sail on Oriental high seas.”

Secret Sharer is, of course, not the first cinematic production based on Joseph Conrad’s works. In fact, even ‘The Secret Sharer’ specifically had already been adapted multiple times before production of *Secret Sharer* even began.

However, Fudakowski’s screenplay included a number of unique plot elements that no other adaptation so far had featured.

“The secret sharer in Conrad’s story is a naked man who comes on board with a secret he needs to share with the young captain. The young captain hides the man in his cabin from a mutinous old crew on a difficult voyage, and has to share everything with him, starting with his clothes, food, then his bed and finally his personal insecurities, loneliness and a need for a friendship.

“I was drawn to this story by its climate of mystery and adventure, but my script editor wife insisted that if I wanted to adapt it to film, we should make it into a contemporary story. I agreed, on condition that she allows me to change the captain’s secret sharer into a beautiful woman!”

Although the plot of *Secret Sharer* does stray from that of the original novella, renowned Conradian academic and editor of ‘Conrad on Film’ Gene Moore does not necessarily see this as an issue, as the key themes and morals of both ‘The Secret Sharer’ and *Secret Sharer* largely overlap.

Reproduced below is Moore’s academic review of *Secret Sharer*, written from the perspective of a Conradian scholar.

Peter Fudakowski’s most recent film, *Secret Sharer*, takes many liberties with the letter of Joseph Conrad’s story but remains remarkably faithful to its spirit. Like the tale that inspired it, *Secret Sharer* is the story of a young sea captain in an alien environment who is uncertain of his ability but learns to develop a sense of confidence and solidarity thanks to a fugitive passenger whom he must keep hidden from the rest of the crew. Perhaps the greatest merit of the film is that it elaborates and updates Conrad’s story, relocating it in today’s world of commerce and corruption, and highlights the efforts of common sailors to preserve a sense of human community in a world governed by impersonal forces.

Both Conrad’s story and the film open with a panoramic view of empty sea and sky; but in the film this peaceful prospect is immediately interrupted by the looming shape of a massive container ship piled improbably high with identical

metal boxes all labeled "MAERSK." What initially seemed a pacific and timeless sea is revealed as a commercial seaway teeming with busy freighters. The film ends with a corresponding image of workers in a vast Chinese factory whose assembly lines stretch away as far as the eye can see. In such anonymous and mechanized settings, the intimacy of human contact becomes a precious commodity.

Like Conrad's narrator, the protagonist of the film is a novice sea captain who has yet to prove himself; but in the film he is Captain Konrad, not an Englishman with a British crew, but a young Pole who suddenly finds himself in charge of a gang of unruly and resentful Chinese sailors. His oddly shaped luggage is eventually shown to be an accordion that he carries about with him, although he no longer plays it.

The most striking difference between story and the film is that in the film the secret sharer represents not Self but Other, not a fellow Englishman and *Conway* boy but a beautiful Chinese girl. Instead of a story dealing with narcissism or homosocial bonding, the film confronts Captain Konrad with Otherness in terms of race, gender, and culture.

Secret Sharer was filmed on location in the Gulf of Thailand, the exact setting of Conrad's story, and geography plays a crucial role in the elaboration of Conrad's tale into a feature-length film. The ship in *Secret Sharer* is not a small sailing vessel but a gigantic Chinese-registered freighter that has no cargo at all and is on her final voyage to a scrapping yard in Shanghai. This vast, floating, empty warehouse, with its rusted metal and echoing chambers, diminishes the human actors and makes the preservation of a sense of community all the more difficult.

The officers in Conrad's story are presented by the narrator as wary and suspicious, but the Chinese crew of the freighter (only six or seven men for such an immense ship) are aggressively disrespectful to their new captain: the first mate ignores his questions and orders; the surly second mate keeps a girlfriend on board; the engineer even spits on his white jacket as if accidentally and appears to menace him with a large wrench. Physically slight, the captain finds himself outnumbered by brutish and violent types, so that his very life depends on his ability to establish his authority among men of an alien race and culture. Fortunately Captain Konrad speaks Mandarin Chinese well enough to hold his own in argument and to understand what is being said by the crew. The film is essentially bilingual, alternating Mandarin with English in a natural manner that relieves English viewers of half the distraction of subtitles. The fact that the characters are speaking a language not their own also means that they say no more than necessary. They speak with a laconic power reminiscent of Hemingway, where simple statements can convey a maximum of meaning.

As soon as they reach Chinese territorial waters, the mutinous crew defies the captain's orders and cheerfully abandons the ship in its only rowboat while the captain lies sleeping, leaving him alone and adrift. That night, while he is alone on deck, the girl arrives. Her first words when she comes aboard are "Hide me!" (the first of her many statements in the imperative mode); but the story of what she has done is withheld far longer than in Conrad's tale. Her wariness and reticence contrast sharply with Leggatt's eagerness to justify himself. The first version of what she has done is provided not by the girl herself but by Captain Wang, the Chinese equivalent of Captain Archbold, who arrives the next morning with his own tough-looking crew to search the ship. Captain Wang explains that the girl has murdered his first mate (the son of a high government official) by pushing him overboard during a storm. Readers may remember that Captain Archbold's wife is also on board the *Sephora*; but here the girl is herself revealed to be Captain

Wang's wife. As the visitors depart, their boat crosses the returning boat with Konrad's crew, who turn out only to have been shopping on the mainland to replenish the ship's supplies, including a profusion of green plants for the garden they maintain on the deck by the galley.

The happy return of the crew and the existence of the garden are among the first markers that these rough fellows are not as tough and murderous as they first seemed. The ship is their only home, and their resentment of the new captain is motivated by their regret that she is being sent to the wrecking yard, or worse yet, that the Boss has paid the new captain to sink the ship secretly for an insurance claim. From this point onwards, the flat characters of stereotypical Chinese villains are rounded into men with feelings and personalities: the gay cook and his assistant are delighted that the captain likes their food well enough to eat for two; a drunken crewman who seems to have no function at all turns out to be the ship's former master, whose alcoholism is justified and eventually cured; the portly, mute steward is revealed as a master of comic pantomime.

To protect the girl, Captain Konrad sets a wider course for Shanghai, one that keeps the ship outside Chinese territorial waters. As the captain and his secret sharer grow closer together, she instructs him in how to win the respect and confidence of the crew. "Spend time with them," she tells him, and suggests that he put aside his immaculate white uniform: "The crew knows who you are." Thanks to her coaching, the captain loosens up, jogging and dancing on deck to the sound of Cuban music. At her suggestion he also celebrates the Moon Festival with the crew, where he engages in a drinking contest with the second mate. Just when the entire crew is thoroughly drunk, they are visited by a Chinese patrol boat with new instructions from the Boss. The captain of the patrol boat reminds them that being outside territorial waters does not make them immune to Chinese control: "This is Chinese vessel, Chinese crew, Chinese law in force."

This period marks the captain's initiation into what it means to be Chinese. When he tries to reproach the girl with her marriage to Captain Wang, she replies, "You obviously don't understand family ties." When he asks her what she wants, she replies, "All I want is that you understand me." The second mate, who is losing his influence over the crew and suspects that the captain is planning to scuttle the ship, ultimately provokes a fight and attacks him with a knife. The rest of the crew help to rescue the captain, and as the engineer bandages his wound he explains that it is now the captain's duty to apologize to the mate who has lost face, "For harmony. This is Chinese way." But the captain does not apologize, and the crew then helps the mate to escape by jumping overboard and swimming to safety: "Better for him. Better for us." In effect, thanks to the girl's insight and advice, the captain wins the respect and devotion of the remaining crewmen, marked by the moment when the former captain proposes a toast in English to "Our ship. Our home." The deepening love between the captain and the girl culminates in a scene where he plays a Polish song on his accordion while she dances an Oriental dance around him, twirling her fingers like butterflies. "I loved to dance before I married Wang," she tells him, and he replies, "I haven't sung that since I left Poland." Instead of the "damned tricks with girls" that Conrad deplored, the film depicts a mature love affair that takes its time and reveals itself indirectly through images and dialogue. At first the captain and the girl sleep head to toe, and only later are they shown sleeping in parallel. Smooth cutting, superb cinematography, and subtle and varied music all contribute seamlessly to the development of the story.

In this sense, *Secret Sharer* elaborates the closeted claustrophobia of Conrad's English tale into a contemporary story of rapprochement and growing respect in

which the barriers and prejudices constituted by differences of race, culture, gender, and language are gradually understood and overcome. This mutual recognition ultimately makes possible a kind of happy ending for the ship's family by laying bare the human qualities that are secretly shared by all the characters regardless of their race or background.

In this film version of Conrad's tale 'The Secret Sharer' is not the Self but the diametrically Other. Through its bilingual dialogue and biracial cast, the film makes a powerful argument for the need to understand and overcome cultural prejudice. As the girl makes the captain see and appreciate his crew, so the film as a whole makes us see and admire the capacity for solidarity of men working under adverse conditions toward a common cause. However unfaithful the film may be to the letter of Conrad's text, it realizes in large measure the aspiration voiced in his famous Preface to 'The Children of the Sea: A Tale of the Forecastle' by showing "the stress and passion within the core of each convincing moment. In a single-minded attempt of that kind, if one be deserving and fortunate, one may perchance attain to such clearness of sincerity that at last the presented vision of regret or pity, of terror or mirth, shall awaken in the hearts of the beholders that feeling of unavoidable solidarity; of the solidarity in mysterious origin, in toil, in joy, in hope, in uncertain fate, which binds men to each other and all mankind to the visible world."

Dr. Gene M. Moore,

Universiteit van Amsterdam

Editor of 'Conrad on Film' (Cambridge University Press, 1997)

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