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“Mixed identity of circumstances”: Bronisław Malinowski in Australia and Melanesia

Abstract: During his stay in Australia and Melanesia from 1914 to 1920, the anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski frequently experienced dichotomous and contradictory attitudes to people, places, and events: the contrast between the ‘civilized’ Australia and the ‘savage’ Melanesia; the background of the Austria-ruled Poland in which he grew up and the British-dominated Australia, Austria’s enemy in the First World War; the emotional tension of simultaneous attraction to two women – Nina Stirling of Adelaide and Elsie Rosaline Masson of Melbourne; the dilemma of the ‘heroic’ versus the ‘unheroic’ related to the war. Most of the dualities of Malinowski’s Australian-Melanesian experience, reflected in letters to his mother Józefa Malinowska, Elsie R. Masson, and in *Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (1989), were resolved at the end of the period, which became a turning point in his life.

Keywords: Australia, Bronisław Malinowski, civilization, First World War, German culture, Melanesia, ‘savages’

1. Introduction

The anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski (1884–1942) arrived in Australia in July 1914 to participate in the long meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science/BAAS and to begin his fieldwork in Melanesia. Though a grown-up man aged 30, Malinowski was still to experience conflicts and tensions that exerted a strong formative influence on him. The dramatic contrast of the ‘civilized’ and the ‘savage,’ which he first experienced studying the natives of Melanesia, later shaped some of his social and political views. The First World War put him in a difficult position between the cultural background of Austria-ruled Poland in which he had been raised and the British-Australian culture in which he had to

function. It also caused a conflict of moral integrity related to the fighting and his unheroic inability to participate in it. Finally, involved in two love relationships, Malinowski was to go a long way towards stability in his relations with women.

2. Between the ‘Civilized’ and the ‘Savage’

Though the rich programme of events accompanying the BAAS meeting gave him only a superficial experience of the country, Malinowski found Australia a place with “completely fresh, new views, not comprehended either in actual fact or in any artistic imagination” (Young 290). The continent was “unspoiled by cultural appropriations of earlier generations” (Young 290). The presence of the ‘savage’ Aborigines was a major element of his experience of the novelty of Australia (2002, 352, 354). He first encountered them on 22 July 1914 on the outskirts of Perth and described the event in a letter of 27 July 1914 to his mother Józefa Malinowska (1848–1918): “I saw a black man from the tribe called [...] Lurija that inhabits the area next to Arunta. The conversation was very difficult because we could hardly understand each other” (1914a; qtd. in Young 291). On 26 July 1914 he visited an Aborigine camp for a demonstration of boomerang-throwing and a viewing of a *woomera* (spearthrower) and a *churinga* (engraved sacred object); he was, however, still unable to gather “any definite information” (Young 291). A day later he discussed boomerangs and initiation ceremonies with the Protector of Aborigines and was also shown “an interesting penis of wood and stone, which they show to boys during initiation” (Young 292). In a letter to his mother, he continued: “I’ve already seen a few Aborigines, dressed in the European way, of course, and quite civilized – but I think I could get a lot of information out of them, after long research” (1914a; qtd. in Young 291). At the early stage of his research enterprise, Malinowski showed the passionate attitude of a young field researcher intent on getting a first-hand understanding of the new people and cultures that he was to study for the next six years.

Those hopeful expectations changed when the fieldwork in Melanesia got under way. Upon leaving Brisbane for the expedition to Mailu in September 1914, Malinowski wrote: “I boarded the ship. Several persons came to see me off. [...] I felt I was taking leave of civilization” (1989, 4–5). Between June 1915 and March 1916 he completed the first period of fieldwork in the Trobriands, but kept no diary then. On leaving Sydney in October 1917 for the second expedition to the Trobriands, Malinowski again experienced the feeling that accompanied him on the journey to Mailu in 1914: “Departure: backs of the business houses – last glimpse of civilization” (1989, 107). In a letter of 24 October 1917 to Elsie Rosaline Masson (1890–1935), his future wife, he related the experience to her two journeys to northern Australia, which provided the material for the book *The Untamed Territory* (1915): “Going out of Sydney Harbour I thought of you and wondered how

you felt on the two occasions going that way. I thought we would have developed the Conradesque contrast between the ‘last glimpse of civilization’”¹ (Wayne 1995, 30–31).

Malinowski spent most of the time between the two Trobriand expeditions in Adelaide and Melbourne. The latter city was so important for him that the first chart of the diary was titled “Life in Melbourne in Retrospect” (Young 415–416). He spent time in a circle of friends called the Clan, which included Paul and Hede Khuner, Bob Broinowski, Leila Peck and her sisters, Mim H. Weigall of St. Kilda,² and, most importantly, Elsie, an Australian writer and nurse, with whom he fell in love. As the study of Melanesian Aborigines went on, Melbourne and the cultural life there became the lonely anthropologist’s longing “for a remote idealised civilisation” (Forge; qtd. in Firth 1989b, xxvi). The images of the city and his friends kept haunting him in the Trobriands. Thus, on 15 November 1917 in Samarai, Malinowski wrote in the diary: “Dream: [...] I am waiting for tram going to Brighton [a suburb of Melbourne]. I look and listen – is it coming? I catch it at the corner. I am sorry that I am alone and that E.R.M. is not there. I think of the day when I will be back at Melb. and she’ll meet me at the station, and we’ll ride again up front” (1989, 116). A more definite contrast appeared on 12 December 1917: “I often long for culture – Paul and Hedy [Khuner] and their *home* (almost brings tears to my eyes); E.R.M. and M.H.W. and that atmosphere” (Malinowski 1989, 150). On 14 December 1917 he added: “I thought of Paul, and E.R.M. I thought of civilization with a *pang*; I rowed the Yarra as I read the newspapers, details about Melbourne. The house in Malvern seems now like paradise on earth” (1989, 151). On 21 December 1917 he continued: “All that day longing for civilization. I thought about friends in Melbourne. [...] This will be my last ethnological escapade. [...] Strong contrast between my dreams of a civilized life and my life with the savages” (1989, 155, 160–161). On some occasions Malinowski was not sure what he missed most. Thus, on 31 December 1917 he wrote: “Then thought of E.R.M. ‘What is she doing? [...]’ [...] I was feeling very well physically, as though the tropics don’t bother me at all; I long for E.R.M. rather than for civilization” (1989, 170). On 19 January 1918 he confessed: “I sat by the water. At moments almost unbearable longing for E.R.M. – or is it for civilization?” (1989, 190). On some other days, for example on 13 and 16 February 1918, Malinowski was calmer: “The moment I got to work, agitation and *homesickness* vanished. [...] *Homesickness* for civilization doesn’t torment me these days” (1989, 201, 204; original emphasis). However, the longing for his own world soon returned. On 29 March 1918 Malinowski wrote: “At moments I long, even now, for Melbourne, E.R.M., civilization” (1989, 240). On 9 April 1918 he said: “Continual *flashes of Sensucht* [longing] for Melbourne, P. & H., and E.R.M.” (1989, 246; original emphasis). On 25 May 1918 he still noted: “Longing for E.R.M. and Melbourne is still immensely strong. [...] I also recall my little room in Grey St., the Library, etc. I am really attached to her and I love her very much” (1989, 279). Malinowski’s diary thus shows the period of fieldwork

as marked by “the feeling of confinement, the obsessional longing to be back even if for the briefest while in one’s own cultural surroundings” (Firth 1989a, xv). It comprises an image of him “working with enormous industry in one world (New Guinea) while living with intense passion in another (an imagined Australian and European setting)” (Geertz; qtd. in Firth 1989b, xxv).

The contrast between the ‘civilized’ and the ‘savage’ was also shaped by the colonial ideology of the time, and some of Malinowski’s reactions towards the natives seem to reflect it. As early as on 21 January 1915, during the field-work period in Mailu, he said: “On the whole my feelings toward the natives are decidedly tending to ‘*Exterminate the brutes*’”³ (1989, 69; original emphasis). The reactions persisted during his second expedition to the Trobriands. Thus, on 18 December 1917 Malinowski wrote: “I thought about my present attitude toward ethnogr. work and the natives. My dislike of them, my longing for civilization” (1989, 155). On 5 January 1918 he was much more emphatic: “During my walk to the *sopi* I felt the need to run away from the *niggers*,⁴ but I can’t remember what I thought about. In the boat: impressions of Joan Weigall and longing for elegant, well-dressed women” (1989, 175; original emphasis). On some days, however, Malinowski seemed to be satisfied with life among the ‘savages.’ On 24 January 1918 he wrote: “Read beginning of E.R.M.’s diary; it vexed me. Looked with pleasure at the mangroves and the lagoon; I ‘was alone’ and felt no desire to go back. For the last few days, until the *mail* came, *native life and native society* had come to seem almost enough to me” (1989, 195; original emphasis). However, negative moods returned on 21 February 1918: “I was irritated by the *niggers* and homesick” (1989, 208; original emphasis). On 11 May 1918 Malinowski made one of his most spiteful comments on the natives:

On this occasion I made one or two coarse jokes, and one *bloody nigger* made a disapproving remark, whereupon I cursed them and was highly irritated. I managed to control myself *on the spot*, but I was terribly vexed by the fact that this *nigger* had dared to speak to me in such a manner. (1989, 272; original emphasis)

The same mood was still present on 25 May 1918: “The natives still irritate me, particularly Ginger, whom I could willingly beat to death. I understand all the *German and Belgian colonial atrocities*”⁵ (1989, 279; original emphasis). On 31 May 1918 he said: “The *niggers* were getting on my nerves, and I could not concentrate” (1989, 284; original emphasis).

The frequent use of the racist-sounding term “niggers” was largely a result of contacts with white merchants in the Trobriand Islands (Firth 1989b, xxiii–xxiv; Kubica 2012, 9). However, it fits both his awareness of the dominant social and cultural position from which he conducted the fieldwork and the difficult emotional experience of extensive contact with Melanesian Aborigines. When the *Diary* was first published in 1967, the attitude “particularly shocked the readers: far from

impartial and benevolent author of *Argonauts*, the Malinowski of the *Diary* was frequently expressing outbursts against the ‘niggers’” (Nakai 26). These outbursts, however, were largely motivated by irritation with the behaviour of some of his informants rather than by a racial prejudice on his side. On some occasions Malinowski admitted that his reactions were too extreme (1989, 69; qtd. in Nakai 27).

In spite of the colonial position from which he investigated the savages, Malinowski never advocated the destruction of their native cultures. He believed that the cultural diversity of native life should be protected even if getting to know other cultures “is itself motivated by a colonialist desire” (Nakai 27). That is why he postulated the study of native cultures in native languages – otherwise most elements of those cultures remained obscure (Nakai 25). That was also why he considered the quality of his sources of information very important. On 29 October 1917 he wrote in the diary: “Yesterday morning got up fairly late; I had engaged Omega [a Mailu informant and village constable] who waited for me below the veranda. [...] My talk with him was rather unsatisfactory” (1988, 28). By contrast, on 16 December 1917 he noted: “*Village policeman* is very good informant” (1989, 154; original emphasis). On 9 March 1918 he said: “M.[wagwaya] is very good informant. Worked to the point of exhaustion” (1989, 219). Another form of Malinowski’s concern for the culture of the natives was his critical attitude to the white Europeans present in Melanesia. It is especially evident in his numerous comments on British Christian missionaries in the region. He admitted that their work had some positive effects, but thought that the impact of religion on native life was wholly negative. As early as on 16 October 1914 in Mailu, Malinowski wrote: “In the afternoon I went to the village and to the gardens with a policeman; I attended evening service and despite the comical effect of the Psalms being roared out in a savage language, I managed to feel well disposed to the farcical humbug of it all” (1989, 25). On 21 October 1914 he expressed a poignant comment on a missionary in Mailu: “This man disgusts me with his [white] ‘superiority,’ etc.” (1989, 16). On 29 November 1914 he made his standpoint fully clear:

Saville’s underhand dealings with Armit annoy me, as well as the persecution of people unfriendly to the mission. Mentally I collect arguments against missions and ponder a really effective anti-mission campaign. The arguments: these people destroy the natives’ joy in life; they destroy their psychological *raison d’être*. And what they give in return is completely beyond the savages. They struggle consistently and ruthlessly against everything old and create new needs, both material and moral. No question but that they do harm. – I want to discuss this matter with Armit and Murray. If possible also with the Royal Commission.⁶ (1989: 41; original emphasis)

Almost four years later, on 31 May 1918, the same attitude was still present: “On my way back: the strongly unpleasant impression made on me by missionaries: artificiality, cult of superficiality and mediocrity” (1989, 284–285). As Gellner

writes, Malinowski “was no doubt much concerned with the culture and well-being of the natives, but in a patronising manner that did not really challenge the basic assumptions of the colonial system” (1987, 557). The ‘civilized’ and the ‘savage’ were to be kept separate, and tolerance towards the colonized world was necessary. Such an attitude was at least partly shaped by Malinowski’s experience of the Habsburg Empire, in which he grew up – it ruled the member nations but at the same time protected their cultural diversity (Hann).

The opposition of the ‘civilized’ and the ‘savage’ did not disappear with the end of Malinowski’s fieldwork in Melanesia. Commenting on the rise of Nazism in Europe in the 1930s, Malinowski – like Frazer (55–56; qtd. in Stone 204–205) – agreed that the difference between ‘the savage’ and “civilised minds” was a matter of degree and that some aspects of the savage had not entirely disappeared from the modern civilized world: the political propaganda of the 1930s was similar to crude magic; racial persecutions in central Europe were modern versions of witch-hunting (Malinowski 1937, vii; qtd. in Stone 203). The fundamental anthropological duality, for the first time fully experienced in Australia and Melanesia, thus turned out to be a legacy of the fieldwork that also shaped some of Malinowski’s social and political views.

3. Between German and British Cultures

Malinowski was born in Cracow, a major city of the province of Galicia in Austria-ruled Poland. Extensive education, much travelling in Europe and Africa, as well as mastery of several languages, contributed to his broad experience of cultures other than Polish. The Austrian-German culture of Galicia exerted a strong influence on him. The Habsburg Empire prevented its constituent nations from fighting one another and at the same time protected their national cultures, thus giving meaning to the richness of life. That is why Malinowski had an undisguised admiration and affection for it (Gellner 1987, 578). In “Preface” to *The Cassubian Civilisation* (1935), he wrote:

I should like to put it here on record that no honest and sincere Pole would ever have given anything but praise to the political regime of the old Dual Monarchy. Pre-war Austria in its federal constitution presented, in my opinion, a sound solution to all minority problems. It was a model of a miniature League of Nations. (1935, viii; qtd. in Gellner 1988, 176)

Daughter Helena Wayne says her father regarded himself as “a Western Slav with Teutonic culture,” “a Polish national,” and “an Austrian national” (1988, xiii).⁷ Though on some occasions Malinowski mentioned his Polish patriotism, his political views in the context of the struggle for Polish independence were clearly anti-nationalist. The experience of Austria-Hungary made him only a “cultural nationalist” (Hann).

Having obtained a PhD degree in philosophy at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow in 1908 for a dissertation on the philosophy of the Austrian Ernst Mach (1838–1916) and the German Richard Avenarius (1843–1896), Bronisław – like his father Lucjan Malinowski (1839–1898), a linguist at the university in Cracow – went to study in Leipzig in Imperial Germany under the psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) and the economist Karl Bücher (1847–1930). In an entry in the diary before departure for Australia, where he gives a brief account of his stay in Berlin in April 1914, Malinowski expressed a very positive view of the Germans:

From a general, purely theoretical perspective, I feel clear sympathy for the Germans. Fabulously versatile and flexible, they are the only nation for which culture really opens its full scale of potential. Compared with the English, they impress me with personal, essential *Leistungsfähigkeit* [competence, efficiency] rather than elegance and style. (2001, 310; trans. K.K.)

However stereotypical the view may have been, Malinowski “maintained life-long, frequently amicable, relations” with such German-speaking scholars as Franz Boas (1858–1942), Leo Frobenius (1873–1938), Fritz Gräbner (1877–1934), and Wilhelm Schmidt (1868–1954), as well as writing in German for German journals such as *Die Geisteswissenschaften* [*Humanities*] (Strenski 767). He may even have had a part in the German movement of *Neuromantik* [second romanticism] – Wundt’s *Völkerpsychologie* [the psychology of peoples] and its idea of the *cultural whole* was fertile ground for a synthetic and holistic approach in anthropology as opposed to narrow specialization and fact accumulation typical of positivism.⁸ Only such an approach made empathic understanding of native life and *Weltanschauung* [world view] possible (Strenski 766–767). Wilhelm Dilthey’s (1833–1911) *new Humanism* in anthropology and Malinowski’s *modern Humanism* (Symmons-Symonolewicz 28; qtd. in Strenski 769) both advocated the idea of a “living man” (Malinowski 1989, 255). Last, but not least, Malinowski’s frequent use of German words in his personal writings, for example *Stimmung* [atmosphere], is also indicative of his linguistic attachment to German culture. Thus, in letters to Elsie he wrote about “the general *Stimmung*” (Wayne 1995, 44; original emphasis) of fieldwork in the Trobriands and his concentration on work; “the *Stimmung* of a bad dream” (Wayne 1995, 106; original emphasis) accompanying his waking experience of the period of bad weather and ill health; “a *Stimmung* of an Egyptian temple ruin” (Wayne 1995, 117; original emphasis) that accompanied him when he described a Koyatabu landscape rich in lush plants; “*Stimmung* of a return to a big city” (Wayne 1995, 132; original emphasis) during his lonely walks in Boyowa or Vakuta, when he approached villages full of activity. He sometimes combined this word with other German words, as in the diary entry on 20 December 1917: “I felt again the joy of being with real *Naturmenschen* [lit. “nature people”; trans. K.K.]. Rode in a boat.

Many observations. I learn a great deal. General *Stimmung* [...], style, in which I observe tabu” (Malinowski 1989, 158; original emphasis).

During his stay in Leipzig Malinowski met Annie Brunton, a South-African pianist, who awoke his interest in British culture and “took” him to the English-speaking world (Wayne 2000, 38). A scholarship from the Jagiellonian University made it possible for him to accompany her to England and study at the London School of Economics. In a letter of 5 January 1910 to his doctoral supervisor Rev. Stefan Pawlicki (1839–1916), Malinowski wrote: “I am very keen on going to England for at least a year, for there, it seems to me, culture has reached its highest standard” (1970; qtd. in Kubica 1988, 96). His high esteem for England and its intellectual tradition was thus more than the influence of James G. Fraser’s (1854–1941) *The Golden Bough* (1890), which stimulated much of his interest in anthropology. Malinowski “saw his own work in anthropology as a part of the scholarship and culture of his adopted home” (Paluch 9). Wayne says that at that time her father “for many reasons had an exaggerated respect for England and things English” (2000, 38). Several years later in a letter to Aniela Zagórska (1881–1943), his friend in Zakopane and a relative of Joseph Conrad, Malinowski confessed to “a highly developed Anglomania, an almost mystic cult of British culture and its exponents” (Wayne 2000, 38). He also added: “I have the impression that if I hadn’t met Mrs Brunton I would never have taken up sociology nor would I have become to a certain extent Anglicised” (Wayne 2000, 38).¹⁰

When on 12 August 1914 the British Empire declared war on the Habsburg Empire, Malinowski – a citizen of Austria-Hungary – became an enemy alien in Australia (Young 299). In spite of bureaucratic problems, he decided not to return to Europe. In a letter to his mother of 24 August 1914, he explained that safe journey through Allied territories was impossible; having poor vision, he was also unfit for military service (Malinowski 1914b; qtd. in Young 301). The status of enemy alien inevitably involved Malinowski in the political context of the First World War and Australia’s relation to it. In a reply to his protector Charles G. Seligman (1873–1940), who was worried about the potential consequences of his Austrian citizenship, Malinowski replied: “We had the best treatment in Austria and as a confederation of fairly autonomous peoples, Austria was one of the most passible [*sic*] states. Once A. fights for Germany, A. becomes stupidly and clumsily odious. This is my *confession de foi*” (Firth 1957, 13; original emphasis). The statement thus seemed to deny any pro-German sympathies on his side. In some intelligence materials, Malinowski was even described as an “Australian Pole” (Young 367). Though Attlee Hunt (1864–1935), the head of the Department of Home and Territories, the Stirling family of Adelaide, and the influential anthropologist Walter B. Spencer (1860–1929) helped him, the colonial authorities of Papua New Guinea, especially its Lieutenant-Governor John Hubert Murray (1861–1940), thought he was a spy. In 1915, shortly after the return from Mailu, he was arrested for failing to comply with bureaucratic duties. In a letter of 2 April 1915 to Attlee Hunt,

Malinowski – reflecting on his four-year-long stay in Great Britain – explained that even if he were not always on the side of the Allies as a Pole, he had an enormous debt to British culture and science as a man (Young 366). On 19 May 1915, interviewed by the Sydney newspaper *Daily Telegraph*, Malinowski mentioned the “Polish spirit” on the side of the Allies and “the special link and sympathy” between Poland and Australia: Count Strzelecki, Mount Kosciuszko named by him, and the legions fighting in Europe (Young 377–378). However politically expedient the words may have been – the title of the column was “For Poland. Why Germany Is Hated” – they did not appease Murray’s suspicions (Young 377).¹¹

As the scale of Australian losses increased, social ostracism against enemies alien grew, especially among the upper-class Melburnians, with whom Malinowski associated. He was again suspected of pro-German sympathies (Young 418–419, 437–439). Indeed, some of his letters and passages of the *Diary* clearly show that his pro-British sympathies were not always genuine. In a letter of 21 October 1917 from Sydney, he wrote to Elsie: “Of course 50% of my love for Australia and of my pro-Allied feelings is due to you – not only to you as my personal friend, but (and this dates from a much earlier time, when I admired you from a far distance) to the vision which I got of certain British qualities in you and in the type you represent” (Wayne 1995, 26–27). In a letter of 15–16 January 1918, Malinowski even said: “I am Australianised enough to find that the *Bulletin* is really good in parts and to enjoy it through and through. [...] I feel sometimes that I have developed a very strong and definite Australian and even British patriotism, through my relation to you [...] I almost feel that with us two, it will be a mutual adoption of our countries, the exchange of patriotisms” (Wayne 1995, 104).¹² His British-Australian patriotism was thus largely motivated by the relationship with Elsie. In the meantime, he had to deal with serious accusations. In the diary entry of 3 January 1918, he said: “Wrote to E.R.M. – At 6 took out the *dinghy*. Undressed down to my truss; fragment of associations: thought of marriage to E.R.M. B. Sp. is also cool toward her – will he break with her? Lady Sp. – what attitude will she take? I thought with indignation of her anti-Austrian-Polish attitude – I made up a long speech pointing out the ignominy of such an attitude. *I screw myself up to a pitch of indignation*. Then I remind myself that all she really cares about is *public opinion*. ‘*Wahn, alles Wahn*’ [all is delusion]” (1989, 172–173; original emphasis). Elsie’s letter to him of 14–16 April 1918 also reflected the uncomfortable situation: “He [Baldwin Spencer] even spoke of your anti-British remarks which were enough to intern you. I said of course that was rubbish, you were as much pro-Ally as he or I, and we had openly declared we were fighting for your country” (Wayne 1995, 141–143).

Malinowski’s attitudes, however, were far from settled. On 15 February 1918 came the strangest manifestation of his pro-German sympathies when he described his dream: “[...] I am in Germany, 2 crippled cavalry officers; met them in some hotel. Walking with them in some German city. Fraternizing with them. I express my sympathy for Germany and German culture, and tell them I was a

Kriegsgefangener [prisoner of war] in England” (1989, 203; original emphasis). Nakai argues that the dream represents his confinement to the England-ruled part of the world and that it reveals “his hidden hostility towards the British, whom he betrays by addressing the Germans in the German language” (28). The attitude persisted for some time and, on 20 February 1918 Malinowski wrote: “Thought about E.R.M. and my anti-B. feelings: desire to shake Anglo-Saxon dust off my sandals. Certain admiration for German culture. In the evening – or was it at night – I again thought of E.R.M. with tenderness and passion; again deviation and setting myself straight” (1989, 207). On 21 February 1918 he continued: “Thoughts about theoretical not sentimental matters but what were they? Oh yes – I was telling Strong in the presence of E.R.M. that England was the embodiment of self-assurance, status quo, the whole world *in the palm of their hands*. Lack of enthusiasm, idealism, purpose. The Germans have a purpose, possibly lousy and thwarted, but there is *élan*, there is a sense of mission. Conservatives [preaching] to ‘democrats’; democrats [allying themselves] with Prussianism – the whole thing is a confusion of ideas. The episode with Baldwin etc. makes me decidedly an Anglo-Saxon – not ‘*phobe*’ perhaps, but it eliminates my ‘*philia*’” (1989, 208; original emphasis).¹³ The anti-British sentiment seemed to be over on 24 February 1918: “Read-finished *Zeppelin Nights*. Strong upsurge of pro-British feelings and regrets that I am not in the war. [...] Began to read *All for a Scrap of Paper* [subtitled *A Romance of the Present War*, by J. Hocking] and finished it by 10. A very inferior novel but the patriotic tone moved me” (1989, 209).¹⁴ Yet, even in discussions of politics, Malinowski was not decidedly anti-German. On 2 March 1918 he wrote in the diary: “At 4:30 went to see the Brudos.¹⁵ [...] Talked about politics and the war. [...] I had criticized Hughes and had expressed moderate anti-German opinions” (1989, 214).¹⁶ On 7 March 1918 Malinowski’s mood was again anti-British: “At moments discouraged by my strong hatred for England and the English. [...] Read issues of *Bulletin*” (1989, 217–218). On 18 March 1918 he said: “I went down to the cabin and read [*The*] *Englishman* [an English literary journal], which I finished. I don’t associate this with E.R.M.; aroused Anglophobic feelings in me. I thought about this and about the complications it might have created in my feelings for E.R.M. [...] I talked, Donovan annoyed me: ‘respect more in the German trenches’” (1989, 224). Offended by one of the white settlers in New Guinea (2000, 759), on 21 March 1918 Malinowski noted: “Since Donovan, anti-English feelings, more accurately, anti-nationalistic feelings” (1989, 229). However, the diary entry of 2 April 1918 is another illustration of his political and emotional duality: “Strong feelings about the war, and very pro-British ones, particularly in view of the bad news from France” (1989, 242). Finally, in a letter-diary to Elsie of 19–24 May 1918, Malinowski admitted: “I feel perfectly at home in Melbourne and I could spend my life there to its end, without any regret, though not without remorse. Even though I am ostracized by those people who would form the natural autochthonous milieu for us” (Wayne 1995, 149). Though the transition to British culture and

acceptance of its values was hardly straightforward, the complex political situation did not change his personal response to life in Australia.

4. Between Nina and Elsie

The scientist Edward C. Stirling (1848–1919) helped Malinowski during the time spent in Adelaide before the Mailu expedition and the first period of fieldwork in the Trobriands (Young 378–379). His daughter Nina (1888–1976) and Malinowski fell in love and got unofficially engaged (Wayne 1995, xv). In the only entry of the diary related to the first period in the Trobriands, dated 1 August 1915, Malinowski wrote: “I am thinking seriously of marrying N. In spite of that, I am very uncertain. But I want to see her and try. [...] If in the end I marry N., March and April 1915 will be the most important months in my emotional life” (1989, 99).

During his long stay in Melbourne between the two Trobriand expeditions, Malinowski and Elsie fell in love. However, the on-going affair with Nina caused a lot of emotional and social tension for him. On 13 November 1917 Malinowski wrote about Elsie: “Emotionally, my love for her – strong, deep, all pervasive – is the main element of my life. I think of her as my future wife. I feel a deep passion based on spiritual attachment. Her body is like a sacrament of love. I should like to tell her that we are engaged, that I want the whole thing made public” (1989, 113). However, on 12 December 1917 he thought of Elsie as a life-long partner, but still loved Nina: “I see her as my future wife, with a feeling of certainty, confidence, but without excitement. I think of N.S. fairly often. [...] I love her like a child, but I have no illusions and I am sure that she would not have been happy with me; and vice versa” (1989, 149–150). The emotional duality continued for some time and, on 23 December 1917 Malinowski wrote of Elsie: “At moments I lose sight of her. Sensually, she has not succeeded in subjugating me” (1989, 162). He still maintained letter contact with Nina and delayed ending their relationship. The situation was on many occasions a cause of remorse when he compared the two women (1989, 123, 126). On 15 January 1918 Malinowski noted: “Strong, deep feeling for E.R.M. ‘My wife’ *de facto* and *de sentimento*. [...] I think of N.S. [...] I am very much attracted to her and interested in her health, but I don’t think of her as a woman” (1989, 185; original emphasis). On 18 January 1918 his mood changed again: “Thought about E.R.M.: a travelling companion rather than star *leading my destinies*. But she is always with me. At moments I think my longing for her is less strong, but then am suddenly dominated by it. I thought about N.S., about Adelaide, the city and the country will always be *Paradise Lost* to me: old Stirling, very faithful, the mother, and the whole [camp]” (1989, 188; original emphasis). On 22 of January 1918 he added: “[...] strong physical attraction to N.S., stronger than ever before. I think of her physique (*am I gross?*) – imagining her body vividly in every detail” (1989, 193; original emphasis). The feelings of guilt and uncertainty returned on

23 January 1918: “Painful feeling that all this is spoiled, that this fundamental error casts a shadow over my life, over my relation with E.R.M. I shouldn’t have started anything with her before definitively breaking with N.S. [...] More clearly than ever I feel that I love them both” (1989, 194–195). The emotional duality was resolved when Nina herself broke off the relationship with him and Malinowski was fully ready to accept Elsie. As Wayne writes, “Both Elsie and Bronio brought with them a conscious ideal of marriage and it included serious work; the delights, the necessity, of music; and the joy of children” (1995, xvi). But even before it finally happened, Malinowski became involved in another duality related only to Elsie.

5. With Elsie: Between the ‘Heroic’ and the ‘Unheroic’

The ANZAC¹⁷ events, especially the battle of Gallipoli in 1915, affected Elsie and her family. Her fiancée Charles E. Matters (d. 1915) was killed in Turkey; her cousin Jim Struthers (d. 1917) lost his life in Europe. Though unable to participate in the war and having the excuse of poor health for it, Malinowski again became caught up between two worlds: the ‘heroic’ and the ‘unheroic.’ In the diary entry of 7 January 1918, he referred to a letter from Elsie: “Passage about Charles made the strongest impression on me, depressed me, and even alienated me” (1989, 178). The tension took on a much more dramatic form on 9 January 1918:

The problem of heroism. Strong feeling of dejection. Charles and I. At moments sad because I cannot subject myself to a test. [...] For one moment I thought that there is no room for me in her heart in the shadow of his fame. I wished he would come back and that I had never met her. [...] For a moment I looked Destiny in the eyes. I know that if I had had to go to war, I would have gone calmly and without too much inner fuss. [...] My love for E.R.M. can be, must be, based on the feeling that she has faith in my heroism, that if I had been called to the colours, I would not have tried to get out of it. (1989, 179–180)

Despite some self-appeasing thoughts, the dark mood returned on 25 January: “All my despair, after all those killed in the war, hangs over this miserable Melanesian hut. I thought of E.R.M., Jim, and Charles. [...] Doubts about whether she is still the ‘complete woman’ for me – I decide to keep them to myself” (Malinowski 1989, 196). On 2 April 1918 Malinowski still wondered: “I think of E.R.M. – will she love me in these unheroic circumstances?” (1989, 242). In a letter to Elsie of 14 May 1918, he even declared himself ready to participate in the war on the Polish side in response to her readiness to do it on the side of the Allies: “I am fairly confident that nothing very bad can happen on the Western front but even this severe fighting which means the killing of thousands of Australians, and probably many Poles in the German trenches, is terrible. [...] But if you felt it your duty to

volunteer as a nurse or as an ‘Anzac w. a.a.c.’ I would get out of my skin to get in to some Polish war work in America” (Wayne 1995, 146–148).¹⁸ His response was thus again motivated by his relationship with Elsie. Fortunately, the duality of the heroic and the unheroic disappeared with the end of the war. However, daughter Helena Wayne mentions the evasive stance that she assumed whenever she was later asked the question, “And what did your father do in the Great War?” Poor health was an excuse; fieldwork in the Pacific was not (Wayne 1988, xiii).

6. Conclusion

The almost six years spent in Australia and Melanesia well illustrate Malinowski’s introspective predicament that “he would always ‘be split in two’” (Young 137). However serious an obstacle the dualities that he “so often conjured” may have been in his “quest for integrity, a harmonious self of individual steely purpose” (Young 130, 136), Australia and Melanesia were also a watershed in the anthropologist’s life because most of the conflicts were resolved at the end of his stay there. The rift between science and art, which opened around 1910, when Malinowski expressed views of culture different from his friend Stanisław I. Witkiewicz’s (1885–1939), terminated in the politically motivated break-up between them in Australia (Skalnik 56–57). The conflict of cultural identity and of the ‘heroic’ versus the ‘unheroic’ disappeared when the war was over and with marriage to Elsie, but another thirteen years passed before Malinowski finally became a British subject. Marrying Elsie in March 1919 ended his difficult relations with women. The duality of the ‘civilized’ and the ‘savage’ was more permanent. Possibly because Malinowski was the first anthropologist to give such a vivid description of the contrast in his self-exposing diary, it affected his later work on society and politics.

Notes

- 1 “Conradesque contrast” is a reference to the British novelist Joseph Conrad’s (1857–1924) experience of the sea.
- 2 Paul Khuner (1884–1932) and his wife Hedwig Khuner (1886–1974) were Austrian entrepreneurs and – like Malinowski – enemies alien in Australia. Bob Broinowski (1877–1959), a fan of bush-walking, was later Clerk of the Senate in Canberra (Young 421–422). Mim H. Weigall (1891–1978) was a sister of the novelist Joan Weigall, later Joan Lindsay (1896–1984), the author of the novel *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1967), which was made into a film by the Australian director Peter Weir (b. 1944). Malinowski often walked with her along the Yarra bank and read poetry in a kind of intellectual romance (Young 422–423).

- 3 The words echo Kurtz's words about the natives of Congo in Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* (1902) (Malinowski 2007, 428).
- 4 The original Polish text uses the term "czarnuchy," which is an equally racist equivalent of *niggers*.
- 5 See Rapport (1990; qtd in Stone 204) for a partial justification of such attitude in terms of overall human characteristics.
- 6 L. Armit was the Resident-Magistrate of Abau. Rev. William J. V. Saville (1873–1946), a missionary of the London Missionary Society, worked in Mailu at that time (Malinowski 1989, 24–25).
- 7 Skalnik argues that Malinowski broke up with his friend Stanisław I. Witkiewicz in Australia in April 1914 because, stressing "his cultural and personal bonds and values," he was "basically happy about belonging to liberal Austria [...] Witkiewicz felt otherwise. He was raised as a Polish patriot and wanted to fight the Germans as the greatest enemy of the Poles" (58). Kuper says, however, that educated Poles in Austria-Hungary had an ambivalent attitude to Vienna and the German culture (29). Witkiewicz returned to Europe and fought for Poland on the Russian side. Later he became a well-known painter and writer.
- 8 Strenski even attributes such views to the social milieu in which Malinowski was raised – landed gentry and intelligentsia that grew out of it as opposed to commercial élites (767). A letter-diary to Elsie of 15–16 January 1918 reflects his negative attitude to this social class: "But it is a different layer of Society with which they deal I expect: more money and dog and less in the line of culture" (Wayne 1995, 104).
- 9 Such humanism would study "living man, living language, and living full-blooded facts" (Malinowski 1989, 255). The provisional title of the paper on it was to be "The New Humanism" (Malinowski 1988, 255) – the same as Dilthey's term.
- 10 On meeting Malinowski in Poland in 1930, Witkiewicz thought he was "odd and Anglicized to the core" (Gerould 33).
- 11 More than two years later, on 23 November 1917, Malinowski also used a slightly ingratiating strategy when talking to the brother of Governor Murray in the Trobriands: "I spoke to him about my health, about friends in Melbourne, and fed him compliments about Australians" (1989, 127–128).
- 12 *Bulletin* was a very influential Australian periodical around the time of the war.
- 13 Dr. William or Walter Mersh Strong (1873–1946), a medical administrator in Papua New Guinea, also worked with the tribes of Roro-speaking peoples in the interior of New Guinea (Malinowski 1989, 76).
- 14 *Zeppelin Nights* is a war-related novel written jointly by Violet Hunt (1866–1942) and Ford Madox Ford (1873–1939) in 1916.
- 15 Raffael Brudo and his wife were French pearl traders in the Trobriands and Malinowski's friends (Malinowski 1989, 142).

- 16 Billy Hughes (1862–1952), the Prime Minister of Australia during the First World War, strongly advocated the country’s participation in the war.
- 17 Australia and New Zealand Army Corps/ANZAC soldiers were volunteers.
- 18 Malinowski considered participation in the Polish Legion being formed in America, but – because of his poor health – only in a clerky capacity (Wayne 1988, xiii).

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