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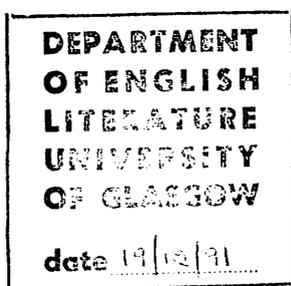
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**CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND  
INTERCULTURAL DISCOURSE IN THE SHORTER FICTION OF  
JOSEPH CONRAD**

**ABD-ALELAH H. AL-NEHAR AL-RIFAEI**



**Submitted to the Department of English Literature,  
University of Glasgow  
in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree  
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)  
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TO  
**PROFESSOR ALI MAHAFAH**  
**With Respect and Gratitude**

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## ABSTRACT

Thesis: Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Discourse in the  
Shorter Fiction of Joseph Conrad

Cultural difference is a major preoccupation of Joseph Conrad's fiction. This may be related to Conrad's own experience of foreignness in Britain. Whatever the possible influences of Conrad's life upon his work, attempts at communication and positive intercultural exchange on the part of Conrad's fictional characters of different cultures, races and ethnic backgrounds, most often fail. Misunderstanding, fear of the foreign and the unfamiliar, intolerance, ignorance of other cultures, and the supremacist assumptions of the colonizing nations, these barriers to any meaningful communication often also lead, ironically, to the loss of cultural identity for individual characters, even to alienation and the inability to survive. Cultural difference and failed intercultural bonding also contribute to the development of other themes in Conrad's fiction, especially that of self-recognition. The isolation of characters in unfamiliar surroundings brings them face to face with themselves, stripped of all cultural trappings and support systems. Some seek self discovery in exotic worlds where the romantic notion of the 'mirror of the other' is revealed to be yet another cultural mindset that closes the door on alternative perspectives. Conrad's own inherent romanticism is offset by his strong sense of moral and creative responsibility and his awareness of the snare of romantic exoticism in which several of his characters become entangled.

Although some reference is made to the novels, this study centres around the shorter fiction, concentrating on the less frequently discussed short stories. The multiplicity of viewpoints and voices in Conrad's narrative method resembles, and often matches in its ultimate function and purpose, the presentation of different cultural viewpoints and perspectives in his characterisation.

Conrad reveals through his fiction that the most tolerant person cannot be rid of all cultural prejudice, which is a limitation imposed by the inevitable social construction of individual identity. In some cases cultural prejudice relates more closely to class distinctions than to ethnic background. Whatever its source, Conrad embraces every opportunity to challenge that prejudice, whether directly or by quietly undermining its underlying assumptions. He remains aware to the last that the problems it raises are greater when disregarded, that they cannot be considered defeated and should never be laid to rest.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AF	<i>Almayer's Folly</i>
AG	<i>The Arrow of Gold</i>
CH	<i>Chance</i>
HD	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>
JCF	<i>Joseph Conrad on Fiction</i> (collected author's notes)
LE	<i>Last Essays</i>
LJ	<i>Lord Jim</i>
MS	<i>The Mirror of the Sea</i>
N	<i>Nostromo</i>
NLL	<i>Notes on life and letters</i>
NN	<i>The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'</i>
OI	<i>An Outcast of the Islands</i>
PR	<i>A Personal Record</i>
R	<i>The Rescue</i>
SA	<i>The Secret Agent</i>
SL	<i>The Shadow-Line</i>
SS	<i>A Set of Six</i>
T	<i>Typhoon and other stories</i>
TLS	<i>'Twixt Land and Sea</i>
TU	<i>Tales of Unrest</i>
UWE	<i>Under Western Eyes</i>
V	<i>Victory</i>
WT	<i>Within the Tides</i>
YET	<i>"Youth" and "The End of the Tether"</i>

Joseph Conrad  
1857 - 1924

Chronology of works: dates of writing and publication

- 1895 *Almayer's Folly* (Short novel, 12 chaps.) first work, begun 1889
- 1896 *An Outcast of the Islands* (longer novel, 5 pts. 26 ch.)  
begins writing *The Rescue*,  
writes "The Lagoon," "An Outpost of Progress"
- 1897 "The Nigger of the Narcissus" (long story, almost novel-length)
- 1898 *Tales of Unrest* ("Karain: A Memory," "The Idiots," "An Outpost of Progress," "The Return," "The Lagoon")
- 1898/99 "Heart of Darkness" (serialized in *Blackwood's*)
- 1899/1900 *Lord Jim* (serialized in *Blackwood's*)
- 1902 *Youth: and Two Other Stories* ("Youth," "Heart of Darkness," "The End of the Tether")
- 1903 *Typhoon: and Other Stories* ("Typhoon," "Amy Foster," "Falk," "Tomorrow")
- 1904 *Nostramo*
- 1906 *The Mirror of the Sea* (semi-autobiographic)
- 1907 *The Secret Agent*
- 1908 *A Set of Six* ("Gasper Ruiz," "The Informer" "The Brute," "An Anarchist," *The Duel*," "Il Conde")
- 1911 *Under Western Eyes* (written 1910, mostly; interrupted by illness)
- 1912 *Twixt Land and Sea* ("A Smile of Fortune," "The Secret Sharer," "Freya of the Seven Isles")
- 1912 *Some Reminiscences: A personal Record* (semi-autobiographic)
- 1913 *Chance*
- 1915 *Within the Tides* ("The Planter of Malata," "The Partner," "The Inn of the Two Witches")
- 1915 *Victory*
- 1917 *The Shadow-line* (longer short story, most autobiographical of the fiction works)
- 1919 *The Arrow of Gold* (autobiographical aspects)
- 1920 *The Rescue* (published 24 years after it was begun)
- 1921 *Notes on life and Letters*
- 1923 *The Rover*
- 1925 *Tales of Hearsay* ("The Warrior's Soul," "Prince Roman," "The Tale," "The Black Mate")
- 1925 *Suspense*
- 1926 *Last Essays*
- 1928 "The Sisters" (fragment)

Note: with Ford Maddox Ford: *The Inheritors* (1902), *Romance* (1903), *The Nature of a Crime* (1924).

## INTRODUCTION

The question of how to meet the problems and challenges posed to humanity by cultural difference is a central theme of Conrad's writing. The amount of space given to cultural difference in both his fiction and non-fiction, the intensity with which it is presented, and his insistence on exposing or discovering the various actual and possible responses to these challenges, indicate that for Conrad this is not only a subject worthy of interest, but one that requires urgent attention.

Whether the sense of importance and urgency surrounding this Conradian preoccupation may be related to Conrad's own situation as a Pole and a foreigner cannot be satisfactorily determined. And it would be pointless to try to establish without doubt and beyond proof that Conrad, having settled in England and adopted the English language, was influenced as a writer by his struggles as a man to deal with cultural difference and questions of intercultural interest. A general awareness of this aspect of Conrad's life, and speculation on the extent of its influence, will always be helpful in developing a contextual understanding of his writing. Since that influence cannot be measured, and since speculation on that relationship belongs to the psycho-analytical area of literary research -- which is not my area of specialization -- this study will be limited to the shorter fictional texts, and will draw on the non-fictional only occasionally and where pertinent. Whatever the causes in Conrad's life of the cultural preoccupation in his writing, the effect of cultural diversity on characters and events in most of his fiction, both at the superficial level of national, political conflict and on the deeper plane of racial, ethnic or class divergence, persists as a hidden spring and an underlying force even when it is not an obvious, conscious theme.

Instances of this cultural preoccupation are numerous, appearing in almost every Conrad text at least briefly if not at length. They cannot all be studied in

equal depth here, but the tales and short stories, for the very reason of their shorter length and reduced complexity (with some exceptions), reveal more tellingly than do the novels the role of the cultural question. The greater directness and simplicity of some, and the greater concentration of significant elements in others, serve to indicate more boldly the steps by which the cultural theme develops and the ways in which it relates to other themes. Also, we can perceive most clearly in the short fiction the role of structure, viewpoint, narrative voice and other aspects of form, in building up the cultural theme. In his preface to "Shorter Tales" Conrad talks of his short stories' bearing upon "their relation to life as I have known it, and on the nature of my reactions to the particular instances as well as to the general tenor of my personal experience. This gave to each of the successive tales, composed at various times and in varied mental conditions, a characteristic tone of its own . . . each of my short-story volumes had a consistent unity of outlook covering the mingled subjects of civilisation and wilderness, of land life and life on the sea: the Malay Archipelago, rustic Brittany, Central Africa, and the interior of an upper middle-class house in a residential street of London." He adds that the shorter tales, with their "inner consistency," stand out as "a confirmation of my sentiment of having welded the diversities of subject and treatment into a consistency characteristic, in its nature, of a certain period of my literary production."<sup>1</sup> For these reasons, in some degree, I have chosen to focus on the shorter works and a few highly defined incidents in one or two novels. As with the non-fiction, I will allude to the other novels only in passing and where clearly pertinent.

Culture is interpreted here broadly as that collection of mostly unstated mores, traditions, belief systems and thought structures that form the most significant bonds of a community and distinguish it from other communities. The ethnic and anthropological connotations of the term, while they are privileged in this study over the connotation of intellectual refinement, do not prevail to the point of excluding it, since the second meaning is related to, and a product of, the first.

These meanings of "culture" and the etymology of the term are discussed briefly in the first chapter. Ramond Williams, in his *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, also makes the distinction between "culture" and "civilization," the first referring to the thought structures and moral order of a group and the second to territoriality. Civilization tends to secularize through its absorption and undermining of several foreign ethnic groups or cultures, but it is not local, does not refer to what is unique in the life of specific races or peoples, and it emphasizes technique where culture emphasizes mores or cultivation of mind.<sup>2</sup>

Meaningful communication and understanding between characters of diverse cultural backgrounds are rare in Conrad's fiction, and between communities they are almost non-existent, in spite of efforts on the part of some participant narrators and a few individual characters to avoid the pitfalls of misinformation and misinterpretation. For the most part, complete ignorance of the influence of culture over a given situation leads to a total breakdown in communication and sometimes also to a loss of cultural identity (paradoxically) and even the incapacity to survive. We find these problems facing one or more characters in the majority of Conrad's fictional texts, from "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" through "Heart of Darkness," *Lord Jim*, *Nostromo*, and several of the shorter tales such as "Amy Foster" and "An Outpost of Progress," all the way to the later novel *Under Western Eyes*.

Intercultural communication, or its absence, also plays a leading role in the development of other important themes in Conrad's works, particularly that of self-recognition. The isolation of characters from familiar surroundings and from their own culture brings them face to face with themselves, propelling them into greater self awareness through contrast, through 'the mirror of the other.' A common theme among the European writers of late Romanticism, this 'mirror of the other' is treated by Conrad in a considerably different way, even to the point of being undermined. He brings to it the struggle against pure idealism and illusion, illusion from which

his characters often emerge in a rude awakening, and against a loss of cultural identity that threatens their very lives, as in "An Outpost of Progress" or, in a more complex way, "Heart of Darkness."

Conrad was particularly keen to avoid the trap of Romantic exoticism, but he often reset it for his characters; as an author he grapples with the all too easy tendency to indulge in sentimental and exaggerated language and impossible adventures in the narrative, so prevalent in his time, especially given the settings, of most of his works -- the sea and lands beyond. Conrad admitted to being a romantic, and a few of his stories, like "The Lagoon," and "Youth," indulge in romantic/poetic extravagance. However, his romanticism is more often tempered with reminders of the question of survival, and attempts to deal with the starker domain of present reality. He insisted that the romantic in him was "disciplined by a sense of personal responsibility and a recognition of the hard facts of existence shared with the rest of mankind" (JCF 211). The way in which his characters adapt to their surroundings, to unknown peoples, ways, and customs, their successful or abortive attempts at communication, or their complete ignorance of its necessity, hardly resemble the purely romantic exoticism that the public of his day and some of his critics preferred to see in his fiction.

Conrad's cultural preoccupation appears in two distinct ways: thematically, in the special concern with cultural identity and intercultural encounter, and formally, in the special perspective provided by narrators and characters of given cultural backgrounds. Not only the plot, characters and themes, but also the form and structure of a Conrad tale or novel, reflect the question of cultural difference or conflict. The choice of narrative voice or voices and the background of the narrator or major character whose point of view tends to override all others, these aspects influence the orientation of the narrative and the perceptions of the reader. Point of view also provides a mask for the author. Through it he may take an ironic stance,

adopt a benevolent attitude, or appear to maintain a tolerant impartiality. This often blurs the distinction between the implied author and the narrator. Some statements on British culture and civilization, extolling it, in "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*," "Youth," or in "Typhoon," for example, could be Conrad's opinions or his narrator's; it is often difficult to tell.

As with any fictional text, these thematic and formal aspects do not function separately; in Conrad they combine in a subtly balanced interdependency, narrative viewpoint often giving more conviction to theme, and the intercultural theme often helping to explain certain choices of narrative voice. I will consider both aspects separately for the purpose of this study, with an early emphasis on the thematic, and a closer attention to form at a later stage, but will not limit myself exclusively to the one or the other.

It is also my intention to introduce examples from the works as I proceed with an investigation of the theme, form, and other aspects of the cultural question, rather than to treat each work fully and separately. In this manner I will move from one portion of a work to another, not consecutively, but as the subject demands.

However, I wish to begin the first chapter with one exception to this method, by treating in detail a short story, "Amy Foster," as a prototype of intercultural interaction, in which the theme of cultural isolation and lack of intercultural communication stands out as central and predominant.

Proceeding from "Amy Foster" as a point of departure, where cultural diversity is presented in the clearest, most straightforward manner, I will move on in later pages to study the more complex, highly developed aspects of this theme, its role in works of greater subtlety, and its relationship to other themes.

Chapter Two of this study treats cultural loss and conflict generally, at both the individual and communal level, emphasizing cultural isolation, misunderstanding and distrust, suspicion, confusion of 'essence' and 'expression' as Conrad perceives them, the imposition of one culture upon another (the intruder and the intruded upon), the collision of cultures under colonialism, oppression and the general negative interaction between the invader's culture and that of the invaded. Special attention is given to "An Outpost of Progress" and "Heart of Darkness."

Chapter Three concentrates on individual relationships and on other themes relating to the intercultural question: self-recognition, honour and fidelity, the test of character through isolation, the waking from <sup>the</sup> illusion, facing moral choices, gaining insight through defamiliarization, the basis and growth of intercultural friendship, and losses and failure. The focus, first, will be on the effect of an alien culture on the inner character and spirit of individuals, their perception of that other culture, and second, on their attempts, if any, to develop relationships with individuals from that other culture (Almayer in *Almayer's Folly*, Willems in *An Outcast of the Islands*, Jim in *Lord Jim*). The identity crisis suffered by women in an alien culture, by halfcastes and by European colonialists' children who have not seen Europe is also considered briefly here. In some cases, intercultural encounter appears to be fortunate for the invaded, but only temporarily as in the case of "Karain." Some space is also given to intercultural interaction between European nationalities, seriously affected at the personal level by economic competition, as in "Falk" and "Freya of the Seven Isles." In "Falk" we see something of the inner thoughts of the English captain-narrator as of Falk himself, but "Freya" offers only a superficial study of the role of colonial competition in the development of personal jealousies.

The intercultural relationships within one nation such as the north/south misunderstanding in "The Duel" and "Il Conde" are particularly interesting because

'culture' here stands at the borderline between its ethnic meaning of racial and regional differences and its class-related meaning of intellectual refinement that depends on social background. Conrad probes and undermines -- but without directly opposing -- the received view of the dark Southerner as more emotional and less refined than the fair Northerner.

The Fourth chapter deals with Conrad's attitude to Romanticism and exoticism and the way it affects the intercultural theme. Conrad is grappling with his own romantic escapist tendencies, and represents the tension of the romantic and the real, drawing the reader into escapism and conflict. Romanticism is cultural, or has become so over the ages; it has been cultivated as a taste, as a literary movement, even as a social/cultural convention. It is cultural in all its aspects, including that of escape into the exotic. Conrad tests his characters in part by luring them into the trap of romanticism. But he is thus testing himself and also his readers, who are made to participate, by the sheer act of reading, in the escapism, in the disillusionment, and even in the sense of responsibility, embarrassment, and guilt, that pervades many pages of his writings.

It will be seen how Conrad quietly subverts a number of Romantic myths and conventions he appears to adhere to. The 'noble savage' myth, made popular by Rousseau and Chateaubriand, appears in some form or disguise in "The Lagoon," "Karain," "An Outpost of Progress," "Heart of Darkness," and "Falk," and is undermined in most of these stories. The 'sensual orient' myth, propagated in so many different kinds of writing over the centuries and revitalized by Romanticism, and the accompanying notion of the foreign as a mirror of the self, tend to be reversed against the mirroring or mythologizing character, as in "Youth" and *Lord Jim*, and parts of several other tales. Nostalgia and the 'lost paradise' myth, common to the majority of Romantics, are treated with irony or in some way

subverted or resisted in a number of stories including "Youth" and "The Shadow-Line."

Decadence is partly represented in the 'ennui' of the search for the exotic after disillusionment and failure of other Romantic ideals. Decadence is one step from complete realization that the romantic/exotic lure is a social/cultural literary/artistic convention, or has become so (a matter of pure artifice and contrivance). This recognition is incorporated into aspects of "Falk," "A Smile of Fortune," and especially "The Planter of Malata." In these texts the reader feels the discomfort of responsibility for exotic, sensual escape, voyeurism, and for the emptiness of romantic conventions. This leads into question of the author's consciousness and the reader's role.

The Fifth and last chapter investigates the narrative method observable in the shorter fiction that has been discussed fully in other chapters, with the exception of one longer work, *Under Western Eyes*, because of its title and relevancy to the question of culture and intercultural discourse, will meet here a fairly detailed treatment concerning its narrative, perspectives, and narrator's cultural point of view. The focus is on the methods by which Conrad achieves the intriguing interplay of form and content.<sup>3</sup> Singled out for special attention are the manner in which a story is structured, the functions, variations and thematic implications of language as it relates to the question of culture, the disclosure of cultural point of view and intercultural discourse. Several of Conrad's narrators function as characters and make it difficult, as in the case of Marlow, to discriminate between their roles as narrator and character.<sup>4</sup> This is similar to the problem of distinguishing the views of the implied author and the narrator, or those of the different narrators when there are more than one. Opinions and prejudices may or may not be Conrad's; and narrative reliability is not to be found in one voice. As Booth has shown, objectivity and commentary need not be in opposition if we

remember that authors often create themselves as carefully as they dramatize their imagined characters. Some sense of the underlying attitudes can be arrived at by weighing up the different projections of the author's voice revealed "in special tones at selected moments."<sup>5</sup>

The narrative technique Conrad uses functions precisely to develop multiple perspectives: indirect discourse, delayed decoding, dislocation, repetition, ellipses, comments and digressions, shifts in time and point of view.

The final effect is that readers discover the boundaries of their own culture, the faults, prejudices and hypocrisies they feed back into their own society and their own age, foreign viewpoints mixed with familiar ones which are a way to defamiliarize the familiar and make the "unfamiliar things credible" (Conrad's own words from JCF 211, discussed in chapter one of this study). They are also a means of bringing to the reader that awareness of hidden prejudices and an openness to possibilities, all leading to an ever greater tolerance of that which is other.

## CHAPTER ONE

'Culture' and Conrad's intercultural theme:

"Amy Foster" as a prototype

In nearly all his works of fiction Joseph Conrad was preoccupied with questions of culture. A word that tends to elude definition because its meaning changes with its context, 'culture' can be explained in several ways. Etymologically, it can be traced to the Latin 'cultura' for land cultivation. Because it referred to an occupation of settled or non-nomadic peoples, the word came to be associated with the notion of civilization. Already in Latin it had acquired from the original sense two other meanings of 'dwelling' and 'care,' both related to the idea of residing in one place to take care of land, property, home, hearth and household gods. The 'cultivation' of the household gods gave rise to the related use of 'cultura' for religious 'cult' or worship. All of these meanings of the Latin word not only led to the English derivatives ('culture,' 'cult' 'cultivate'), but have also left their stamp on the modern interpretation of culture as a conscious effort to develop, improve, perfect or refine. Upon this interpretation is founded the notion of culture as the refinement of manners, taste and judgement, and the 'cultivation' of the intellectual faculties.

A more modern and more distant offspring of 'culture' is the anthropological definition: the customs, traditions and ways of life handed down through the generations among specific groups of peoples, divided according to such affiliations, for example, as race, ethnicity, tribe, region, nation or religion. If stretched, this meaning may also include ways of life and thought adopted by people of specific classes, backgrounds and social milieux within the same group. Although some of Conrad's fiction concerns this further breakdown of broad cultural groups into smaller divisions -- and I will have occasion to refer to these -- it is on the meaning

and usage of 'culture' as a large group division that the intercultural theme in most of his works focuses.

Conrad's notion of culture as it applied to himself did not allow for a definite distinction and separation between refinement and intellectual pursuit on the one hand and traditional group identification on the other. Being from the Polish ruling class, called 'szlachta,' Conrad was expected to develop his intellectual faculties. Cultural activity among the 'szlachta' was, like political activity, an integral part of one's identity as a Pole.<sup>1</sup> Conrad's father, Apollo Korzeniowski, was a poet as well as a politically active patriot. Conrad's Polish origins, and the influence of French life and literature, gave him a view of culture that could never be strictly anthropological. His life as a Pole and foreigner in Britain makes it tempting to regard the intercultural theme as no more than encounters between different races, nations and ethnic groups, but the notion of culture as self cultivation tended to influence Conrad's perceptions of the various peoples and communities he portrays. His foreignness in Britain cannot be assumed to be the cause of the preponderance of foreign characters and cultures in his works. Conrad may well have been influenced as a writer by his struggles as a man to deal with cultural difference, but the extent to which his foreignness would have influenced the intercultural aspects of his works cannot be satisfactorily determined. Although biographers and critics approaching Conrad from a psychological viewpoint have made significant contributions to this area of Conrad studies, they can only go as far as suggestion.

Culture in the general anthropological sense of customs and ways of life among specific groups is always indirectly absorbed. Culture as the refinement of the faculties of the mind implies conscious striving and will. It involves discipline and a measure of moral awareness. Above all it goes beyond knowledge 'per se' to a healthy curiosity and spirit of inquiry and a refinement of the sensibilities. These last two components are the legacy of the eighteenth century 'philosophers' who

brought the notion of culture out of the absolutism and preciousness of the Neoclassical age and whose emphasis on tolerance contributed to a more secular and relative approach to intellectual development.<sup>2</sup> If Conrad's concern with the diversity of cultures may be attributed in part to his experiences as a foreigner it also derives from this concept of culture as a conscious development of the powers of the mind, a refinement of the sensibilities and a broad interest in the world at large. This notion of culture differs from that of formal education which is received or imposed as well as limited to specific skills or branches of knowledge. A tension between the two notions appears in a number of Conrad's works.<sup>3</sup>

There is in Conrad's novels and tales an insistence on cultural identity (or the lack of it), on cultural viewpoint, and on intercultural exchange, that gives the question of culture at least as much weight as other major themes. Conrad exegetes have exhausted the topics of individual identity, self recognition, conflict, dilemma, isolation, revolt and betrayal, and the trials of failure and success as shapers of character. The theme of culture, intricately woven into these other Conradian themes, sometimes even supersedes them. This is not to say that the cultural question has been newly discovered in Conrad; it has been discussed several times over the years in numerous critical studies from articles in journals, and theses of all lengths, to printed works of more than one volume.<sup>4</sup> But it has suffered from a lopsided emphasis. Rarely has discussion of this topic left the two areas of East/West disparity or conflict on the one hand and racism/imperialism on the other, both subjects of interest and relevance which cannot be ignored, and will not be neglected here, but both tributaries of a wider concern with cultural identity and diversity.

Cultural identity for Conrad is not, then, the superficial fact of being English or Polish, brown or yellow, flat-nosed or flat-footed; accordingly, cultural diversity refers to the variety in human ways of thought and perspectives on life and the

world as well as customs and manners that have been refined and sometimes formalized over the ages. Because thought has been cultivated along different lines by different groups of people, cultural diversity, more often than not, means the incomprehensibility of one cultural group to another, and there is a tendency in the predominant society of any given period to regard its own culture as the best and only normative culture in existence, since such a society, as Jane Miller has stated in her excellent article on writing in a second language, "has taken its assumptions so much for granted as to have forgotten that they are only assumptions."<sup>5</sup> When people used to making such assumptions are forced into situations where they meet with that which is culturally different, other, and incomprehensible to them, fear often becomes the dominant reaction and ruling emotion, activating all other responses. An awareness of this phenomenon of human behaviour underlies the cultural theme in most of Conrad's works. In the short story, "Amy Foster," it is more than an awareness; it is the central theme, the point Conrad is making.

"Amy Foster," with its simple narrative style and uncomplicated structure, cannot be ranked among Conrad's masterpieces -- among those works celebrated for their depth of psychological insight and their richness of meaning. And yet, although the story does not contain the complexities found in many other tales and novels, its directness brings home the cultural theme all the more forcefully; for here the obvious, conscious message stands out on its own, untrammelled by any other preoccupations. The problem of culture is the 'raison d'être' of the story. In that sense "Amy Foster" is a prototype.

#### "Amy Foster"

The narrator of this story recounts his visit to an old friend, a country doctor whom he accompanies on his rounds among the English coastal villages that make

up his practice. On the outskirts of one such village Dr Kennedy stops his horse and cart to enquire after the child of Amy Foster, who is seen in front of her cottage. When they drive on, the doctor tells his visitor the story of the young girl's kindness to a shipwrecked central European who appeared suddenly in the village, having miraculously survived when the ship in which he was emigrating to America foundered off the English coast. At first Amy Foster had been the only one to treat Yanko Gooral with kindness and pity. Their courtship and marriage soon followed, but she later began to feel estranged from him, even after their child is born. When Yanko falls ill with fever his desperate and excitable ravings in foreign accent paralyse her with fear, and when he cries out for water she flees him in terror, leaving him to die.

Cultural isolation is at the very heart and core of Conrad's almost obsessive interest in questions of culture. "Amy Foster" is one of two works that treat this subject well nigh exclusively and with a blunt, even brutal directness. The other story is "An Outpost of Progress," whose title -- like *An Outcast of the Islands* -- denotes the subject and emphasizes exile or isolation in its first word or prefix.<sup>6</sup> The two stories resemble each other both in the choice of subject and in their essentially (and intentionally) unsubtle presentation. But they differ in one important aspect, which nonetheless highlights their similarity, like two faces of the same coin. "An Outpost of Progress" is about two 'civilized' West Europeans isolated in the African jungle. "Amy Foster" tells of a Central European shipwrecked off the coast of England, home of Conrad's Edwardian readers, and for them the bastion of Western European civilization.

In "An Outpost of Progress" the two Europeans are driven to madness by a combination of their own inadequacies of character and their cultural isolation. One of them kills the other and then commits suicide, ironically just before the arrival of the boat that would recall them to the world of civilization and progress. It

no doubt appeared to Conrad's contemporaries that the two protagonists of this story met with their fate because they were civilized men isolated for too long in a totally uncivilized environment. And in a sense, at this early stage of Conrad's writing, what his contemporary readers believed was so, for Conrad does indeed speak of the "sudden and profound trouble [brought] into the heart" by "contact with pure unmitigated savagery, with primitive nature and primitive man . . ."7 However, in portraying two men cut off from the security and familiarity of their society's nurturing institutions and support systems, Conrad already begins to relate the 'civilized' versus 'primitive' opposition to a more general conflict between what we are accustomed to and what appears strange and therefore unsafe.

Few men realize that their life, the very *essence* of their character, their capabilities and their audacity, are only the *expression* of their belief in the safety of their surroundings. (TU 85, my italics)

The key note here is the verbal opposition between "essence" and "expression" which turns out to be no opposition at all. In fact according to this statement, 'being' is not distinguished from 'appearances.' The inner self, the 'soul' or "essence" of a person is not the central, permanent entity, not the unchanging nucleus, that humankind has always liked to believe it is. The deepest part of an individual character is just as susceptible to change and environmental influence as the most superficial side of the outer personality. Only with the most rigorous discipline and effort can one create a degree of inner constancy and stability. Most people remain unaware that they are the product of their environment. In this respect Conrad's two characters in "An Outpost" are no exception to the common run of humanity, who may be called 'civilized' not as individuals, but only because they belong to an organized society which, collectively and unconsciously, carries them along in its own momentum.

Further, before this statement on character and environment, Conrad uses "civilized" ironically hand in hand with "crowds," an old partnership of words whose hint of contradiction reinforces the notion that civilization lacks a core. When the individual is removed from the group or crowd, he suffers from "the sentiment of being alone of one's kind," "the clear perception of the loneliness of one's thought," and "the negation of the habitual, which is safe," as well as "the affirmation of the unusual, which is dangerous . . ." (TU 86).

"Amy Foster" develops this wider concept of civilization as habit and custom and of primitiveness as what we are unused to, as the self buried beneath the layers of habit so that if it emerges it appears foreign. But this story goes further, implying that primitiveness can also be cultivated. It presents the majority of the inhabitants of an English coastal village as dangerous and even savage in their treatment of a shipwrecked man who cannot communicate his circumstances to them and who is "dismay[ed] at finding all the men angry and all the women fierce."<sup>8</sup>

He had approached them as a beggar, it is true, he said; but in his country, even if they gave nothing, they spoke gently to beggars. The children in his country were not *taught* to throw stones at those who asked for compassion. (T 136, my italics)

It is a universal phenomenon, especially in unsophisticated communities, for children to throw stones at social outcasts, be they beggars, tramps, drunks or madmen -- or the village fool. In Yanko's country this practice was not approved; instead, the compassion appealed for was given. Conrad (or his narrators, or Yanko), could have used 'permitted' for "taught"; 'allowed' or 'permitted' would first spring to mind in such a context. The verb "taught" goes beyond mere approval towards systematic training, and implies at least a covert and manipulative inculcation if not a direct, conscious instruction. To allude to definitions of culture earlier in this chapter, stoning is not in this case merely a cultural practice in the

anthropological sense of an indirectly absorbed custom, but one in which the children appear to have been 'schooled.' Barbarous customs can, paradoxically, be knowingly fostered or 'cultivated' in a society where the more enlightened form of culture holds no sway, and the behaviour of children reflects that of adults. Not only the children of the village, then, but the entire community, may be termed wilfully fierce and savage.

From the castaway's own point of view, he might well have entered a land where no civilized man had set foot. Indeed, England was just such a place for him.

And for him, who knew nothing of the earth,  
England was an undiscovered country. It was  
some time before he learned its name; and for  
all I know he might have expected to find wild  
beasts or wild men here . . . (T 122)

This allusion to England as an "undiscovered country" of "wild beasts" and "wild men" echoes the opening passages of Marlow's prelude to "Heart of Darkness," in which an ancient Roman official is sent to the far-flung reaches of the then known world: Britain.<sup>9</sup>

The first welcome the castaway receives in that land does not differ much from what he would have expected from "wild men," and increases the sense of loneliness, that same loneliness the two men in "An Outpost" experienced before the "unmitigated savagery" of their surroundings, or that the Roman commander in "Heart of Darkness" must have endured at "the very end of the world," with "a sea the colour of lead, a sky the colour of smoke . . ." (HD9)

Isolation and the impossibility of communication dominate "Amy Foster," reappearing at every turn of the page. But cultural isolation is of a special kind that leads the mind to the giddy edge of awareness that existence itself is a solitary

experience that the individual consciousness cannot escape. The castaway in "Amy Foster" experiences "an overwhelming loneliness [that] seemed to fall from the leaden sky of that winter without sunshine . . .

All the faces were sad. He could talk to no one, and had no hope of ever understanding anybody. It was as if these had been the faces of people from the other world -- dead people.

He was different: innocent of heart, and full of good will, which nobody wanted, this castaway, that, like a man transplanted into another planet, was separated by an immense space from his past and by an immense ignorance from his future. (T 141 & 145)

The references to the world of the dead and to another planet, with the immensity of space and time dividing the castaway from his former self, lend a cosmic dimension to his psychological state of alienation, stressing its character of metaphysical anxiety. To this must be added the abyss in communication which is non-verbal as well as verbal. Practically every deed and detail of behaviour on the part of the castaway not only meets with blank responses and misunderstanding, but also suffers the ignominy of a negative judgement, as when he attempts to express the festive gaiety of his home country by dancing in the taproom of the local inn. He is booted out. (T 145)

What gives cultural isolation its full impact in this story is Conrad's emphasis on one of its main causes: fear. In fact, isolation and fear combined produce upon each other a reciprocal effect of intensification and concentration, for Conrad implies two things throughout the story: first, that isolation, the sense of being lost in a void, is more conducive than any other state to a growing feeling of panic, which, over a period of time, develops into abject terror as of a brute; second, that fear itself increases and aggravates the isolation, both within the mind of the sufferer and in the world of reality. The problem is compounded when the fear is aroused not only in the isolated individual but also in those of the 'other' culture,

especially in the case of a castaway whose arrival among the people is so totally unexpected. Each regards the other with terror because of "irreconcilable differences" and "that fear of the Incomprehensible that hangs over all our heads -- over all our heads. . . ." (T 118) Conrad insists, through the country doctor Kennedy's repetition of the last words, that no one escapes the fear of the unknown.

Repetition for emphasis is a favourite Conradian device, and recurs often in the speech of narrators and characters who play the role of objective observer or mentor.<sup>10</sup> With the voices of these individuals, frequently detached from the actual events of the narratives, Conrad comes closest to expressing his own thoughts on his material and his purpose in writing it. It is as far as he goes towards the position of omniscient author which he usually avoids. In these speeches and statements we often find not only repetition but also capitalized nouns representing broad, abstract concepts or cosmic forces.<sup>11</sup> Conrad refers to the "Incomprehensible" numerous times throughout his writing, and almost always, as here, with the added connotation of the "unfamiliar." But "unfamiliar" refers to what we are not acquainted with, whereas "Incomprehensible" suggests the great unknown, or the mystery of life, existence, the universe, both in its capitalization and through its context. The paragraph following this reference to the "Incomprehensible," ostensibly no more than one of Conrad's typical descriptive pieces -- a picturesque scene of an approaching horse and wagon silhouetted against the sky at sunset -- in fact performs a significant function. The "Incomprehensible that hangs over all our heads" is transformed into a "speckless sky" which in turn becomes, at the end of the descriptive scene, "the background of the Infinite" against which the daily activities of human existence appear brave with a vulgar kind of boldness that springs from ignorance and unawareness.

And the clumsy figure of the man plodding at the head of the leading horse projected itself on the background of the Infinite with a heroic uncouthness. The end of his carter's whip quivered high up in the blue. (T 118)

Again the cosmic element is brought in. The "Incomprehensible" is not only that of "irreconcilable differences," but also that of time and space, and existence. Fear of the metaphysically incomprehensible lies at the root of fear of the unfamiliar in all its forms. The final words of this descriptive passage prefigure the description of Yanko's feeling of "a man transplanted into another planet," cut off from himself by time and distance.

Fear of Yanko's immediate response to the unknown. From a region around the borders of present-day Austria and Czechoslovakia, Yanko, who had not seen a ship until the day he set sail for America, always stopped his own narration of his trip from continental Europe at the point before the voyage properly began, that is, at the moment of fear, the moment when he felt "that awful sensation of his heart melting within him directly he set foot on board that ship" (T 129). To board the ship, for Yanko, is to cross the threshold of the knowledge of fear; it is to pass from innocence to experience.

The first people Yanko meets in England after his shipwreck react to his dishevelled, distracted appearance with fright. And his own fear does not help his case, causing him to act in a manner that seems doubly strange to the local 'natives.' When the schoolmistress went out to speak "indignantly to a 'horrid-looking man' on the road," he "edged away, hanging his head, for a few steps, and then suddenly ran off with extraordinary fleetness" (T 130). This kind of behaviour only serves to increase the fear of others and the violence of their own responses. Thus Mrs Finn, walking her baby in a pram, "hit him courageously with her umbrella over the head, and, without once looking back, ran like the wind with the perambulator as far as the first house in the village" (T 131). Such a description is not limited to a parody of English country village people in their reactions to a stranger in their midst. The deeper implication in all these early scenes is that

primal emotions such as fear can and do quickly corrode the veneer of civilization and reduce us all to 'savages,' even when we believe we are acting 'courageously.' If England is an unfamiliar country to Yanko, so is he an unfamiliar sight to the inhabitants. Depending upon the point of view, and also upon the degree of fear, the line between 'primitive' and 'civilized' is shadowy and the positions at times interchangeable, so that opposition itself becomes superficial and meaningless.

In "Amy Foster" fear continues to feed upon fear as the violence of local reactions increases the panic and terror of the castaway, totally unable to make himself (and his circumstances) understood, until finally his behaviour resembles that of a madman. Mrs Finn and old Lewis "followed with their eyes the figure of the man running over a field; they saw him fall down, pick himself up, and run on again, staggering and waving his long arms above his head. . ." (T 131). The final words of this description contain more than a hint of the madman. They also suggest the bestial aspect Yanko seems to present to the villagers, particularly in the ape-like length of his arms and the antics of his whole body.<sup>12</sup> Already, before entering into the specifics of Amy Foster's story, Conrad sets the stage for the final outcome of the tale by a complete and detailed description through these many 'vignettes' of the gathering momentum of fear and its reciprocal 'snowball effect' on all parties concerned.

Amy Foster herself is at once the dullest and the most perplexing character of the story. From her first meeting with Yanko, she distinguishes herself from most other characters by her lack of fear: she "was not frightened" (T 136). And without fear, the narrator suggests, there is no violence, for Amy "had been neither fierce nor angry, nor frightened" (T 142). The reversed sequence of these three adjective moves from effect to cause. Yanko, remembering Amy as the only one who had shown him kindness, thinks of her often, noting first the absence of fierceness as an external expression of anger which in turn derives from the inner motivating force of

fear. He traces her behaviour back to its source: Amy was not fierce because she was not angry, and she was not angry because she was not frightened.

Only one apparently insignificant incident presents an exception to Amy's fearless conduct, and it occurs prior to her meeting with Yanko. She is known to be kind to children and animals, having even been seen "on her knees in the wet grass helping a toad in difficulties" (T 120), and was devoted to her employer's parrot. Yet, when the cat attacked the parrot which "shrieked for help in human accents, she ran out into the yard stopping her ears, and did not prevent the crime" ( 119). The "human accents" of the parrot prompt a response in Amy that indicates this simple village girl's incapacity of sympathy towards anything but inarticulate beings like small children and animals. Her kindness is limited to non-verbal creatures and to those without a language. The parrot incident is a prediction of things to come, of her escape in terror at the end of the story when her sick and feverish husband cries out for water, a situation exactly the reverse of their first meeting when, moved by pity rather than fear, she gave him his first meal in England -- a piece of bread.

Amy Foster's fearlessness is not the equivalent of courage, and may even be associated with her dullness of mind and passivity. "I had time to see her dull face," says the narrator, and turning to Dr Kennedy he remarks "she seems a dull creature" (T 117). Dr Kennedy himself speaks of the "inertness of her mind -- an inertness that one would think made it everlastingly safe from the surprises of imagination" (T 118). Amy's behaviour is governed by her feelings of the moment rather than by her mind, which has not been developed. She is in no position to be influenced by 'culture' or the refinement of the intellectual faculties. Culturally -- in the anthropological sense -- she inherits only from her community. The fear prompting the reactions of the locals when Yanko first appears amongst them, seems, in Amy, to have gained in intensity from delayed effect when she first

experiences fear of her husband a year after their marriage, and rushes in blind terror from his foreign-sounding, feverish cries for help, leaving him to die.

. . . he demanded a drink of water. She did not move. She had not understood, though he may have thought he was speaking in English. . . . His passionate remonstrances only increased her fear of that strange man. (T 153)

The implication is that Yanko was speaking English as he believed, and that Amy was really frightened not by his feverish behaviour alone, but by its combination with the language she understood. To Amy, Yanko could sound foreign and could be feverish (he had done both before), but not in English. His foreign accent and excitable gestures were doubly frightening to her in her own language, just as she had been terrified by the parrot's shrieking "in human accents."

For all her dullness Amy is gifted with imagination. But we do not usually expect to find two such traits together in the same person since the one trait would tend to cancel out the other. Their combination is the paradox of Amy's character, perplexing even to the principal narrator, Dr Kennedy. He implies that the only possible explanation lies in a distinction between Amy's dullness as an inertness of mind -- plainly called "stupidity" by her employer's wife -- and imagination as a less clearly definable quality of the spirit and the emotions. If Amy is incapable of logical thought and conceptualization, her abundant kindness and pity, suggests the doctor, are not possible without imagination: "there is no kindness of heart without a certain amount of imagination" (T 120). In this respect Amy is a mild forerunner of Stevie, Winnie's retarded brother in *The Secret Agent*.

Dr Kennedy takes his view even further when he adds that Amy "fell in love under circumstances that leave no doubt in the matter; for you need imagination to form a notion of beauty at all, and still more to discover your ideal in an unfamiliar

shape" (T 120). This statement recalls the French Romantics' vague notion of beauty and the ideal.<sup>13</sup> But it is as much Conrad's own statement about his artistic ideal as it is his narrator's about Amy, and is significant in two ways: it exposes Conrad's purpose in writing the story and relates it to the broader artistic intent behind Conrad's creative work in general. Like many Victorian works Conrad's tale has its message, and, as in most of his early fiction, that message is spelt out plainly. Conrad endows Amy with the saving grace of imagination which accomplishes, at least temporarily, the double feat of holding fear at bay and enabling her to welcome the unfamiliar with joy -- to recognize her ideal in it. If fear of the unknown could always be defeated by such faculties as imagination, cultural diversity would become an enriching experience instead of a source of hostility, and all peoples would develop a keener awareness of their common humanity and a greater tolerance of whatever does not conform to their own ways. Where imagination is coupled with an active and enquiring mind tolerance more readily appears, as it does in Dr Kennedy and his visitor (the outer narrator).

"Liberty of imagination," says Conrad in his 1905 essay on books, "should be the most precious possession of a novelist."<sup>14</sup> Much later, in his preface to *Within the Tides* (1920), he states that if imagination appears to have greater freedom of play in his works about "men who go to sea and live on lonely islands" and "matters outside the general run of everyday experience" (JCF 210) such things have nevertheless been real for him, a part of his own past. To impart them to his readers he felt all the more exhorted to render them truthfully and convincingly. He therefore had to discipline his imagination and channel it into a "scrupulous fidelity to the truth of my own sensations," so that the sense of unfamiliarity might be overcome. "The problem was to make unfamiliar things credible" (JCF 211). Here Conrad uses "unfamiliar" in its limited sense of 'unacquainted,' without the connotation of the metaphysically "Incomprehensible." He intends to evoke strange peoples, things and places which, though functioning according to their own laws,

have their place in the real world. He attempts to transmit a full awareness of these foreign elements so that they will no longer appear strange (unreal), by placing them in "their proper atmosphere of actuality" (JCF 211).

Conrad's artistic intent of making the unfamiliar credible is integrally bound to the moral significance of his cosmopolitanism, of his desire to portray people and things foreign in such a way that his readers believe and accept them. Speaking in *A Personal Record* (1912) of the composition of *Almayer's Folly*, his first published work of fiction, Conrad alludes to the moral significance of the intercultural theme as an inseparable part of his creative intent.

Unknown to my respectable landlady. It was my practice directly after breakfast to hold animated receptions of Malays, Arabs and half-castes. They did not clamour aloud for my attention. They came with a silent and irresistible appeal -- and the appeal, I affirm here, was not to my self love or my vanity. It seems, now, to have had a moral character, for why should the memory of these beings, seen in their obscure, sun-bathed existence, demand to express itself in the shape of a novel, except on the ground of that mysterious fellowship which unites in a community of hopes and fears all the dwellers on this earth? (JCF 128)

A sense of faithfulness to the past sets the dominant tone of this passage. People Conrad claims to have known long ago and will not see again appeal to his loyalty. He cannot return to them, he cannot express his fidelity except by writing about them. But Conrad's loyalty goes beyond this appeal from his past. In so far as all people share the human condition they are kin; and the fidelity of which Conrad speaks here relates to a broader sense of loyalty to humankind. It not only motivates his writing but also appears as a theme, often together with its antonym, betrayal, in many of his fictive works.<sup>15</sup> In several sea tales the ship appears as a

microcosm and its crew make up the universal kind of community and "fellowship" Conrad envisages here. "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" in particular celebrates the anonymous heroism of toil and fidelity that prevails in spite of the unusual strain imposed upon it by collective self doubt, weakness and sentimentalism revolving around a consumptive black crew member.

Like the Malays, Arabs and half-castes that appear in some of Conrad's novels, Yanko steps out of an obscure existence in a foreign world, but he projects onto the story, at least in one part, his own view of the English village as foreign and sometimes even backward, in much the same spirit as the Persian hero of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* perceives European society. The readers unwittingly change places with the foreigner and find themselves to be outside observers of their own community. This defamiliarization of the reader's own world occurs together with the familiarization of the foreign character. It goes hand in hand with making "the unfamiliar credible." These two opposite processes take place simultaneously, joining forces to bring about ultimate conviction. And what matters most for Conrad is that the reader be convinced and that the conviction deepen the sense of belonging to the human community.

Only two pages after the above-quoted statement on the moral purpose of his writing Conrad relates that moral purpose to his aesthetic intent.

What is it that Novalis says? "It is certain my conviction gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it." And what is a novel if not a conviction of our fellow-men's existence strong enough to take upon itself a form of imagined life clearer than reality and whose accumulated verisimilitude of collected episodes puts to shame the pride of documentary history? (JCF 130)

The novel should convince its readers of the fellowship of the human community by bringing what it portrays to life in a way that recorded facts of history cannot do,

through the faithful rendering of sensations, of those "necessary and sympathetic reservations and qualifications" which give to truth "its semblance of human fellowship" (JCF 213). The strong sense of the human bond, the conviction of "our fellow men's existence" is one with the credibility and conviction of the work of art. Conrad makes this same moral/aesthetic link in his preface to "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*."

Art itself may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its very aspect. (JCF 160)

Conrad rarely offers a glimpse of the ideal situation without also showing us the other side of the coin -- things as they stand in reality. The triumph of Amy's imagination over fear is short-lived. She was at first both too dull to conceive of the problems that might arise from her love for Yanko and too imaginative to allow room for fear. And yet, if both of these paradoxical traits contribute to her fearlessness in the early stage, they also serve to augment her fear at the end. In that final incident her dullness prevents her from understanding the real cause of her husband's strange behaviour, while imagination, once sat upon the track of fear instead of the ideal, only develops it into terror. The ending, then, is tragic.

One other factor that brings on the unfortunate turn of events, and also increases the fear, is lack of exposure. It appears in many of Conrad's works as an ignorance of the world at large or even of places just outside one's own community.<sup>16</sup> It aggravates the problem of cultural isolation and intercultural misunderstanding, but nowhere does it play such an important role as in "Amy Foster," where it takes the form of naivete, simplicity and inexperience.

To begin with, Yanko has been duped, along with other peasants from his native district, into a fraudulent scheme of emigration to America, for which his father sells the only family cow, a pair of ponies and a plot of land. Yanko is persuaded that he will make up this lost fortune many times over by picking up gold nuggets lying about on American soil. To this natural gullibility of his character is added Yanko's total ignorance of the external world. He has never set eyes on a train, a station, or a city, a ship, a seaport or the sea. Dr Kennedy, who relates the story of Yanko's journey, retains the vocabulary and expressions of the young man as if to demonstrate Yanko's unfamiliarity with these experiences. In these passages giving Yanko's point of view everything he sees appears new and strange, and the reader sees everything through Yanko's own eyes. What belongs to our everyday world of common experiences is defamiliarized to the reader. Trains are called "steam machines" and the ship is described as "a great house on the water [whose] walls were smooth and black" (T 127). And the masts are said to be "growing from the roof" like "bare trees in the shape of crosses, extremely high" (T 127). These descriptions, taken together, form the very model of the dual, simultaneous process of defamiliarizing the familiar and making the unfamiliar credible (in this case the foreign Yanko with his extreme innocence).

Yanko's innocence magnifies the effect on him of cultural shock during his first period of time in England. And he might have suffered a better fate had he been shipwrecked in the vicinity of a town whose inhabitants had themselves experienced something of the external world. In isolated villages the simple folk are out of touch with the more sophisticated, urban areas of their own society. They have little knowledge beyond the unquestioning faith that their own nation is the most civilized. That which is different or foreign is automatically thought inferior, even primitive, and is regarded with suspicion. Yanko, with his dark complexion and expressive manner, is called by the names of things that are strange, disliked, and even feared. He is referred to as a "hairy sort of gypsy fellow" and a "funny

tramp" (T 130), a "dirty tramp" and "miry creature" (T 131), and an "escaped lunatic" and "dangerous maniac" (T 132). The locals believe they have finally hit upon the secret of his identity when one of them, a little more enlightened, suggests that Yanko might be "a bit of a Hindoo [sic]" (T 138), thus exaggerating his foreignness and perceiving him as coming from a land even further away and more different from England than his actual country of origin. Finally, when Yanko demonstrates the lively folkdancing of his country, he is called "an excitable devil" (T 145). The irony lies in the almost primitively hostile reception they give him, prompted as it is by both fear and, paradoxically, a complacent sense of superiority.

Aggressiveness abates with time as Yanko becomes a more familiar sight, but he is never fully accepted.

His foreignness had a peculiar and indelible stamp. At last people became used to seeing him. But they never became used to him.  
(T 144)

For the village people a feeling of familiarity towards Yanko does not exceed the sense perception of sight. All their understanding is limited to the visual, the physical eye, but not the eye of the mind. In the early stages after his arrival the villagers "followed [him] with their eyes" in a state of fright. Now they can open their eyes upon Yanko without fear, but they still cannot open their hearts to him.<sup>17</sup> If the ignorance and simplicity of these people play a part in the tragic events of the story, it should not be forgotten that Amy is one of them. The villagers are a people of limited vision, and whatever may be Amy's behaviour towards Yanko in the beginning, her cultural background, which 'fostered' her, finally reclaims her.

Besides Amy, only one other character in the local population takes an interest in Yanko, and that is "old Swaffer," the man who first began to suspect that Yanko might be a foreigner and perhaps a "Hindoo." In knowledge, understanding

and tolerance, Swaffer can be placed somewhere between the hostile villagers and Dr Kennedy. Swaffer takes Yanko home to his farm and allows him to work for his board, and is generally more benevolent than the other characters, including Amy's father. However, Yanko stays at first in one of the smaller, detached buildings of the farm; he only receives wages and takes his meals at the kitchen table after he has saved Swaffer's granddaughter from drowning in a pond. On the other hand, when Yanko wishes to marry Amy, and all the village redoubles its hostility to him, Swaffer stands behind the project and presents Yanko with a cottage on his own property. Old Swaffer combines a rigorous discipline and a severe sense of justice and hard work with tolerance and open-mindedness springing from his great love of reading and his natural curiosity. And yet he is very much part of the rural life. These various traits make of him one of the most realistic and convincing characters in the story.

In spite of the overall directness and simplicity of this tale, one aspect of its form, at least, is complex. The multi-frame narrative, or story within a story, was a favourite narrative method of Conrad. Already in "Heart of Darkness," "Youth", and *Lord Jim*, he had introduced Marlow, the narrator/participator, who was also to figure in the later novel, *Chance* (1914). The unnamed narrator of the frame or outer story of "Amy Foster" speaks in the first person, though the story begins as if it were being told by the omniscient author. Only in the third long paragraph, after a detailed description of the town of Colebrook, Brenzett and the surrounding area, do the words "my" and "I" make their quiet, unobtrusive appearance, and it is easy to let them pass entirely unnoticed.

"Amy Foster" opens with the name of the country doctor, Kennedy, and gives the impression that he is to be the protagonist. But after the reader discovers that the story is in fact a first person narration, it becomes clear that Kennedy, too, is yet another narrator. Although, like Marlow, he participates in the action (mostly as

the doctor attending the castaway), Dr Kennedy plays only a minor part in the events he reports. His most important role is the telling of the story. The boxed story effect created by the use of these two narrators is heightened by Yanko's account of his passage and shipwreck. Although Dr Kennedy also narrates Yanko's story, he separates it from the main body of the tale by using many of the castaway's own words and expressions and by a style suggestive of indirect discourse. We smile with him at Yanko's ingenuousness and enjoy the irony of certain incidents: "he had never seen a ship before. This was the ship that was going to swim all the way to America" (T 127), or "all the time a great noise of wind went on outside and heavy blows fell -- boom! boom!" (T 125), or ". . . the American kaiser would not take everybody. Oh no! he himself [the bogus government official] had a great difficulty in getting accepted" (T 128).

All the same, it is Dr Kennedy who narrates this part, and in fact not one of the characters in "Amy Foster" tells his or her own story; the work offers a highly filtered and twice-removed -- and even at one time thrice-removed -- account of its events, with plenty of room for the narrator's perspectives to colour the reader's judgement.

We can never be sure exactly where Conrad himself stands in all this, or which characters or narrators most faithfully adhere to Conrad's own line of thought, although they constantly drop tempting and provocative hints along the way. The ambiguity is always intended and never resolved. It functions both as a means to arouse the reader's mind out of the passive, receptive mode into active participation, and as a set of masks behind which Conrad may disguise himself.<sup>18</sup> Nor does this ambiguity stop at the alternation of different narrators, characters and viewpoints. An apparent change or contradiction in attitude is often found in the same character. When the outer narrator of "Amy Foster" remarks that Amy "seems a dull creature," Kennedy gives the impression at first of whole-hearted agreement.

He describes her as passive and inert, and admits that he does not know "what induced me to notice her at all," if not because there are "faces that call your attention by a curious want of definiteness in their whole aspect" (T 119). Two pages later, however, Kennedy speaks warmly of her kindness, pity and imagination, and her perception of her ideal. We are given two views of Amy, both apparently true and both by the same individual. A sense of puzzlement dominates the doctor's own attitude to her, and this is imparted to the reader together with a vague awareness of the error of categorically judging others, even those who appear simple.

The outer narrator explains from the first that Dr Kennedy is intelligent, educated and of an enquiring mind; Dr Kennedy is therefore in a position to offer a broad, unprejudiced view of the characters and events. He also suggests questions about Amy's behaviour and seems to hope that his friend and visitor, the outer narrator (and through him the reader) will help to answer them, though in fact Dr Kennedy himself prompts his audience. Conrad thus draws his readers into the story, enticing them to the same spirit of enquiry, the same desire for understanding, and the same sense of common humanity that he gives his principal narrator. The combination of an external and an inner, participating narrator, while it draws the readers into a sense of involvement, also achieves a detachment that encourages them to the effort of objectivity which the doctor, as a man of science, represents. The appeal of science for Conrad lay in its austere impersonal approach to all that comes within its purview. In his late essay on "Geography and Explorers" Conrad compares the Conquistadors, the seekers of El Dorado and other early explorers motivated by material interests who did not give "a single thought to the science of geography" with the scientific discoverers such as James Cook, "whose only object was the search for truth."<sup>19</sup> Their unspectacular heroism won Conrad's admiration. Owing to his scientific education and experience, Dr Kennedy alone recognizes the full impact of the final events even before they occur. He alone

remains tolerant and compassionate to the last, understanding that fear is the main source of intolerance. He has the insight to divine what may be happening within Amy Foster's mind, although his scientific detachment will not allow him to draw hasty conclusions. He can only question and wonder.

I walked away thoughtfully; I wondered whether his [Yanko's] difference, his strangeness, were not penetrating with repulsion that dull nature they had begun by irresistibly attracting. I wondered. . . . (T 151)

We are moved to wonder with him, to stand back from the characters, even as we become fully involved in the story.

Had the whole tale been told by Yanko himself, Conrad's British readers would quickly have lost patience with the irrelevant (to them) account of a foreigner's symptoms of cultural shock, not to mention the problems of language and credibility. (Can a tale be well told by a foreigner who has only just learned English?) And neither Yanko nor Amy, in their simplicity, could have offered any depth of insight into their own behaviour.

On the other hand, had Conrad employed the conventional authorial voice, many parts of his tale would have come across as condescending to his readers, and even dogmatic. In fact, some Conrad scholars feel that parts of Dr Kennedy's narration still come dangerously close to a patronising tone. Lawrence Graver, for example, believes that the doctor's "elaborate classical allusions and solemn moralizing are sometimes strained and unconvincing," and that Kennedy "may have been a thematic and structural necessity for Conrad, but he is a mixed blessing for the reader."<sup>20</sup>

Another possible interpretation of Dr Kennedy's manner is to regard him as an unwitting self parody. What Graver calls "moralizing" does not appear in the actual content of Kennedy's speeches as strongly as in his extremely formal and cadenced rhetoric, which sounds a little too lofty and self-important for a man telling a story to an old friend visiting him. His sentences, laden with numerous clusters of phrases and carefully balanced breath groups ending with strings of adjectives convey a subtle irony on the part of Conrad as the actor behind the mask, or the puppeteer controlling his narrator, forcing him to adopt either an unnatural, stylized tone or the voice of the other characters like Yanko, Smith, Swaffer or Amy's father. Kennedy is alienated from his own language; he does not speak as himself. Even when not rendering the thoughts and language of others, he strikes a pose. For all his narrating, Kennedy is verbally as estranged from himself as Yanko was at first isolated without a language at all. (Hence Kennedy's story is most effective when he speaks in the voice -- and sees through the eyes -- of others). No matter how we interpret Dr Kennedy's discourse, there can be no doubt that by enlisting two spokesmen with whom readers can initially identify more readily than with the foreign Yanko or the simple Amy, Conrad gradually sensitizes his readers to these characters. His participating -- or semi-participating -- narrators are always more articulate than most of his characters, more observant, more detached, yet able to be touched and moved (even into action). With one foot in the story and one outside, as it were, they can be involved while still offering a broad perspective of the events. Their role is to interpret, and either to indicate openly or to suggest subtly how characters, incidents and situations affect each other.

With cultural isolation an obvious theme in "Amy Foster," my discussion so far has been restricted to the phenomenological (rather than interpretive) plane, especially since what appears on the surface is indeed also the substance. Conjectures have been made as to the possible underlying biographical elements of the story, given Conrad's Polish descent and Yanko's origins in Central Europe. (No

other Conradian main character comes from a region so near to Poland). "Amy Foster" is not an entirely original work. Its resemblance to Ford Madox Ford's *Cinque Ports* written in 1900 is striking, at least in the description of the castaway's reception in England. But Conrad no doubt also drew upon his own experience of foreignness for his convincing picture of Yanko's first few weeks in an alien country. Conrad's Polishness is not of great significance here; the abiding sense of being a stranger in a strange land is, no matter the country of origin.

In other more complex works like *Lord Jim*, "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*," or "Heart of Darkness," cultural isolation appears as a sign of an inner, deeper-seated alienation within an individual character. Sometimes it is an external symptom of a character's sense of alienation from society as a whole, as with Jim, and sometimes it appears as an aesthetic symbol or image that supports and intensifies a character's inner conflict, such as James Wait's blackness that heightens the feeling of difference and estrangement from his shipmates, though the first and foremost cause of that feeling is the knowledge of death lurking within him. It may even be both the psychological (thematic) and symbolic (formal) aspects subtly intermixed, as appears to be the case in "Heart of Darkness." In "Amy Foster," however, cultural isolation is largely external, and there is no delving into the mind and motives of Yanko, whose simplicity leaves no room for complex purposes and designs, or even for hind thoughts. Everything is overt, and cultural isolation neither signifies anything else nor is represented by anything else. Loss of self in Yanko is purely cultural, brought on by his shipwreck. Neither his loss of identity nor Amy's fear move out of themselves to suggest other underlying causes or concerns. At most, the apparently sudden change in Amy's conduct is intriguing, but Dr Kennedy points out the contradictions of her nature and suggests reasons for them almost in the same breath, in the way he presents her. This is as far as the tale goes beneath the surface, beneath its overt subject.

And yet the final outcome in this most straightforward of Conrad's tales, and for two of his simplest characters, is tragic enough. The negative side of cultural diversity dominates here, and will continue to dominate in other works where psychological complexes or other complexities of character join with overpowering outside forces such as political situations and social pressure to complicate and aggravate the problems of cultural difference and intercultural conflict.

## CHAPTER TWO

Cultural attitude as intended theme and hidden intent:

tales of undermining and camouflaging

The intercultural question is never wholly absent from any of Conrad's fiction. When it is not an obvious, dominant theme it remains hidden, to be glimpsed through the web of more conspicuous themes to which it is related. When it does stand out the ostensible message and the viewpoints of characters and narrators are not always fully in line with that of the work as a whole which builds itself around their variety. The skills by which the author achieves and communicates these disparities will be discussed fully in the last part of this study devoted to form, structure and narrative technique. For the present I am restricting myself to pointing out where some of them occur and to what other themes they are related.

Present-day Conrad scholars have discovered 'new' topics of interest in a number of his works, among them colonialism, imperialism, racism. No one called them by these names when Conrad was writing -- they were unknown as conscious subjects of creative literature.<sup>1</sup> Conrad was a precursor of the new attitudes. He did not directly confront these issues because in his time they were not perceived as issues.<sup>2</sup> But he was baffled and disturbed by some of the practices that contemporary views of 'colony,' 'empire,' and 'race' seemed to encourage, and he questioned their moral validity. This sense of bafflement and questioning comes as a natural consequence of his concern with intercultural interaction as it relates to the more general moral basis of human behaviour and discourse. Colonialism, imperialism, racism are some of the topics that Conrad treats with varying degrees of directness or intensity.

"Heart of Darkness"

To observe the range between manifest theme and hidden intent we need only compare two works that stand at opposite extremes in this respect, though they share the same locale and superficial subject matter. "An Outpost of Progress" and "Heart of Darkness" are too different in their form and treatment of themes to bear comparison in any great depth, precisely because "An Outpost" is a short, straightforward story which remains, like "Amy Foster," within the bounds of its own clearly stated themes and meanings, whereas "Heart of Darkness," perhaps more than any other Conrad work, offers a remarkable openness of interpretive possibilities. All the same, as a painter's preliminary pencil sketch can lead to a greater appreciation of the final masterwork, even though fundamental changes may have been made along the way, the very directness of "An Outpost" can provide insight as to how to approach "Heart of Darkness."

Both works share the setting of jungle trading stations in Central Africa that deal mainly in ivory. The posts can be reached only by river steamers, and the Europeans there are consequently isolated from their own society and culture. "An Outpost" centres around two white men in one small trading post, and is narrated conventionally in the third person authorial voice, with much authorial explication and commentary. "Heart of Darkness" is told by a narrator recounting the story of yet another narrator, Marlow, as if in Marlow's own words.<sup>3</sup> Resembling "Amy Foster" in its double narrator and frame narrative construction, "Heart of Darkness" also has two quite different settings, the first to match the outer frame, and giving the atmosphere in which Marlow tells of his experiences: evening aboard the yawl *Nellie* on the river Thames. The inner story, instead of focusing on a single trading station in Africa, follows Marlow inland from the coast, from station to station, concentrating on his trip up the Congo as captain of a small river steamer in search of Kurtz, a company employee and ivory dealer. As noted in the previous chapter,

the two white men in "An Outpost," Kayerts and Carrier, are driven mad and reduced to savagery by their isolation and loneliness. But they surrender easily because, as Conrad states explicitly, their characters have been formed entirely by their cultural environment and must inevitably break down in the totally unfamiliar world and conditions of Central Africa. The borderline between 'civilized' and 'primitive' disappears, the first being only a frail veneer that rubs off easily in this jungle outpost.

The equation of "character" with "surroundings," of "essence" with "expression," stated so clearly in "An Outpost," reappears in all its stages of complexity in "Heart of Darkness," but Conrad shows by example, rather than telling didactically, what these stages are and how isolation serves to bring them on. Beginning with the Swedish steamer captain's account of a countryman who hanged himself for no reason other than that the "sun [was] too much for him, or the country perhaps"(HD18),<sup>4</sup> the story gives a variety of responses to isolation from several characters Marlow meets along his way to the final encounter with Kurtz, the object of his search. One reaction of isolation, quite different from that of the Swede, is the spotless and elegant apparel worn by the company accountant at the coastal station. Marlow's shock at the sight of sick and dying black men under the trees is immediately followed by the startling, vision-like appearance of this man in snow-white trousers and immaculate, starched shirt. Marlow's ambiguous attitude towards this attempt to maintain at all cost the outer expression or 'costume' of European civilization sets the tone for the more complex and puzzling ambiguities that develop in the course of the story. He regards the accountant's efforts to keep up his personal appearance with a mixture of genuine admiration and latent irony.

Yes. I respected his collars, his vast cuffs, his brushed hair. . . . in the great demoralisation of the land he kept up his appearance. That's backbone. His starched collars and got-up shirt-fronts were achievements of character. (HD 21)

Beneath the overt admiration of the accountant lies an ironic grotesqueness in the timing of this encounter, in the dazzling whiteness of the clothes and the man in them alongside the wretchedness of the Africans whom he completely ignores, and in the exaggerated elegance under the hot climate (tie, varnished boots, parasol "held in a big white hand"). This is Marlow's first white man in Africa, a telling sign of what is in store. The final impression the accountant gives is not admirable but pathetic in his pouring whatever courage he may have into the mere formality of dress and manner, only to appear absurdly incongruous. Illusion stands in for reality; character is equated with costume, "expression" turned into "essence." If the passage from "An Outpost," quoted in Chapter One, insists that "essence" is no more than "expression," the above excerpt, though its fundamental message is the same, ironically reverses the emphasis by seeming to state that "expression" is everything.

The above case is rather unusual, however. Among the more common responses to cultural isolation is drunkenness. Marlow briefly comes across such a person on his way to the Central Station. Camped on the path through the jungle, together with an escort of armed natives, the man tells Marlow he is looking after the upkeep of the road. Marlow can see neither road nor upkeep, unless, he adds, "the body of a middle-aged nigger with a bullet-hole in the forehead upon which I absolutely stumbled three miles farther on may be considered as a permanent improvement" (HD 23). The incident presages the lawlessness he will encounter on a grander scale at the Central Station and beyond.

Conrad also gives a fuller account of the physical aspects of isolation and exposure to unfamiliar conditions when Marlow makes the two hundred mile trek through the jungle to the Central Station with another European who falls prey to fever and must be carried most of the way. Fever had also contributed to the moral decadence of Kayerts and Carlier in "An Outpost" by weakening their physical strength and resistance. They had come to the outpost because their predecessor

had died of fever. In "Heart of Darkness" Marlow suffers from fever. He also learns that men die of it even before they can return to the company station to be sent home. So many men are lost in this way that the only people who attain management positions are those who do not succumb to sickness, irrespective of their talent or competence. And the greediest and most unscrupulous seem to have the most robust health. Hence the Central Station manager and his outlaw uncle rule the region, the first acting as a mask of officialdom for the second, both of them having been in Africa for three years without becoming ill.<sup>5</sup>

The Central Station is already two hundred miles from the coastal company station. The farther inland Marlow goes, the more chaos and lawlessness he encounters. This situation is yet another illustration of Conrad's argument in "An Outpost" that the "civilised crowd[s]" blind belief in the "irresistible force of its institutions and of its morals, in the power of its police and of its opinion" gives way to the "discomposing intrusion (of) a suggestion of things vague, uncontrollable, and repulsive" when it comes into contact with "primitive nature" (TU 86). At the Central Station even appearances are not kept up, and cultural isolation has long since joined forces with inner moral corruption. Where the mere trappings of civilization have replaced the moral fibre behind the flourishing of a people and its culture, contact with the primitive "essence" of human nature reveals those trappings to be without substance, and nothing is left.

In both "An Outpost" and "Heart of Darkness" the immediate cause of corruption is greed, and more specifically, the scramble for ivory. This, after all, is why the European companies are in Africa. It is the economic reason for colonization, the material cause of their physical presence. In "An Outpost" the trading station is run by the "Great Trading Company," a vague, all-encompassing title which avoids specifying any nationality and easily translates into any one of the national European trading companies that abounded in the Nineteenth Century and

functioned as the central agent of colonization. In "Heart of Darkness" no nationality is specified either, but place descriptions and passing allusions are more transparent, homing in upon the Congo Free State of the 1890s sponsored by Leopold II of Belgium -- a regime notorious for its cruelty and exploitation cloaked in the guise of philanthropic intentions. Conrad's choice of a worst case scenario based on his experiences need not mean that he is restricting himself to that case alone. As the vaguer, more generalized descriptions in "An Outpost" serve to indicate, the specific example in "Heart of Darkness" may be taken as representing a more general situation. In fact Conrad does not limit himself to the subject of the Europeans in Africa, nor even to his own times, but universalizes the situation he describes by referring at the outset to emissaries of the Roman Empire in the wild country that was Britain. Through this opening discussion Conrad/Marlow emphasizes that the approach to his tale must not be absolute, but relative, and his reader's perspective must reach beyond the confines of the inner story. Marlow, the narrator of "Heart of Darkness," implies that the Roman conquest was violent, bloody, and 'honest' -- at least without the element of hypocrisy that characterized contemporary invasion in the name of civilization and enlightenment. "They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got" (HD 10). An earlier manuscript contained lines which make this point even clearer, but which Conrad must have felt were too direct to include.

That's all. The best of them is they didn't get up pretty fictions about it. Was there, I wonder, an association on a philanthropic basis to develop Britain, with some third rate king for a president and solemn old senators discoursing about it approvingly and philosophers with uncombed beards praising it, and men in market places crying it up. Not much! And that's what I like!<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, Conrad did not want to give himself away so soon or so easily. The allusion to Leopold is too obvious for one thing, but also Marlow would have been saying something that Conrad must have preferred his readers to infer, since quieter

allusions and suggestions of the same kind recur throughout the work. I will return to this aspect of the tale further on.

At the level of the individual, it appears on the surface that in both of these stories corruption is aggravated by cultural isolation because illness and loneliness bring on a gradual disintegration of personality and sap moral strength. Beneath the surface, however, but communicated more directly in "An Outpost," inherent character weakness deriving from habitual over-reliance on the system of one's own society is also at the root of individual corruption, which needs only the encouragement of the unfamiliar conditions in which these characters find themselves in order to ferment. The corruption of Kayerts and Carlier in "An Outpost" is best exemplified by the slave-for-ivory deal initiated by their native assistant, Makola, without their knowledge, but to which they acquiesce all too readily. As in "Amy Foster," fear and panic enter into play, and during the last scenes of this story, they join with isolation and corruption to bring about the blindness and madness of murder, which is followed in turn by suicide.

Corruption is far more complex in "Heart of Darkness," where it operates at different levels and in different ways depending on the characters concerned. Here Conrad explores more fully the relationship between individual and institutional corruption. The kind of materialistic exploitation or greed we see in "An Outpost" recurs among the station managers, assistants and employees in "Heart of Darkness," and it has the official seal of approval from the European government that sponsors colonization to the region. On the surface there seems to be no connection between this and the more subtle, psychological kind of corruption that takes place within individuals. One of the earliest, most pathetic cases of individual corruption is the briefly sketched incident of the death of the Danish river-boat captain Marlow replaces. In a quarrel over two black hens, the Dane had begun to beat a village chief mercilessly with a stick because, having been in Africa for two

years, "he probably felt the need at last of asserting his self-respect in some way" (HD 12). He was speared to death by the chief's son. The frustrated sense of his own unimportance among a small group of Europeans lost in the African wilderness impresses him as a kind of punishment which he transfers to the natives in a moment of dissatisfaction over a trifle. Not only the natives, but the Europeans themselves, suffer from the imported system by which the European companies are run, a system imposed on a land where it has no place.

The case of the Dane, however, is one of the most straightforward examples of how this psychological kind of corruption can infiltrate the simplest and most gentle of characters. As Marlow moves inland looking for Kurtz he is gradually drawn into the sphere of that same corruption; he comes to know the appeal of the wild, senses a link with its "simple people" (HD 53), and understands the temptation to egocentrism and megalomania for the white man in such an environment. In this world of untamed nature the European can see no demarcation between a *primaevae* instinct for survival and the seizure and worship of power. The farther Marlow goes the more complex are the instances of this insidious corruption. The penultimate example, before he meets Kurtz, is the young Russian unwittingly caught, with his air of naive innocence and romantic love of adventure, in the idol-worship of a monster.<sup>7</sup> The Russian has something of the idealism that Kurtz apparently once had, as Marlow discovers upon reading Kurtz's report written for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs. But in his naivete the Russian is also gullible and impressionable, and has given over all his judgement to an unquestioning faith in the greatness of Kurtz.

The corruption at work here develops in proportion to the idealism that the individual Europeans bring with them. It cannot be otherwise. The ideals themselves, the 'enlightening' and 'civilizing' of 'savages,' embody cultural imposition and invasion. They are so much a part of the European culture of that period that

the idealist who holds them cannot recognize their hypocritical mask or underlying moral baseness unless they are laid bare by defamiliarization. In a world as remote as Central Africa, where the moral order is so different as to appear to the Europeans completely lacking, the idealist can no longer take his own culture's ideals for granted, but is brought face to face with the horror of their unmasked reality. The temptation, then, is to give in to the frankness of power lust. Hence the ambiguity of Marlow's attitude to Kurtz, who betrays all his ideals and embraces cruel, bloody and 'honest' rampage and violence.

Marlow is fascinated by "the gifted Kurtz" (HD 48), but he is not completely spellbound like the Russian. He recognizes that Kurtz's "voice" (HD 48) and "magnificent eloquence" (HD 57) are still only gifts of 'expression' ("little more than a voice" HD 48), that do not reflect the man's 'essence,' the corruption of his "soul" which had gone "mad" (HD 65). The first time Marlow calls Kurtz "remarkable" he is speaking to the company manager, thinking to himself how Kurtz's corruption seems almost welcome alongside the hypocritical and sanctioned corruption that the manager represents.

It seems to me I had never breathed an atmosphere so vile, and I turned mentally to Kurtz for relief -- positively for relief. "Nevertheless, I think Mr Kurtz is a remarkable man," I said with emphasis. (HD 61)

Later Marlow repeats this judgement because Kurtz has recognized the horror within himself before dying.

After all, this was the expression of some sort of belief; it had candour, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth . . . (HD 69)

Essence and expression have come together in Kurtz's last words "The horror! The horror!" (HD 68)

To say that Kurtz 'goes native' when he discovers that his ideals are impossible to realize because they are a sham is to oversimplify his enigmatic character and to render what happens to him in the crudest terms; it is to neglect the many tonal inferences of the story. Conrad links the moral corruption of the intellectually gifted idealist with the institutionalized corruption behind the European presence in Africa. And he does so indirectly, in much the same way as he implicates all the European countries not mentioned by name. Kurtz's name is German, but we are told his mother was half English, his father half French. Kurtz's parentage places him in the position of the marginal man, without a specific identity, not wholly belonging to one community or another. He is "from the back of nowhere" (HD 50). But his multi-national background makes him the perfect choice for implementing the pan-European philanthropic ideals and writing reports for an "International" society. At the same time his mixed blood serves the purpose, in the text, of sharing out the culpability for his own atrocities as well as for the general exploitation of colonized Africa among all the European nations. "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" (HD 50), just as all Europe is represented in Africa, for besides the obvious allusions to Belgium, Conrad involves English, French, Swedish, Danish and Russian characters or groups, not to mention passing references to other (Dutch, German) European nationalities.

In Conrad's time 'empire' was a word to brandish loftily like a national flag, and it would have been inconceivable to affix a deprecatory '-ism' to 'imperial.' When 'imperialism' first came into usage it had a mixture of positive and negative connotations, the emphasis depending on the user and context. *The Westminster Review* of October 1858 made the first officially recorded use of the word, referring to national vigour and stern resolutions as tasks set by imperialism. The negative

connotations gained ground as the century wore on, and the word came to be equated with a form of despotism, with the result that the so-called imperialists shied away from the term. "As late as 1878, well after imperialism is said to have entered its most expansive stage, Lord Carnarvon, Colonial Secretary in two Conservative British Cabinets, wrote that he was 'perplexed' by the 'newly coined term.'"<sup>8</sup> Even had Conrad been so far in advance of his time as to use the term with its negative connotation, most of his contemporaries would neither have accepted nor appreciated such an interpretation of 'empire.' We approach Conrad from outside the imperialist/nationalist/racist system of late Nineteenth Century Britain, but we should remember that Conrad was writing within it. As Edward Said has put it in talking of "Heart of Darkness," imperialism when Conrad was writing "seemed an attitude that was inevitable and for which there was no alternative," but Conrad enables us "to realize that imperialism has been placed and located by history . . ."<sup>9</sup> While Conrad may not be able to pose an alternative, he offers a view by which to recognize how relative are the attitudes of his day.

On more than one occasion, Conrad explicitly denounced "the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human consciousness and geographical exploration."<sup>10</sup> He was clearly aware that any intercultural interaction associated with colonial exploitation must necessarily be negative, not only between exploiter and exploited, but also among the exploiting nations competing with each other. What happens to Kurtz signifies that all European activity in this part of the world (exploring, exploiting, suppressing, civilizing) automatically entails intercultural conflict as a consequence of its inherent moral corruption. In abandoning his ideals Kurtz has merely abolished the 'masquerade' of 'philanthropy,' as can be seen in the startling about-face of the single short sentence penned as a final note in the margin of his eloquent philanthropic report: "Exterminate all the brutes!" (HD 51) The link between Kurtz's, the Company's and the general Europeans' treatment of the

Africans stands out in Marlow's response to the young Russian's claim that the heads on the stakes outside Kurtz's house are those of 'rebels.'

I shocked him excessively by laughing. Rebels!  
 What would be the next definition I was to hear.  
 There had been *enemies, criminals, workers* --  
 and these were -- *rebels*. Those rebellious heads  
 looked very subdued to me on their sticks. (HD  
 58, my italics)

Marlow relates the so-called "rebels" to every previous encounter he had with native Africans, and to the way the Europeans perceive them on each occasion. The word 'enemies' above recalls specifically two incidents in which the whites fire blindly into the bush from boats, with no one in sight on land. The first is that of the French ship "firing into a continent."

Pop, would go one of the six-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish . . . and nothing happened. Nothing could happen. There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight: and it was not dissipated by somebody on board assuring me earnestly there was a camp of natives -- he called them, *enemies* -- hidden out of sight somewhere. (HD 17, my italics)

Marlow treats the use of "enemies" in this situation with a mocking irony, since the Africans can only be termed 'enemies' in the sense that they are defending themselves and their land from the European invaders. On the second occasion he does not use the word 'enemies,' but the scene is clearly a re-enactment in miniature -- this time upon the river -- of that first scene at the coast, and Marlow's attitude remains bitterly ironic.

A fusillade burst out under my feet. The pilgrims had opened with their Winchesters and were simply squirting lead into that bush. A deuce of a lot of smoke came up and drove

slowly forward. . . . and the arrows came in swarms. They might have been poisoned, but they looked as though they wouldn't kill a cat. (HD 46)

Marlow had already commented on this attack with arrows as hardly meriting to be so termed, since the accompanying cries "had not the fierce character boding of immediate hostile intention. . . . they had given me an irresistible impression of sorrow. . . . The action . . . in its essence was purely protective." (HD 44)

The second definition in Marlow's list of three, "criminals," refers to the men in chains and iron collars, the first men he saw as soon as he set foot upon African soil.

Another report from the cliff made me think suddenly of that ship of war I had seen firing into a continent. It was the same kind of ominous voice; but these men could by no stretch of imagination be called *enemies*. They were called *criminals* and the outraged law like the bursting shells had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea. (HD 19, my italics)

The law by which these men are declared criminals is that of the violent invader who fires guns from ships and explodes mines. Weaponry and the ability to destroy seem to be the only highly developed aspects of European society.

The third definition Marlow remembers as he talks with the Russian, "workers," refers to the group of men he saw lying about in the shade of trees at the coastal station, all sick or dying. This scene is signalled by yet another explosion.

Another mine on the cliff went off followed by a slight shudder of the soil under my feet. The *work* was going on. The work! And this was the place where some of the *helpers* had withdrawn to die.

. . . They were dying slowly -- it was very clear. They were not *enemies*, they were not *criminals*, they were nothing earthly now, nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest. These moribund shapes were free as air -- and nearly as thin. (HD 20, my italics)

The sardonic irony continues in terming these violent explosions "work" and those engaged in it "helpers," a word with the nuance of 'volunteers.' These men, who in fact have no choice but to work for the company, are returned to their freedom only when they become fatally sick, and are no longer of any use.

Every word of Marlow's list -- "enemies, criminals, workers" -- has a specific counterpart in the earlier narrative, and in all cases the Africans are at a distinct disadvantage. They and their world are the invaded, the exploited, the penetrated. Marlow sees Kurtz's rebels -- as the Russian calls them -- in exactly the same light. And every aspect of Kurtz's conduct is linked in a similar way to the wider question of the European presence in Africa and even the question of invasion in any land. Kurtz represents the best that Europe could give to the cause of "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways" as Marlow's aunt describes it (HD 16), and what happens to Kurtz dramatizes the inherent fallacy of the idea behind the cause.

Conrad knew that to write polemically would persuade and convince no one. If he was after conviction, he could only give a picture of the situation in Africa as he had observed it, not through argument, but through a faithful rendition of his own reactions, perceptions, sensations. He had to begin from the contemporary British reader's point of view, and lead and entice through irony and ambiguity, so that the reader would be, if not convinced, at least discomposed or disconcerted at the end of

the tale; that is, in a position open to wonder and question. This is quite different from Conrad's direct and didactic method in "An Outpost" -- the least effective and most tiresome aspect of that story. The very passages in "An Outpost" which help us to appreciate "Heart of Darkness" interrupt the action and obstruct the effect of the narrative in which they occur. Conrad's broad irony "might be excusable," says Graver, "if it were not for a half dozen passages of reflection in which points already established through action or irony are repeated in candid expository prose."<sup>11</sup> These rankle as much as the didactic moralising of Dr Kennedy in "Amy Foster." On the other hand, although V.J. Emmett agrees that Conrad made "a more richly complex story of 'Heart of Darkness,'" he also believes: "The gains, though worth the price, are achieved only at the expense . . . of the beautiful clarity of outline found in 'An Outpost of Progress.'"<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless in "Heart of Darkness" Conrad finds a way to question moral values without obtruding upon his readers, to be critical without sermonizing.

At times it appears that Marlow explicitly condones those values, as in the often quoted passage (usually out of context) on the conquest of the earth, but this is no more than a temporary placation in preparation for deeper and more disturbing ironies. To return that famous passage to its context, Marlow speaks first of the straightforwardness of early Roman conquest, free of pretension or hypocrisy. Only then does he make the general statement.

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it, not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea -- something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. . . . (HD 10)

Many interpretations stop at some point before the dash, holding that the Swiftian touch of the first sentence is cancelled out by the (apparently) serious allusion to the "idea" behind conquest, an idea that "redeems" and excuses all. But it is what follows the dash that contains the final point (and position) of Marlow and that in fact cancels out the "idea" through its association with the narrator's description of him.<sup>13</sup> For in the beginning of the same paragraph the narrator compares Marlow's physical pose to that of a Buddha "preaching in European clothes and without a lotus-flower" (HD 10). A hint of the ludicrous in this image establishes an ironic distance between Conrad (or his narrator) and Marlow, and should put readers on their guard for any further developments of this kind. And indeed Marlow himself returns to religious imagery in describing the "idea" behind conquest, an idea which is "set up" as a kind of idol (does one 'set up' or 'cultivate' real gods? truths?) as if for the sake of inventing something to bow down before and offer sacrifice to. The very excess of the language and religious imagery makes a mockery of the "idea" by turning it into an object of 'cult' worship and destroys what the entire passage has been 'setting up.' Whether Conrad intends Marlow to be conscious of it or not, these final words point to the contradictions and exaggerations that upset any chance of faith in this "redeeming" idea. They also indicate Marlow's own difficulty in believing what he is saying, as do the suspension marks and final words of the paragraph signalling that he breaks off his speech as if, having come too far, he is unable to continue along this road.

The conflict between a "redeeming" idea and the opposing view linking it with corruption is presented more explicitly in *Nostromo*. Charles Gould, British owner of the San Tome silver mine in the fictitious Latin-American republic of Costaguana argues that only material interests can bring about social good.

What is wanted here is law, good faith, order, security. Anyone can declaim about these things, but I pin my faith to material interests. Only let the material interests once get a firm footing, and they are bound to impose the

conditions on which alone they can continue to exist. That's how your money-making is justified here in the face of lawlessness and disorder. It is justified because the security which it demands must be shared with an oppressed people. A better justice will come afterwards. That's your ray of hope.<sup>14</sup>

Mrs Gould and Dr Monygham represent the opposing view. Mrs Gould reflects bitterly on her husband's illusions linking material interest with the goals of a new era of justice:

There was something inherent in the necessities of successful *action* which carried with it the moral degradation of the idea. She saw the San Tome mountain hanging over the Campo, over the whole land, feared, hated, wealthy; more soulless than any tyrant, more pitiless and *autocratic* than the worst Government; ready to crush innumerable lives in the expansion of its greatness. (N 431, my italics)

Autocracy for Conrad is always "soulless" because it is separated, as he states in his 1905 essay, "Autocracy and War," "from the benighted, starved souls of its people." The need of States to make "their existence manifest to themselves is determined in the direction of physical activity":

The idea of ceasing to grow in territory, in strength, in wealth, in influence -- in anything but wisdom and self-knowledge is odious to them as the omen of the end. *Action*, in which is to be found the illusion of a mastered destiny, can alone satisfy our uneasy vanity and lay to rest the haunting fear of the future. Let us act lest we perish -- is the cry. And the only form of action open to a State can be no other than aggressive nature.<sup>15</sup> (My italics)

This is why Mrs Gould can see only "moral degradation" in the "successful action" of the San Tome mine which is more autocratic and soulless than any State. It is Dr Monygham who passes the most damning judgement upon Gould's material

interests and exposes the real premises on which they are founded, and unfavourably compares the autocracy of the Gould Concession with that of a State or "worst government" -- the dictatorship which had previously reigned over Costaguana:

There is no peace and no rest in the development of material interests. They have their law, and their justice. But it is founded on expediency, and is inhuman; it is without rectitude, without the continuity and the force that can be found only in a moral principle. Mrs Gould, the time approaches when all that the Gould Concession stands for shall weigh as heavily upon the people as the barbarism, cruelty, and misrule of a few years back.' (N 423)

The explicitness of *Nostromo* is almost entirely absent from "Heart of Darkness," and the rift between the "redeeming idea" and the corrupt reality of colonialism is illustrated instead by the scenes and actions of "Heart of Darkness," and by Marlow's inner conflicts expressed in a language of uncertainty, ambiguity and subdued irony.

That Marlow himself has been left puzzled and disturbed by his African adventure is suggested when the narrator states that "we were fated . . . to hear about one of Marlow's inconclusive experiences" (HD 11), and when Marlow himself says that his trip to Africa threw "a kind of light on everything about me -- and into my thoughts." He describes this light as "sombre" and "not very clear," but adds "And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light" (HD 11). There follows yet another ironic phrase, perhaps one of the most ironic in view of the story's development:

I was loafing about, hindering you fellows in your work and *invading* your homes, just as though I had got a *heavenly mission to civilise you*. (HD 11, my italics)

Marlow is speaking to his friends in a language full of reminiscences of the story he is about to tell, and the reader is as surprised by his choice of vocabulary as would have been his supposed company of friends -- the narrator, and also the Lawyer, the Accountant and the Director of Companies. All three of these professions characterize European prosperity as well as being the professions most actively involved in colonial expansion. Such individuals would have been shocked at the thought that Marlow, their countryman, friend, and peer, could even conceive that they might need civilizing. It is supposed to be friendly banter, but Marlow, once again, is giving himself away, allowing his preoccupations to show through. The great "civilising" work in Africa had already struck him as no less droll and absurd than his friends would have found it had it been practised on them.

This whole preliminary scene, establishing the Thames setting in which the act of narration takes place, nominating Marlow's listeners only by profession, revealing that they live and practise those professions in the city of London, and offering many small details, twists of phrase, and touches of irony, ambiguity and exaggerated language, cannot but implicate Great Britain and the British Empire in the colonial exploitation that "Heart of Darkness" unveils. Whatever Marlow may imply about the redeeming quality of honest work, efficiency and the "idea" behind British colonization, and no matter how he may appear to distinguish between 'good' and 'evil' colonizing nations, his final message is one of critical questioning and disgust mingled with disbelief at the whole practice.

All my bitterness of those days, all my puzzled  
wonder as to the meaning of all I saw -- all my  
indignation at masquerading philanthropy.<sup>16</sup>

The disgust that Conrad could afford to express directly in letters to friends and publishers had to be disguised in his works.

However, Conrad's attitude to British imperialism is particularly complex, as Patrick Brantlinger's article on "Heart of Darkness" demonstrates:

Conrad entertained no illusions about imperialist violence. But Marlow distinguishes between British imperialism and that of the other European powers: the red parts of the map are good to see, he says, 'because one knows that some real work is done in there' . . . At what point is it safe to assume that Conrad/Marlow express a single [imperialist or anti-imperialist] point of view? . . . *Heart of Darkness*, I believe, offers a powerful critique of at least certain manifestations of imperialism and racism, at the same time that it presents that critique in ways which can only be characterized as both imperialist and racist.<sup>17</sup>

Conrad could not possibly have been 'anti-imperialist' or 'anti-racist' at a time when 'racism and 'imperialism' did not connote precisely what they connote today, but were part of the normal European perspective on the world. Contrasts and comparisons of colonial systems (usually in favour of one's own nation) had not yet become purely academic and irrelevant, since the intellectual world had not arrived at the stage of roundly condemning imperialism with a view to abolishing it. Conrad's position in this regard was in a sense a balancing act. His logic seemed to run along the following lines: imperialism is evil, its exploitation and cruelty appalling, but given its inevitability, Britain's is the least harmful version and perhaps actually does some good, though a world without imperialism would be preferable. Conrad's letters to friends on the Boer War reflect his ambivalence. "My feelings are very complex." He believed the Boers were "struggling in good faith for their independence" but had "no idea of liberty, which can only be found under the English flag all over the world."<sup>18</sup> At the time of writing these words Conrad apparently saw no inherent contradiction between the "liberty" he spoke of and British imperialism, at least not consciously. Nevertheless his works suggest that he is engaged in a constant dialogue with himself on the subject, and that although

he extols the merits of some aspects of the British system, he also believes that Britain must ultimately assume responsibility for her part in imperialist ventures.

When Conrad appears to favour the British in his writing, he is performing an act of allegiance whereby he keeps his contemporary British readers reading just as Marlow in "Heart of Darkness" keeps the London Lawyer, Accountant and Director listening. The conciliating remarks occur in the text as an aside, an afterthought, a parenthesis, often between dashes as in the example quoted by Brantlinger from the passage describing the map Marlow saw at the company headquarters in the "sepulchral" European city, a map "marked with all the colours of a rainbow." Once again, we return that quote to its context:

There was a vast amount of red -- good to see at any time because one knows that some real work is done in there -- a deuce of a lot of blue, a little green, smears of orange, and, on the East Coast, a purple patch, to show where the jolly pioneers of progress drink the jolly lager-beer. (HD 13)

The dashes indicate a propitiatory, parenthetical quality of Marlow's comment on the red parts of the map, but the "vast amount of red" still takes its place in a list of all the colonial powers in Africa, each designated by a colour, as if the colours were the only difference between them. Such conciliations and concessions to the British cannot be taken too seriously, especially since they are always either followed or accompanied by expressions of uncertainty, critical judgment, or repugnance in Conrad's general attitude to the hypocrisy of colonialism. Under such a system the only kind of relationship between colonizers and native peoples was one of invasion, imposition and exploitation, that is, one of action and reaction but not of interaction, for it offered no possibility of any real communication or discourse. This is the case not only in Africa but also in Malaysia, where four of Conrad's novels are set, as well as a number of his short stories. It is also the case, as we have briefly noted, in *Nostromo*. With their greater length and opportunity for detailed

development, the novels offer examples of individual relationships between people of different cultures. A few of the short stories also focus on individuals, and I will examine these in the following chapter, since they can only be considered in the light of the general atmosphere and attitudes of the day toward race, empire and colony.

Although "Heart of Darkness" unmasks the horrors of colonial exploitation and corruption Marlow's own attitude to imperialism generally is not always clear. Since Marlow tells about one of his "inconclusive experiences" it is left to the reader to draw conclusions, which will depend largely on the reader's own position and openness of approach. "Heart of Darkness" takes up where "An Outpost" leaves off. The final image in that early story of the dead Kayerts poking out his tongue at the company manager is at once a grotesque accusation and a mockery on the part of the individual towards the institution. Kurtz's obscene and rebellious atrocities develop that accusatory, mocking gesture into a full-scale condemnation of institutionalized exploitation. The message does not come with the sudden shock of the final gesture of "An Outpost"; the intent is submerged beneath the narrative, piercing through the flashes of scenes, in variations of tone, in subtle contradictions and ambiguities of the kind discussed above, culminating in the "glimpsed truth" of Kurtz's exclamation before he dies. "The horror! The horror!" in a dying breath that is now no more than a whisper. It is the only time that this 'choked/choking' horror comes to the fore without disguise in this tale and passes in an instant. The disagreement among critics today concerning Conrad's attitudes to imperialism in "Heart of Darkness" is a testimony to the veiled message that was Conrad's only means of having any influence on the British reading public of his own time.<sup>19</sup>

The question of racism has been shown to be even more problematic in "Heart of Darkness" than that of imperialism, especially since 1975 when Chinua Achebe denounced Conrad for his racist attitudes to Africans and attacked "Heart of

Darkness" specifically.<sup>20</sup> Achebe pointed to those parts of the work in which Conrad uses derogatory terms for blacks ("grotesque" -- HD 14, "horrid" -- 36, "ugly" -- 37, "satanic" -- 68, "niggers" -- 19, "prehistoric men" -- 36, "rudimentary souls" -- 51, "cannibals" -- 36). For Achebe, the fact that it is Marlow who uses these terms does not excuse Conrad, and he censures the description of Marlow's helmsman as resembling "a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat walking on his hind legs" (HD 38) because Marlow suggests that this African is out of place and would look less ridiculous leaping and howling on the shore with his own kind. But this rather cruel description is in fact a kind of backlash on the Europeans and their cultural imposition. Gradual adaptation of one culture to another through genuine interaction would not produce such a parody, and if Marlow says "Fine fellows -- cannibals -- in their place," he makes it clear that by "in their place" he means 'when not engaged in their practices in the company of whites' because Marlow immediately goes on to explain that he was grateful to them for not eating each other "before my face" (HD 36) or not attacking him and the other whites on the boat. Fear of cannibalism at that time was genuine, since the Europeans had no understanding of the ritualistic motives behind these practices and the limitations and restrictions these rites imposed. Human sacrifice did occur and was carried out in ways that horrified the Europeans.<sup>21</sup> And Conrad could not have been expected to understand these rites any more than other whites who had been in Africa much longer than himself. Marlow also refers to the Africans as "savages" on several occasions. Most of these terms that we now regard as depreciatory were taken for granted in Conrad's day, and Conrad had no choice but to use them even if he had been aware of a negative value, or he could not have found a basis of identity with his readers from which to build up a degree of influence over them. As Peter Nazareth explains: "There was censorship in the colonial world: no Marx or Lenin. But there was Conrad, sneaking through as a member of Leavis' *Great Tradition*, actually undermining that tradition."<sup>22</sup>

Achebe is particularly bitter about the passage in which Marlow makes the 'frightening' suggestion that Europeans might actually be related to the "savages" in African bush.

The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there -- there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly and the men were. . . . No they were not inhuman. Well, you know that was the worst of it -- this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped and spun and made horrid faces, but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity -- like yours -- the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. (HD 38)

The very first sentence tells us what the paragraph is attempting: to defamiliarize and, at the same time, to remind the white Europeans (British) listeners and readers of their relationship to the unfamiliar. "The earth seemed unearthly" and the people resembled monsters, "unshackled" and "free" and, in a sense, out of control -- white, European control -- because they were not "conquered." Victorian readers can only have been persuaded to rethink their perception of 'savages' when brought up short by such words as "the suspicion of their not being inhuman" coming from one supposed to share their own world view, whereas they would have easily dismissed any suggestion of critical self reflection had Conrad substituted a more direct but commonplace truism like "Remember that those we call 'savages' are human beings." What Achebe fails to realize is that in Conrad's time, no Europeans shared a feeling of relationship with black Africans or any other race, especially as Darwin's theories, though long known to the educated world, were only beginning to prevail. Most Europeans saw human beings as having been created separately and on separate levels. While such views shock us today Conrad's views would have shocked them if he had not couched them in a language that first defamiliarized their own view to themselves and then replaced it subtly with a new perception

without their being fully aware of his intent, which had to be hidden or disguised in order to be fulfilled.

One description in Conrad's stories that could possibly be considered among the most racist has strangely been neglected by commentators on this issue. Conrad's character sketch of Makola, the native assistant in "An Outpost," poses some problems.

He spoke English and French with a warbling accent, wrote a beautiful hand, understood bookkeeping, and cherished in his innermost heart the worship of evil spirits. . . . Makola, taciturn and impenetrable, despised the two white men. (TU 83)

Makola had watched the energetic artistic [the first chief of that station] die of fever in the just finished house with his usual kind of "I told you so" indifference. Then, for a time, he dwelt alone with his family, his account books, and the Evil Spirit that rules the lands under the Equator. He got on very well with his god. Perhaps he had propitiated him by a promise of more white men to play with by and by. (TU 84)

Conrad draws this sketch at the beginning of the story and as the initial introduction to Makola. He presents the assistant exactly as the whites would have seen him and interpreted his actions in the course of the story, and as Kayerts and Carlier did finally come to see him -- as a white-washed black whose ability with languages, beautiful writing and bookkeeping skills camouflages an evil heart worshipping an Evil Spirit that rules only in "the lands under the Equator," and whose evil must therefore be linked with his Africanness.

Only the other reminder of this view of Makola appears half way through the story, the morning after the terrible deed whereby drunken station hands are sold into slavery in exchange for ivory.

Across the yard they saw Makola come out of his hut, a tin basin of soapy water in his hand.

Makola, a *civilized nigger*, was very neat in his person. He threw the soap-suds skilfully over a wretched little cur he had, then turning his face to the agents' house, he shouted from a distance, "All the men gone last night!" (TU 97, my italics)

The cunning and villainy that this scene presents and that appears to support Conrad's original sketch is not what Kayerts and Carlier saw in Makola at the beginning. They had been impressed by his European skills: "This Makola is invaluable," they said even at the last minute before learning the truth about the night's events, but by the next morning they are beginning to perceive things differently, and become suspicious. They "saw," says Conrad, Makola's "civilized" neatness just before they 'heard' him shout the words that first informed them of what had happened. From that point on they call Makola a "fiend" (TU 98), a "filthy scoundrel" and a "beast," all the while weighing the tusks and agreeing with each other that "it had to be done." In mentioning Makola's name "they always added to it an opprobrious epithet. It eased their conscience" (TU 100).

This is not to say that the whites' refusal to accept responsibility exonerates Makola, but the development of Makola's character after the initial, rather simplified depiction, presents some interesting variations. If, as a black African, he has every reason to despise white men in general, we can understand all the better why he despises these two weak and spineless whites in particular. The "evil" he performs is motivated by his own instinct for survival and an accompanying expediency. This expediency derives at least in part from the materialistic values he has learned from the Europeans when he underwent the 'civilizing' process that gave him his skills, the name of Henry Price and the position he holds with the company. But Conrad also implies that Makola seems to have little choice, for when the armed men arrive he says himself: "They are perhaps bad men," and when questioned about them, he "seemed to be standing on hot bricks" (TU 93). He seems to fear the presence of these men at the station, and the next afternoon he tells Kayerts that the column of

smoke they see above the forest rises from burning villages, and he suddenly asks if Kayerts would like more ivory. We are given the impression that the station is spared because Makola's wife comes from the same region as the strangers [Luanda] and can help her husband persuade them to go away, but only by exchanging a portion of their heavy load of ivory -- too heavy to carry -- for the station hands as carriers. Makola manages to save himself, his family and the station. He considers the white men too weak and incompetent to handle the situation intelligently or even to be informed of what is happening. Had they been intelligent and responsible they might have been able to make arrangements with the old chief Gobila and his people to fight off the strangers. Unable to count on them, Makola makes the ivory purchase that he believes will at least keep the company director happy. He does not care much about the price paid under these circumstances, but then Kayerts and Carlier only think they care.

"Slavery is an awful thing," stammered out Kayerts in an unsteady voice. "Frightful -- the sufferings," grunted Carlier with conviction. They believed their words. Everybody shows a respectful deference to certain sounds that he and his fellows can make. But about feelings people really know nothing. We talk with indignation or enthusiasm; we talk about oppression, cruelty, crime, devotion, self-sacrifice, virtue, and we know nothing real beyond the words. Nobody knows what suffering or sacrifice mean -- except, perhaps the victims of the mysterious purpose of these illusions. (TU 98 - 100)

The passage offers yet another example of 'expression' -- in this case verbal expression -- as a substitute for the 'essence' it should convey. Unlike the "eloquence" and "burning noble words" of Kurtz (HD 50), which had become for Marlow "little more than a voice," the comments of Kayerts and Carlier are trite and inept, but they too are reduced to their physical components, the "sounds" made by the voice, this time hardly different from those of animals. Kayerts "stammers" and Carlier "grunts" out the hackneyed hyperboles "awful" and "frightful" which take on an oddly euphemistic tone alongside the substantives they qualify, "slavery" and

"sufferings." The two men cannot render the feelings they speak of because they know nothing of them. Conrad regarded the faithful rendition of feeling as a universal moral responsibility and challenge, even though he also saw it as an impossible goal, since the most that can be hoped for in verbal expression is a "translation."

To render a crucial point of feelings in terms of human speech is really an impossible task. Written words can only form a sort of translation and if that translation happens from want of skill or from over-anxiety, to be too literal, the people caught in the toils of passion, instead of disclosing themselves, which would be art, are made to give themselves away, which is neither art nor life. Nor yet truth! At any rate, not the whole truth; for it is truth robbed of all its necessary and sympathetic reservations and qualifications which give it its fair form, its just proportions, its semblance of human fellowship. (Preface to *Within the Tides*, JCF 213)

Kayerts and Carlier are men who feel absolved of responsibility by expressing verbally, and only verbally, concern, sympathy, sorrow at the plight of their station hands. Their limitations in this respect also bear on their racism. Any sense of "human fellowship" with their station hands would have been inconceivable to them. What makes their "words" and "sounds" doubly ironic is the fact that these hands were really their own slaves, having been engaged by the company for six months and having served for at least two years. Since some of the members of Gobila's tribe are also carried away by the strangers, the worst price, for Kayerts and Carlier, is the hostility of Gobila, whose people stop bringing food to the station and eat the hippo that Carlier shoots. Carlier "had a fit of rage over it and talked about the necessity of exterminating all the niggers before the country could be made habitable" (TU 102). Carlier's talk will be echoed in Kurtz's marginal note to his philanthropic report in "Heart of Darkness" -- "Exterminate all the brutes!"

Kayerts and Carrier, by the end of the story, hold a view of blacks in general and of Makola in particular that the description of Makola in the opening paragraph would suggest to the reader, and it is the reader who has been given a fuller picture at the end of the whole scene, and the opportunity either to condone Makola's actions or at least to modify that initial, clear-cut, 'black-and-white' view. The two white men came to Africa with their characters already formed; the environment merely highlights their lack of substance, precipitates and aggravates the consequences. Makola, on the other hand, is transformed by contact with white colonizing society. What character he had has been distorted and perverted. In spite of that perversion Makola acts to survive, and that motivation brings his deeds closer to 'essence' than the empty words of the two white men.

Gestures of obeisance to the prevailing views of other races and cultures as inferior, when they appear in Conrad's works, are usually couched in a language too pat to be taken seriously, and are always belied by the situation in which they occur, by actions or incidents occurring simultaneously, or by later contradictory comments. One such gesture that appears half way through "Youth" seems to uphold the racial and national superiority of the British, although Marlow, who relates this story, does not mention Britain by name. He is explaining why the crew of the *Judea* worked hard and carefully at furling the sails in the face of great danger, adding that it was not for the sake of professional reputation, praise or duty; and it was not for the pay, which was always too low.

No; it was something in them, something inborn and subtle and everlasting. I don't say positively that the crew of a French or German merchantman wouldn't have done it, but I doubt whether it would have been done in the same way. There was a completeness in it, something solid like a principle, and masterful like an instinct -- a disclosure of something secret -- of that hidden something, that gift of good or evil that makes *racial difference*, that shapes the *fate of nations*.<sup>23</sup> (my italics)

It is one thing to praise a good ship's crew, and we might allow for praise of a British crew at a time when Britain's navy and merchant marine were the world's most powerful and prosperous. But it is another thing altogether to credit the good work of the crew to some mysterious and unexplained 'gift' vaguely associated with race and nationality. The glibness and haziness of the last part of this passage are calculated to leave a trace of uneasiness in the mind of the careful reader, and are directly contradicted by a few lines of almost equal length at the end, when Marlow is describing the East.

I have known its fascination since; I have seen the mysterious shores; the still water, the lands of *brown nations*, where a stealthy *Nemesis* lies in wait, pursues, overtakes so many of the *conquering race*, who are *proud* of their wisdom, of their knowledge, of their strength. ( Y & ET 38, my italics)

The words "racial difference" and "fate of nations" of the first passage above haunt the second passage in "brown nations" and "conquering race." Marlow himself perhaps fails to recognize the irony of his use of a similar language to undermine his earlier statement, or the irony of the undermining as it applies to himself. He had expressed so much pride in his crew on account of their race and nationality, but here he blames that very pride for bringing on the "Nemesis" lurking in the East. From the very resemblance of the vocabulary we can deduce that Conrad was more aware of the link than his narrator, and that the contradiction and the irony are intended. Conrad affirms his awareness of racial prejudice even more clearly in his essay "Autocracy and War," when he speaks of the lesson to the world of the Russian-Japanese War.

The greatness of the lesson had been dwarfed for most of us by an often half-conscious prejudice of race-difference. The West having managed to lodge its hasty foot on the neck of the East is prone to forget that it is from the East that the wonders of patience and wisdom

have come to a world of men who set the value of life in the power to act rather than in the faculty of meditation.<sup>24</sup>

The wisdom the West is proud of is not its own, but has been appropriated from the East, misinterpreted and misused by over-emphasis on action. But for Western man, action as indicated earlier in the passages from *Nostromo*, relates directly to conquest, aggrandizement and material interest. Conrad's perspective suggests that the false wisdom of action is what the Nemesis in the East is avenging.

Perhaps, as some critics have suggested, Conrad worked through and attempted to resolve his own inner doubts and conflicts on the issues of race and nationality.<sup>25</sup> Conrad may have genuinely taken pride in his adopted nation and felt a sincere gratitude towards those British individuals who welcomed him with hospitality and showed an appreciation of his literary genius, while at the same time he recognized the limitations and backfiring possibilities of the predominant (at the time) British belief in racial and national superiority.<sup>25</sup> Marlow is a thinking, liberal-minded Englishman who is also engaged in a struggle between his natural pride in -- and preference for -- his own people and his sincere desire to approach all peoples, his fellow-men, with an openness and tolerance of which he is equally proud. The irony comes from owing one's openness and liberal-mindedness to an education that inculcates such values as characteristic of white, British superiority. Marlow is engaged in a tussle with himself that is most often subconscious, with occasional moments of perception and glimpses of self knowledge that approach Conrad's own.

As in "Youth" and "Heart of Darkness," statements and gestures of racial and national smugness in other Conrad works always precede contradictory indications. Even when these indications come in the form of simultaneous events in the narrative, they are not divulged to the reader until after the initial expression of complacency. The events of "Heart of Darkness" belie the ideals which Marlow is

required to don by a European philanthropic society and which Kurtz bore into Africa before him. It is the first narrator of "Heart of Darkness" who offers the most unreserved praise of the Thames as a sacred symbol of the greatness of the nation, at least as he saw it that evening aboard the *Nellie*, before hearing Marlow's story. He ends his eulogy with a description of all the great ships of trade, piracy, and exploration ("the great knights-errant of the sea").

Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the *sword*, and often the *torch*, messengers of the night within the land, bearers of a spark from the *sacred fire*. What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth? . . . The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of *empires*.  
(HD 8, my italics)

This passage is echoed in the final words of the essay "Geography and Explorers." Great "books of travel and discovery" had, for Conrad, peopled the sea with "men who went forth each according to his lights and with varied motives, laudable or sinful, but each bearing in his breast a spark of the sacred fire."<sup>27</sup> The reference to "sacred fire" provides a finishing touch or flourish to the essay that embraces all explorers, but one of the important points of the essay, as noted in Chapter One, is the distinction between the unselfish and impersonal scientific explorer, enlightened and not seeking wealth or glory, and the self-interested conquerors and exploiters. In the passage from "Heart of Darkness" the torch of knowledge and enlightenment is born into other lands together with the mighty sword. The inherent contradiction slips by under the cloak of a stirring patriotic sentiment fashioned to lure every Victorian reader, and ending on the dramatic note of empire. The religious imagery of "sacred fire" moves gently in the direction of the parody that will be found in the image, two pages later, of Marlow as a Buddha and in the presentation of the idea behind conquest as something "redeeming," something to "bow down before" and "offer a sacrifice to." It becomes a complete mockery in the words "heavenly mission" on the following page when Marlow speaks of invading his friends' homes

to "civilise" them. We are back with the sword of might and the torch of light, now transformed into a joke whereby the absurd contradiction of this pairing is already beginning to undermine the premises upon which conquests were carried out and empires built. Marlow's narrative of his experiences in Central Africa goes on to complete that undermining process begun by the narrator who already knows the story and has been affected by it even in preparing the setting of the tale.

### "TYPHOON"

Another work that presents contradictions concerning race and nationality, and in a fairly straightforward manner, is "Typhoon." There is no Marlow in "Typhoon" and no outer narrator; it is one of the few tales that follow the more conventional type of omniscient author narration.

The steamer, *Nan-Shan*, voyaging from Bangkok to Fu-Chau in China with a British crew and two hundred Chinese coolies in her hold, runs into a typhoon when her captain insists on maintaining course whatever the weather. The heavy chests of the Chinese become loose from their battening and go flying about the hold together with their contents of personal belongings and silver dollars, and the Chinese, trying to save them at first, are finally tossed dangerously about with them like loose cargo. The first mate is sent with a company of men to correct the situation, and after the storm he and the other crew members expect trouble from the Chinese. To his surprise the simple captain MacWhirr releases the Chinese onto the deck and distributes all their money that can be found equally among them. Considered stubborn and stupid, especially by his first mate, the captain surprises them all by his straightforward manner of dealing which causes as "little fuss as possible" (T 108) and proves, in its simplicity, to be fairest to all concerned.

Jukes, first mate of the *Nan-Shan*, is so strongly patriotic that he feels personally offended as a British crew member on a British-made ship at having to sail under the Siamese flag.

. . . Jukes grew restless, as if under a sense of personal affront. He went about grumbling to himself and uttering short scornful laughs. "Fancy having a ridiculous Noah's Ark elephant in the ensign of one's ship," he said once at the engine room door. (T 10)

And later he remarks to the captain: "Queer flag for a man to sail under, Sir" (T 10). Jukes calls the flag "queer" because it is strange and unfamiliar, making him feel out of his element and insecure, since he can no longer rest assured that his ship is a little parcel of Britain in foreign waters. A flag of this kind is a symbol, a national coding that designates a country and also demonstrates something of its culture. Jukes perceives the Siamese flag as "ridiculous." Compared with the geometrical, abstract type of design he is used to seeing in the Union Jack and the flags of most European nations, the elephant of the Siamese flag appears simple, childish, and inferior -- like a child's outline of the animals in Noah's Ark -- a 'third-world' symbol borrowed from nature. He is doubly exasperated when his literal-minded captain, not understanding what could be amiss in the flag, tells him to "take care they don't hoist the elephant upside down" and suggests that the elephant no doubt "stands for something in the nature of the Union Jack in the flag" (T 12). When Jukes says to the chief engineer "here, let me tell you the old man's latest" (T 12); the joke appears to be on Captain MacWhirr, because of his literalness. But we have already in this dialogue an example of MacWhirr's fair-mindedness untrammelled by sentimental patriotic attachment. The captain's simple and practical nature is able to perceive things as they are, and not as fancy, wishful thinking and prejudice would have them.

When Jukes shows the Chinese clerk the hatch leading to the cargo area that will accommodate two hundred coolies returning to Fu-Chau, his pidgin

English is so exaggerated as to be laughable and we are told he had "no talent for foreign languages" and "mangled the very pidgin-English cruelly" (T 14). It is at this very point that we meet with the first direct racial comment on the part of the author.

He was gruff, as became his racial superiority,  
but not unfriendly. (T 14)

Racial prejudice is institutionally built into the system whereby the coolies are transported back to China in the forward " 'tween-deck" -- a load of human cargo. Superficially, Conrad appears to adhere to this view, but the phrase "as became his racial superiority" must necessarily be interpreted as ironic, surrounded as it is by Jukes' ludicrous, unwitting parody of pidgin English and followed by a description of the Chinese clerk in stark contrast with Jukes' uncouth gruffness and gestures. We are told that the "Chinaman, gazing sad and speechless into the darkness of the hatchway, seemed to stand at the head of a yawning grave" (T 14), that he "concealed his distrust of this [Jukes'] pantomime under a collected demeanour tinged by a gentle and refined melancholy" (T 15), and that he went away "ducking low under a sling of ten dirty gunny-bags full of some costly merchandise and exhaling a repulsive smell" (T 15). These final words emphasize the greater value allowed to merchandise and commodities over human beings. And yet this man displays the outstanding characteristics associated with 'civilization' (cleanliness, dignity, refinement, gentleness) that lend a brutish comicality to Jukes' pantomime.<sup>28</sup> Thus the whole scene is an ironic comment on Jukes' avowed "racial superiority."

This process by which the events of the narrative contradict the language used to relate it continues through "Typhoon." When Jukes refers to the coolies as passengers, Captain MacWhirr wonders "What passengers?" And when Jukes explains, his captain responds: "Never heard a lot of coolies spoken of as passengers before. Passengers, indeed! What's come to you?" (T 34) If we interpret this dialogue

as a sign of the sensitive young Jukes' thoughtfulness and concern for everyone aboard the ship and for the coolies in particular, and of Captain MacWhirr's racial prejudice in dismissing the use of this term to refer to the coolies, we must look again more closely at this scene both alone and in the light of the previous and subsequent events. To begin with, Jukes' expression of concern for the coolies is far from genuine. He is looking for an excuse to turn the ship into the wind. Every mention of the worsening weather has no effect on his captain. At last -- and as a last resort it seems -- when the captain becomes impatient with him, asking "What do you want?" Jukes blurts out his concern for the safety of a group of people he would not otherwise have considered as important. He uses the word "passengers" only to support his statement, not from any sense of racial equality. The ship is rolling heavily and Conrad turns to the physical effects of the ship's movements at sea to describe Jukes' embarrassed casting about for a way to convince MacWhirr.

At this Jukes lost his footing and began to flounder. "I was thinking of our passengers," he said, in the manner of a man clutching at a straw. (T 34)

Conrad makes it clear that the "passengers" are the "straw" by which Jukes wishfully attempts to persuade his captain to change the ship's direction. ("Thought you might put her head on perhaps -- for a while" T 34). As for MacWhirr, literalness rather than lack of concern dictates his reaction to Jukes' choice of vocabulary. If Chinese coolies were not called passengers on British ships in those times, such a term could only strike the captain as another example of that "fanciful" talk (T 8) he heard so often around him without ever understanding it. If racial and cultural prejudice was ingrained into his native language, he was not one to notice it or to conceive of changing it. For Captain MacWhirr language is pure denotation, never connotation. This very same literalness together with his simplicity and practical nature, later enable him at the end of the trip to deal fairly with the coolies.

Underlying all this contradictory and ironic dialectic between words and events, and between the two main characters, the message in this story involving two different cultures is the total lack of intercultural communication and the almost total absence of any kind of intercultural interaction. The only instance of verbal discourse is the pathetic scene between Jukes and the Chinese company clerk who interprets for the coolies. By unquestioned custom, the whites relegate these people to the holds of the ship and effectively bury them out of sight and mind. The Chinese are well aware of the impossibility of reversing the situation; they accept their plight with a sad but stoic resignation, as Conrad makes clear in the description of the clerk's behaviour and his gazing into the hatchway as if standing "at the head of a yawning grave" (T 14). In the case of "Typhoon," the question of racist and imperialist attitudes to other cultures does not stand out as a major theme or concern at first. The storm and the relations of the crew members with each other appear to take precedence. In fact the cultural question appears to serve merely as a springboard for portraying the main characters. Not one of the Chinese play a role in the narrative, and once the storm is under way and some attention is given to the coolies, they are depicted 'en masse.' Their tumbling about together with their chests and belongings in the hold and their screams and howls are confused with the tempest itself beating and howling at the ship. The chaos below the decks of the *Nan-Shan* reflects that of the sea. In both cases the violence and brutality are brought on by a completely mindless force.

With a precipitated sound of trampling and shuffling of bare feet and with guttural cries, the mound of writhing bodies piled up to port detached itself from the ship's side and shifted to starboard, sliding, inert and struggling, to a dull brutal thump. The cries ceased. The boatswain heard a long moan through the roar and whistling of the wind; he saw an inextricable confusion of heads and shoulders, naked soles kicking upwards, fists raised, tumbling backs, legs, pigtails, faces. (T 63 - 64)

The dislocative effect of synecdoche, transforming the many Chinese into one knot of unrelated body parts shaken and tossed about by an invisible agent, recalls another kind of dislocation in "Heart of Darkness." Marlow's discovery of the bones of his dead predecessor is rendered in curious language: "when an opportunity offered at last to meet my predecessor, the grass growing through his ribs was tall enough to hide his bones" (HD 13). The grass is the subject of the main clause that is oddly preceded by the verb "to meet" as if the man were living. Unlike the coolies who are tangled together in one inhuman mass, this man is fleetingly resurrected to be reduced again to a pile of bones concealed and disunited by the grass. Nor is he the only passive object; the whole scene thrusts itself upon Marlow as in a dream state where there is no control of events.

In a recent article in *Conradiana* Joseph Kolupke treats "Typhoon" as a story with a political theme in which the *Nan-Shan* represents a "ship of state" or "political microcosm."<sup>29</sup> Although he makes some interesting points in connection with this theory, interpreting the coolies as the colonial peoples at the bottom echelon of an imperial hierarchy, the coolies cannot really represent, together with the storm and through figurative imagery, revolution and revolutionaries, as Kolupke suggests. The hurricane force of their mass movement is entirely involuntary; it is forced upon them as a part of their original condition of oppression in the ship, and their "mad struggle" is one of pure panic and terror, first for their possessions, and then for their very lives. To perceive their movements as in any way analogous to revolution is no different from reading revolutionary imagery into the description of a stampeding crowd trying to escape from a building on fire. And the coolies are not even trying to get out of the hold.

The Asian presence in this story is more than a mere excuse for character portrayal. That presence is not limited to the Chinese. The ship begins her trip in Bangkok, is owned by a Siamese firm, and sails under the Siamese flag. Her name

is also Asian: the *Nan-Shan*. As human 'cargo' the coolies have no human rights. They are especially deprived of language, they cannot speak for themselves, they have no 'voice' except to scream and howl. On entering the hold of the ship they are transformed into an object that may be neither seen nor heard. Indeed one of the first sounds that the boatswain hears from them is that of their knocking about in one mass so that he confuses the sound with that of a large object of the kind the ship often takes on board as cargo, "profound, ponderous thumps, as if a bulky object of five-ton weight or so had got play in the hold" (T 62). But if in this story the Asian world is deprived of any meaningful verbal communication, a silent, symbolic representation has more influence and stronger, more subtle power both in the events and in the effect of the narrative, than those things that appear to be happening on the surface. Just as the quiet dignity of the Chinese clerk represents his culture and excels the antics and volubility of Jukes, the silent visual symbol of the Siamese flag 'speaks' selfhood, nationhood, cultural identity. And the coolies, who appear to be without a voice, cannot ultimately be ignored or denied. Not in revolution (even symbolic) but by their sheer presence and predicament in the storm they force recognition of themselves upon the ship's crew. This does not much alter the way they are treated or even perceived generally, in spite of Captain MacWhirr's fair distribution of their silver at the end of the trip, but that very fact is part of the underlying theme or hidden intent of the tale.

Conrad speaks of the tale's "deeper significance which was quite apparent to me," but he does not make it apparent to the reader. Yet these words appear in his preface to "Typhoon" only a dozen lines after he has stated that the interest of the tale is "not the bad weather but the extraordinary complication brought into the ship's life at a moment of exceptional stress by the human element below her deck" (JCF 179 - 180). Conrad is concerned with the effect of that complication on the ship's life, but he is also intrigued by the nature of the complication per se. In fact, taken together, the above two statements should enjoin us to seek Conrad's "leading

motive . . . and . . . point of view" (JCF 180) in that same "human element below her deck" and beneath the surface of the story. The "deeper significance" is the mirror held up to the European reader reflecting back to him the ways he perceives people of other cultures.

Jukes' racism is so deep-rooted and subconscious that it can hardly be eradicated by his experience on the *Nan-Shan*, especially with his stubborn streak that keeps him from learning from experience. Stubbornness is most often associated with Captain MacWhirr, in whom it stands out more conspicuously, especially in his ignoring the advice of books and his insistence on heading into the typhoon. This partly comes from relying solely on his experience which is limited. In Jukes' case it arises from his cultural mind-set and youthful opinionatedness. Just as Jukes insists at the end of his letter to a friend, and in spite of the recent events, that Captain MacWhirr is "such a stupid man" (T 112), so also he continues to see the Chinese as he had perceived them before the trip: "My notion was to keep these johnnies under hatches for another fifteen hours or so" (T 108), "Surely any skipper of a man-of-war -- English, French or Dutch -- would see white men through as far as row on board goes" (T 108). "They had had a doing that would have shaken the soul out of a white man. But then they say a Chinaman has no soul" (T 111). Jukes ironically proceeds to express wonder and astonishment at the toughness of the Chinese.

Conrad is not, after all, able to change the characters of his story, who represent the values and prejudices of the era in which the story is set. That would be too unrealistic for Conrad. But he can attempt to sensitize his readers to the problems and contradictions inherent in those values, and to the fact that other cultures with other values and perceptions continue to assert themselves and their identity irrespective of how colonialist Europe perceives them.

"The Nigger of the *Narcissus*"

Of Conrad's early stories, that which best illustrates racial attitude as an inseparable element of the whole question of intercultural interaction is "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*." A sick black man named James Wait joins the ship *Narcissus* and its already motley crew of men from several nations as well as different parts of Britain and different cultural and regional backgrounds. They respond in generally similar but individually varying ways to James Wait's play-acting or dramatization of himself -- of a consumptive black man soon to die.

Although it is called a novel, "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*," like "Heart of Darkness," in fact resembles a long tale in its structural division and its concentrated setting and subject matter. Racial attitude is an even more complex question in this work than in "Heart of Darkness," owing to quirks in the narrative chronology and especially to the numerous changes in narrative perspective, but also for reasons related to the stage of development Conrad attained as a creative writer in this work.

Setting aside for the present the first two reasons, which are related to form, I will begin by looking more closely at the question of this tale's place in Conrad's growing artistic consciousness and maturity. Preceding "Heart of Darkness," "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" is generally regarded as Conrad's first great artistic work. For this reason some critics have regarded Conrad's racial attitudes in this work in the light of his later development and affirm that here Conrad is definitely racist, or at least adheres unreservedly to accepted linguistic, symbolic, and literary terminology infused with the racist outlook condoned in Conrad's time. Some go so far as to state that Conrad's "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" testifies to a permanent, underlying racism. Such is the point of view of Eugene Redmond: "Conrad's mind-

set. . . was not simply a product of the Nineteenth Century. Actually, he was an apparently willing victim of latent racist thoughts and attitudes developed over several hundred years. . . ."30 Others, like Ian Watt, believe that Conrad uses prejudicial racial language because it was current in his time.<sup>31</sup> Hunt Hawkins, on the other hand, claims that Conrad was anti-racist from the beginning, though he could not consciously break away from all the entanglements of the prevailing beliefs.<sup>32</sup> An interesting and persuasive theory has been put forward in a doctoral thesis by Doreatha Drummond: that Conrad's attitude to race underwent a chronological development in tandem with his growing artistic maturity. She sees Conrad as making an ever greater effort in each of his works to break free of accepted racist views, and she believes that in the early works Conrad discovers his own latent racism through the act of writing and then, in turn, brings that racism to the surface and confronts it, so that by the later works, he is fully cognizant and fully engaged against racism.<sup>33</sup> For this reason she considers "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" to be Conrad's most racist work, for he specifically chooses a black, she says, to symbolize human weakness.

Conrad must have felt himself caught up in the tangle of terms and connotations that reflected the racist bias of his day, and while he no doubt worked himself gradually free of these linguistic barriers as he wrote, it would be tipping the scales too far to consider this tale as a racist work. If it is possible to say that Conrad's choice of a black to symbolize human weakness (and this is questionable) indicates racism then it can also be argued that his centring the story around a black with human weaknesses indicates Conrad's awareness of the role of racial attitudes in human relations and that he is posing questions about that very subject as he writes. After all, the reactions of the crew to James Wait are the motivating force behind all the events of the narrative, and James Wait's race and colour introduce an added, complicating factor into the already difficult situation of his illness, not because he is black, but because his blackness evokes certain typical

responses -- in those times -- from the white crew. Nor are those responses uncomplicated, though they come from simple men who lead, for the most part, simple lives. In fact Conrad is constantly giving two radically different views of James Wait: the accepted, racist view of those times, and one that questions the premises of that first view, partly through aspects of the narrative presentation and partly through the crew's own confusion, bewilderment, and half conscious resistance to their learned behaviour. Through the tale the crew members' deepest sense of common humanity repeatedly and unwittingly finds itself in conflict with their conventional ideas on race.

What makes the question of racism in "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" so complex is the heavy dose of light and colour symbolism splashed liberally throughout, sometimes subtly blended into the descriptive scenes, more often conspicuously related to the question of James Wait's colour. This very conspicuousness of symbolic phrases should lead us to question Conrad's intent. The tendency to associate 'white' with 'light' and 'good' and 'black' with 'darkness' and 'evil' is almost universal and not in itself reprehensible. The problem arises from a further tendency in White European society to over-emphasize and over-extend these associations, and to relate them to race via skin colour as a racial characteristic. This tendency leads to an assumption of their own racial superiority and the inferiority of non-white races.<sup>34</sup> The question of the point at which light-versus-darkness, white-versus-black symbolism becomes racist is one that Conrad explores in this tale, just as he explores the extent to which the white crew relate Jimmy's illness, shamming the deception (the question of how ill he really is) to their feelings about his race.

Jack Biles states that Wait is "the black man, a traditional designation for the evil one, the chief of the devils," and "the colour black symbolizes error, evil, falsehood."<sup>35</sup> This exaggerates even the symbolic role of James Wait. At no time is

he represented as an evil being (consciously committed to the performance and propagation of evil), and although some of the symbolic descriptions or incidents associate him with the devil, there are just as many scenes that present him in a totally different light. Further, the most obvious instances of such symbolism represent the view that the crew have of him in a given situation. Eugene Redmond quotes several specific examples of racist statements and symbolism, most of them disastrously out of context. To take the first example in his long list:

"The setting sun dipped sharply, as though  
fleeing before our nigger."<sup>36</sup>

This short phrase occurs in a whole passage that Redmond might well have quoted in its entirety, with its reference to James Wait's glimmering, "startlingly prominent" eyes in the blackness of the doorway. The passage describes Wait's sudden appearance among the men who have been laughing and joking:

The circle broke up. The joy of laughter died on stiffened lips. There was not a smile left among all the ship's company. Not a word was spoken. Many turned their backs, trying to look unconcerned; others, with averted heads, sent half-reluctant glances out of the corners of their eyes. They resembled criminals conscious of misdeeds more than honest men distracted by doubt; only two or three stared frankly, but stupidly, with lips slightly open. All expected James Wait to say something, and, at the same time, had the air of knowing beforehand what he would say. (NN 21)

What is presented here is the effect Wait's appearance has on the crew, the way they see him. Conrad singles out individual responses to Wait's appearance: "suddenly the face of Donkin . . . became grave. . . . the washerman plunged both his arms into the tub abruptly; the cook became . . . crestfallen . . . the boatswain moved his shoulders uneasily; the carpenter got up with a spring and walked away, -- while the sailmaker . . . began to puff at his pipe with sombre determination" (NN 20 - 21). The accumulative effect of these short descriptions of each man is to build up the general, collective feeling of the entire crew toward Wait. That the description of Wait reflects the crew's perception of him is also evident in the sentence quoted by

Redmond, which refers to Wait as "our nigger." This "our" serves several purposes. It could be the possessive of the omniscient author as in traditional authorial commentary -- "our hero," "our heroine." Aside from only one previous appearance of "we" in chapter I some pages earlier (NN3), and "our" two pages earlier (NN 19), this is the first time that the first person plural shows up in the tale, which moves into that voice, but not until the following page. This first person plural occurs alone in the entire passage. It draws the narrator in as one of the crew, sets up for the first time the sense of possession, for the crew gradually come to regard Wait as belonging to them and as their responsibility, and it emphasizes Wait's place at the centre of the story by the very use of "nigger" where "hero" would be found in an authorial comment. This combination is two-edged, having an ambivalent mixture of positive and negative connotations (authorial proprietorship of his character, shock substitution for "our hero," the possessiveness of care for an invalid, and the possessiveness of slavery). It would suggest that the reader is also meant to be drawn into sharing the crew's possession and perception of Wait, and at the same time it arouses momentary surprise or even disturbance at the sudden appearance of "our" in such a context. But the disturbance is fleeting, like the setting sun, the bravura is momentary, and the reader is immediately lulled back into the security of distance as the racist symbols continue in the third person narrative voice. Something had flashed by that did not sound quite right. It is all very well to be told of the crew's reactions, it is another thing to be made to participate in them. A racist would not notice the difference. A discerning reader with an inclination to question prejudice and set ideas would be aware, if not directly conscious, of the discrepancy, which can only be intentional on Conrad's part, given the unusual appearance of the possessive here.

The reader is not told why the sun seems to depart when Wait appears, so that the reason could possibly be his blackness. But Conrad is setting up his reader, as he does in "Heart of Darkness" and "Typhoon," by giving a first impression

which he in some way undermines through a later incident or disclosure. In this case it is the flashback. "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" is an unusually straightforward and linear narrative chronologically, for an author whose narrative frequently deploys either dislocation of time or time sequence, but here we have a rare instance of such chronological rearrangement, the only one in this tale, for five pages after the above quoted passage comes the full explanation of the men's behaviour: "It began a week after leaving Bombay and came on us stealthily like any other great misfortune" (NN 26). Only at this point we learn when and how James Wait first spoke of the fatal nature of his illness ("can't you see I'm a dying man? I know it!" NN 27) The intervening pages gradually lead up to this flashback, with all the crew wondering just how sick Jimmy really is, and culminate in the formula passed from lip to lip "Old Singleton says he will die," immediately quashed by Donkin's "And so will you" (NN 26). Growing suspicion that Jimmy's constant companion -- death -- is the real cause of their gloom ("We all lovingly called him Jimmy to conceal our hate of his accomplice" NN 22), is fully confirmed in the flashback.

The symbolism, then, is in the minds of the crew, through association and their own white European backgrounds. The narrator acts as an intermediary between the crew members who are rarely conscious of their racist stance and the position of the author who, through their collective and individual psyches, poses questions about how and why such a group of men react as they do to James Wait as a new crew member in their midst. He offers the reader characteristic examples of contemporary responses to a given situation, and whilst it would have been impossible in Conrad's time to reject totally the validity of these responses, he wonders about them and imparts to the reader the same sense of doubt, unease, and questioning. If, for instance, the reader becomes accustomed to the crew's identifying James Wait's blackness with darkness and misfortune, as well as with death because of his illness, such a position cannot be held for long. Certain parts

and scenes are bound to cause some confusion and disorientation, if not surprise and discomfort as to what the author intends. James Wait's own attitude to light and darkness, for example, is also presented. And it is quite complex. On the one hand the physical darkness of night is simple and reassuring because he sees it as an aspect of life.

Life seemed an indestructible thing. It went on in darkness, in sunshine, in sleep: tireless, it hovered affectionately round the imposture of his ready death. It was bright, like the twisted flare of lightning, and more full of surprises than the dark night. It made him safe, and the calm of its overpowering darkness was as precious as its restless and dangerous light. (NN 64)

As long as James Wait can deceive himself that he is only playing at dying, that he is as full of life as any of his shipmates, he finds darkness reassuring because it is a part of nature and everyday life. But after Donkin's dramatic demonstration of the death that is in store for Jimmy, then Jimmy himself sees darkness as related to death.

"Splash! Never see yer any more. Overboard! Good 'nuff fur yer." Jimmy's head moved slightly and he turned his eyes to Donkin's face; a gaze unbelieving, desolated and appealing of a child frightened by the menace of being shut up alone in the dark. (NN 94)

The terror of imminent death, and the horror of a sea burial, have at last become real for Jimmy, have defeated his illusion of life. Fear of the dark is not merely a simile here; it recurs in his last words before he dies: "Light. . . . the lamp . . . and go" (NN 95). Conrad makes it clear James Wait's normal view of light and darkness does not express itself in a dichotomy of opposites as extreme as for the white European. Darkness for him is not overcharged with evil and ominous meanings. On the other hand fear of the dark (of losing the sense of perception by which we are most aware of being alive because we rely on it most), as it occurs in childhood, in dangerous circumstances or impending death, is common to the experience of all races and cultures.

Conrad's light and darkness motif is not found in "The Nigger" alone. It recurs in most of his other works. In *Nostromo* almost all of Chapter 8 in Part II ("The Isabels") is given over to the influence of the darkness that broods over the Golfo Placido when Nostromo and Decoud take the silver out to sea in the lighter. Decoud compares the darkness to death; for him it is "a foretaste of eternal peace" (N 231), an obscurity that "felt warm and hopeless all about them" (N 232). It is also linked with solitude: "The solitude could almost be felt and the blackness seemed to weigh on Decoud like a stone" (N231). Much later, in Chapter 10 of Part III ("The Lighthouse") the solitude on the Isabels proves beyond Decoud's endurance, and joins forces with the silence, which resembles darkness, to alienate him from the brightness of the morning and draw him into suicide: "the solitude appeared like a great void, and the silence of the gulf like a tense, thin cord to which he hung suspended" (N 414), "the sun appeared splendidly above the peaks . . . and in this glory of merciless solitude the silence appeared again before him, stretched taut like a dark, thin string" (N 415).

The complexity in the light and colour symbolism of "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" reflects the complexity of the work as a whole. None of Conrad's characters are 'good' or 'bad,' perfectly heroic or perfectly villainous. In this tale, Conrad gives Wait the most common faults associated with the black stereotype: laziness, tardiness, shamming. This brings up the question of why Conrad presents them so obviously, or why he has James Wait make these faults so obvious. In every scene illustrating them, James Wait seems to want the whole world, or the ship as a microcosm, to take notice. For reasons that the narrator and most of the crew cannot fully explain or comprehend, James Wait is constantly dramatizing himself. He plays to the hilt the role of a sick and dying black man. David Manikom remarks that James Wait wears the mask of death and makes it conspicuous to convince the world that the man behind the mask is its exact opposite -- alive and

healthy.<sup>37</sup> But James Wait does not only play at being ill and dying; he also plays at being 'black.' When he arrives late to join the ship's crew, it is with a full awareness of his dramatic impact, and the same is true of the comedy of literally obeying Mr Baker ("Get out of my sight" NN 27) by immediately dropping his broom and walking slowly away. If in the past Jimmy may have drawn only disadvantage from his colour in a white racist society, in his new situation he is clearly compensating by getting all the mileage he can out of being a black who is fatally ill among a white crew. Conrad does not at any time blame Jimmy for enjoying to the full the confusion, embarrassment, and discomfort of mixed feeling that the crew experiences towards him. Further, Conrad makes it clear that Jimmy's faults which he play-acts, are just as likely to be found in the white European. A character who comes much closer to a villain than Wait is Donkin, whose nature it is to shirk work, deceive others, and bear a chip on the shoulder throughout his life, all of which has a most noxious effect on the lives of those around him.

Well before James Wait joins the *Narcissus* Donkin cunningly arouses the sympathy of the men, even though they recognize him at once for a lazy, wheedling cadger. He "knew how to conquer the naive instincts of that crowd"; "the gust of their benevolence sent a wave of sentimental pity through their doubting hearts" (NN 7). The tension between benevolence and doubt in each man saps the strength and mutual trust that bind them to each other. Their reactions to Donkin prefigure the more complex corruption worked by the pity Wait will evoke. Donkin believes that he sees through Jimmy's game, and Jimmy's awareness of this sets up an unnatural and precarious bond between them; they are both social outcasts, but each in his own way and for reasons too different to provide a sound basis for a deeper tie. For all his supposed understanding of Jimmy, Donkin is the most racist and culturally prejudiced person aboard ship. Almost immediately after his arrival on board he starts up a row with Wamibo, the extremely placid Russian Finn, for no

reason other than to vent his own feelings of victimization on anyone he can safely regard as inferior:

"Get out of the road, Dutchie," said the victim of Yankee brutality. [Donkin had been working on an American ship.] The Finn did not move -- did not hear. "Get out, blast ye," shouted the other, shoving him aside with his elbow. "Get out, you blanked deaf and dumb fool." The man staggered, recovered himself, and gazed at the speaker in silence. -- "Those damned furriners should be kept under," opined the amiable Donkin to the forecandle. "If you don't teach 'em their place they put on like anythink." (NN 7)

'Dutchie' was a derogative term since Anglo-Dutch Wars of 17th century and reflects the economic competition between Britain and Holland during this period who were both pursuing expansionist policies and developing their material interests in roughly the same or adjacent areas of the globe. The term came to be used pejoratively among the English to refer to all foreigners. Donkin, in keeping with his character, as well as with his disadvantaged class and East End background, calls all the foreign crew "Dutchmen" or "Dutchies" instead of calling them by their names. The irony of the first sentence in the above quoted passage is three-fold, and would be comic if it were not so brutal. At the obvious level Donkin feels victimized, but his reaction is to victimize another. But also, Donkin believes he was victimized as an Englishman, and a foreigner, in an American ship, and yet now, as an Englishman in a British ship he bullies the foreign crew. The ultimate irony, however, is that American ships were notorious for their severity towards their crew, although Americans in general continued to represent freedom and independence to the people of other nations, so that the words "victim of Yankee brutality" sound a paradoxical note.<sup>38</sup> The word "amiable" is a rare example, for Conrad, of direct and obvious irony. Finally there is the overall situational irony of Wamibo's not hearing what Donkin is saying, not grasping what is happening, and responding to Donkin's aggression with stunned silence.

Donkin is on the point of a fist fight with "the amazed Finn" when the boatswain calls all hands on deck. Much later, when Nilsen, one of the two young Scandinavians, passes the news that Singleton says Jimmy will die, Donkin answers him by a spiteful "And so will you -- you fat-headed Dutchman. Wish you Dutchmen were all dead -- 'stead comin' takin' our money inter your starvin' country" (NN 26). For Donkin's kind the concept of intercultural interaction is unthinkable. If Wait plays at being a caricature of what the white European expects of the black, Donkin is an unconscious caricature of the ignorant British xenophobe.

James Wait is not the only person presented as the rest of the crew perceive him, or in the stereotypical way the Victorians perceived those not only of other races, but also of other nationalities. Wamibo is heavy, dreamy, and solid, Belfast (Craik) fits the accepted image of the emotional and sentimental Irishman moving back and forth from anger to tears in a moment, and the Scotsmen and West Countrymen are also 'true to type.' Conrad sets up his characters as stereotypes, and, having done so, he then proceeds to offer a surprisingly different view of them. Donkin is the only one he is not so kind to. He presents contradictory or ambiguous views not only of James Wait but also of minor characters. Wamibo may be dreamy and unaware, and yet he is one of the five men who take part in Jimmy's rescue. The cook's religious fanaticism, also a kind of stereotyping, is unbearable to the crew, and his doomsday speech to Jimmy even helps to precipitate Jimmy's death. Yet he has moments of fierce courage and loyalty to the ship, as when he brings hot coffee to the men in the midst of the storm: "As long as she swims, I will cook!" (NN 50, 52)

Surely Conrad's intent behind the apparent contradictions in character portrayal is to illustrate how human nature and conduct are far more complex than they at first appear, and will ultimately upset any stereotypical view we may take of

them. Perhaps the best example of character aberration by which Conrad emphasizes the complexity of the human psyche and of human relations is Captain Allistoun in his attitude to Wait. Some critics find Allistoun harsh when he refuses to permit Jimmy to work and insists that he remain in his cabin.<sup>39</sup> He tells Jimmy "You have been shamming sick . . . you choose to lie-up to please yourself -- and now you shall lie-up to please me" (NN 74). Allistoun's conduct is in keeping with all previous descriptions of him as "a little hard-faced man" (NN 36), "thin-lipped" (NN 32), and with "restless grey eyes" (NN 18), the "ruler of that minute world" who "seldom descended from the Olympian heights of his poop" (NN 19). It comes as a surprise when, four pages later, Allistoun uncharacteristically expresses self doubt before his two mates ("Did you think I had gone wrong there, Mr. Baker?" NN 78), and begins to explain the real reason why he acted as he did.

When I saw him standing there, three parts dead and so scared -- black amongst that gaping lot -- no grit to face what's coming to us all -- the notion came to me all at once, before I could think. Sorry for him as you would be for a sick brute. If ever creature was in a mortal funk to die! . . . I thought I would let him go out in his own way. Kind of impulse. (NN 78)

Allistoun seems to need reassurance that he acted for the best. The reasons he now gives Mr Baker for the way he handled the situation are quite different from what he told Wait. He recognizes that Jimmy is really dying and that his fear comes not only from the thought of imminent death, but also from his loneliness as a black facing death among a group of whites, and that this added burden has contributed to a death wish on Jimmy's part and a surrendering to the tyranny of death. For this reason he attempts to keep James Wait out of the way of the crew, so that none of them can bother and torment him, as the cook has been doing. If Allistoun feels sorry for him as for a "sick brute" it is not because Wait is black, but because in his loneliness as a black he lacks the courage to face his death even though he wants to die, and because he is helpless. A few lines later, and no doubt for emphasis, Conrad has Allistoun express the same thoughts again in a different way:

Past all help. One lone black beggar amongst the lot of us, and he seemed to look through me into the very hell. Fancy, this wretched Podmore! [the cook] Well let him die in peace. I am master here after all. Let him be. He might have been half a man once. (NN 78)

The captain's unusual loquacity on this occasion, and his asking Mr Baker if he thought he had gone wrong, leave the two mates dumbfounded. Allistoun concedes that James Wait may well have been a different person before contracting his fatal consumption and shipping aboard the *Narcissus*. From "the heights of his poop" Allistoun achieves a kind of detachment that brings with it, paradoxically, a deeper insight into the psyche and behaviour of the crew. The crew, on the other hand, who think themselves so caring of 'their' Jimmy, are too deeply entangled in the conflict of feelings towards him and consequently towards each other to perceive the reality of their interaction on this voyage. It is no wonder they misconstrue the captain's motives. As in some of the other sea tales, the ship's captain gives the impression of reflecting more faithfully than any other character -- or even the narrator -- the author's own position and attitudes.

The hierarchy of the ship, as represented in Captain Allistoun's physical station in the poop and his detachment from the crew, focuses on another cultural aspect of "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" that is also to be found in several other Conrad works: the question of cultural difference as it relates to rank and social background. The social and cultural class of the characters are so clearly delineated not only by their position in the ship's hierarchy but also by their speech, actions and behaviour, that their relative status in this regard could be charted as in a graph. At the risk of sounding repetitious I must reiterate here that the conditions behind Conrad's attitudes to imperialism and racism also obtain in the case of his depiction of class culture. He presents what he saw around him, what prevailed in his own time. He is severe with Donkin who ranks at the bottom of the

social/cultural order, not seeking to excuse him, as modern literature in the Marxist vein, for example, would do on the grounds that Donkin's character has been formed by his social background. Nor has Conrad passed, in the case of Singleton, beyond the proverbial 'let them sleep' standpoint of the privileged. He upholds Singleton as the eldest and wisest able seaman in the ship, but he does not allow Singleton to be educated, does not wish to give "that unconscious man the power to think" because Singleton would then become "conscious -- and much smaller -- and very unhappy. Now he is simple and great like an elemental force."<sup>40</sup> This attitude, which would be regarded today as irresponsible, was in keeping with the Romantic concept, still prevalent in the 1890s, of unspoilt nature and rustic simplicity that must be safeguarded against the disturbances of an urban society (to be discussed again in a later point in this study). It blends well with Conrad's own conviction that "fidelity to nature would be the best of all . . . if we could only get rid of consciousness. What makes mankind tragic is not that they are the victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it."<sup>41</sup> But Conrad also believes that "Singleton with an education is impossible" for the more valid reason that in those times education in the old sailor would have been highly implausible. Nor would it have suited Singleton's role as a model of the unsophisticated and unassuming dignity of anonymous heroism that was to be found in a good ship's crew. With the exception of Wait and Donkin all the men on board the *Narcissus*, no matter what their background or their status in the ship's hierarchy, are first and foremost members of the universal kind of community the tale celebrates.

. . . discipline is not ceremonious in merchant ships, where the sense of hierarchy is weak, and where all feel themselves equal before the unconcerned immensity of the sea and the exacting appeal of the work. (NN 9)

Not one of the characters seeks personal recognition either as an individual or as a member of a sub-group.<sup>42</sup> Hierarchy is seen merely in terms of the organization of work for the functioning of the ship. Although the tale is full of detailed sketches of

individual crew members such as Old Singleton at the beginning or the two Norwegians who "sat on a chest side by side, alike and placid, resembling a pair of love birds on a perch" (NN 4), these specifics build up throughout the tale to the whole, universal picture of a polyglot crew as a single community.

The accumulation of specifics to form a collective unity contrasts with the descriptive processes used in "Typhoon" where the Chinese coolies are lumped together in a mass of seemingly dislocated arms and legs helplessly knocking about in the hold. The description of the crew differs from that of the crew in "Typhoon," few of whom are depicted individually. This is partly because the *Nan-Shan* is a steamer, and some of the best anonymous work and 'camaraderie' take place in the engine room, which is also located deep in the bowels of the ship. This division into different levels of physical location results in more distinct separations of the crew that are more likely to hinder the development of a universal sense of community than on a sailing ship. The engineers feel strongly that they are part of that community, but they also remark a certain condescension on the part of the deck officers, especially Jukes. The long description of the men and machines in the engine room is no mere diversion, and culminates in its own small climax of a tiff between the hot and irritable engineers and the frenzied, dramatic Jukes, all under pressure from the greater danger of the storm. It is Mr. Rout, the chief engineer, who first arouses Jukes' irritation: "You deck people 'll drive me silly. . . . You fellows are going wrong for want of something to do" (T 83). Jukes' "hot scorn" is exacerbated by the words of the second engineer thrown after him as he dashes through the stoke-hold on his way to fetch men to assist him in dealing with the coolies:

Hallo, you wandering officer! Hey! Can't you get some of your slush-slingers to wind up a few of them ashes? I am getting choked with them here. Curse it! Hallo! Hey! Remember the articles: '*Sailors and fremen to assist each other.*' Hey! D'ye hear? (T 83)

Mr Rout was partly bantering, but his second engineer is more serious. He cannot know why Jukes rushes past him taking no notice. Although the business at hand for Jukes is pressing, he works himself into a "frenzy" of excitement in order to force himself to act, to face the coolie situation squarely. Jukes ignores the second engineer's words as he had ignored those of Rout, though he is no doubt ruffled by their references to the divisions in a steamship's hierarchy between upper deck officers and those working below, and the necessity of full cooperation between them. There is more than a touch of self-importance in the drama of Jukes' behaviour. His "comings and goings," the "rapidity of his movements" makes him appear to the deck men "formidable -- busied with matters of life and death that brooked no delay" (T 84). The matter at hand is indeed of vital importance, but the tone of these pages implies that Jukes could have handled the situation more calmly, an implication born out by the contrast between his mad rushing about and the steady, unerring, attentive work of Mr Rout and his men in the engine room even at the worst moment of the storm when they fear that the captain and the wheelhouse must have all been swept away. In this respect Jukes is one of those younger officers who, keen to make his mark, has not yet learned to appreciate the full value of the collective, anonymous, universal character of a ship's community.

Jukes is not at the top of the ship's hierarchy but he does, unlike Captain MacWhirr, approach the egocentricity that stands at the extreme end of another kind of spectrum. The ideal collectivity of a ship's crew, as represented in the engine room where the individual contributes to the common good, is the 'golden mean' at the middle of this spectrum that ranges from ego -(and ethno-) centricity to the forced collectivity that dehumanizes the Chinese coolies by heaping them into one massive object and denying them any individual identity.

Conrad achieves this dehumanizing effect by a process of dislocation in which the logical subject of a sentence, usually a person, is replaced by a neuter or

abstract noun. In the following examples the nouns are italicised to highlight the oddness of their combination with the kinds of verbs used or the strangeness of their function as the subject of the clause: "The *whole place* seemed to twist upon itself, *jumping* incessantly the while" (T 69). "One of the coolies began to speak. . . . the incomprehensible guttural hooting *sounds*, that did not seem to belong to a human language, *penetrated* Jukes with a strange emotion as if a brute had tried to be eloquent" (T87 - 88). In "Typhoon" this process is linked with simile and metaphor, but was not new to Conrad; he had taken it further in "Heart of Darkness," as previously noted in the example "when an opportunity offered at last to meet my predecessor the *grass* growing through his ribs was tall enough to hide his bones." Dislocation occurs frequently here. Prior to this example, when the chief's son makes a "tentative jab" at Marlow's predecessor with his spear, "of course *it* went in quite easy between the shoulder blades" (HD 13); entering the company director's office in Brussels, Marlow sees only a desk, then "from behind that structure *came out an impression* of pale *plumpness* in a frock-coat" (HD 14). The role of this process in "Heart of Darkness" is to set up the incredible, dream-like atmosphere in which Marlow finds himself: "I am trying to tell you a dream -- making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is the very essence of dreams. . . ." (HD 30) This form of dislocation is intensified as Marlow moves deeper into the Congo. When his helmsman is killed, for example, "Something big appeared in the air before the shutter, *the rifle went overboard* . . . the man . . . fell upon my feet. The side of his head hit the wheel twice and *the end of what appeared a long cane clattered* round and *knocked over* a little camp-stool" (HD47, my italics). Eight lines later that "cane" turns out to be "the shaft of a spear" embedded in the man's chest. The nightmarish effects that dislocation helps to produce are in their turn part of the defamiliarization process mentioned in my earlier discussion of the passage on the "unearthly earth" and the whites' "remote

kinship" with the Africans. In his capacity as a company employee Marlow is forced to witness the perpetration of evil and violence around him. As a helpless and passive spectator who cannot change the events, he too experiences a sense of victimization. He is an unwilling captive of what he sees. This is passed on to the reader as part of the "notion of being captured by the incredible which is the very essence of dreams." As in "Amy Foster" Conrad simultaneously renders the unfamiliar credible and, through defamiliarization, intensifies the horror and incredibility of real events.

Applied to the events of "Heart of Darkness" dislocation serves to defamiliarize, but applied to the coolies in "Typhoon" dislocation serves to dehumanize. This dehumanization and the impetuous, attention-seeking dramatics of Jukes represent the two opposite extremes where communal solidarity breaks down because the equilibrium between the ego and impersonal universality has been lost. Captain MacWhirr does not permit those extremes to upset that equilibrium in his ship. In "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" the self-centredness of Wait and Donkin proves to be far more pernicious than Jukes' youthful desire for personal recognition, especially when it begins to spread like a contagion through the crew. Again it is the captain who, perceiving the menace, acts to prevent it from becoming a reality, if in a different way that demonstrates more conscious control.

Conrad's statements concerning James Wait in his preface to his American readers seem at first contradictory. Like Captain Allistoun, he draws attention to Wait's loneliness as a black: "A negro in a British fore-castle is a lonely being. He has no chums." But he immediately goes on to state that in the story Wait is "nothing; he is merely the centre of the ship's collective psychology and the pivot of the action."<sup>43</sup> These words recall Conrad's letter to Cunninghame Graham on *Nostromo*.

Nostromo is nothing at all -- a fiction -- embodied vanity of the sailor kind -- a romantic mouthpiece of "the people" which (I mean "the people") frequently experience the very feelings to which he gives utterance.<sup>44</sup>

Nostromo appears to be at the centre of the novel in that he represents the feelings of the people of Costaguana, but his vanity destroys the validity of his role as an instrument of expression, and even turns his acts of daring into empty posturing (pure 'expression' devoid of 'essence'). He is only significant, ultimately, as a cause of failure of the enterprise he and a few others undertake for the community. His bravura is the antithesis of the anonymous heroism of toil and fidelity represented in the crew of the *Narcissus*. In anticipation of Nostromo, James Wait is at one and the same time "nothing" in the story and its "centre" and "pivot." He provokes reactions and responses in those around him that reveal the hidden forces at work in their psyche, individually and collectively, some of them negative forces such as doubt and sentimental pity that weaken the fabric of their communal life and solidarity. Like Donkin, Wait ushers in a wave of egocentricity, self pity and resentment that threaten dissolution, the near mutiny being a concrete expression of these insidiously corrupting elements. He sets going a chain of reaction, which, because of his race and colour, and because of the different national and cultural backgrounds of so many others in the crew, attains as much significance interculturally as it does at the level of the individual -- perhaps more, since so much depends on the collective strength and character of the ship's crew, especially in situations that occur frequently such as stormy weather. In fact the tale illustrates how the self-centredness or 'narcissism' of certain characters, and especially Donkin, encourages the kinds of responses to each situation that threaten that collective effort and even the life of the ship. Narcissism is the antithesis of positive communal interaction. Its presence necessarily pre-empts any chance of individual, national, racial or cultural communication.

The constant movement between different views of James Wait does not escape the notice of Eugene Redmond who misinterprets them in his article as a "love-hate seesaw" on Conrad's part. He does not see the one as intentionally undermining the other. And yet Conrad's use of incidental contradiction to undermine the surface image of many of his characters also applies to other aspects of his story. If the ship is a microcosm of the world, Britain itself is compared to a ship in ostensibly patriotic terms, typically Victorian.

The dark land lay alone in the midst of waters,  
 like a mighty ship bestarred with vigilant lights  
 -- a ship carrying the burden of millions of lives  
 -- a ship freighted with dross and with jewels,  
 with gold and with steel. She towered up  
 immense and strong, guarding priceless  
 traditions and untold suffering, sheltering  
 glorious memories and base forgetfulness,  
 ignoble virtues and splendid transgressions. A  
 great ship! For ages had the ocean battered in  
 vain her enduring sides; she was there when  
 the world was vaster and darker, when the sea  
 was great and mysterious, and ready to  
 surrender the prize of fame to audacious men.  
 A ship mother of fleets and nations! The great  
 flagship of the race; stronger than the storms!  
 And anchored in the open sea. (NN 100 - 01)

This passage follows in the tradition of patriotic literature of which Gaunt's speech in Shakespeare's *King Richard II* (II.i) and, to a lesser degree, the queen's speech in his *Cymbeline* (III.i) have come to be regarded as the models. It also recalls the stirring patriotic words of the narrator at the beginning of "Heart of Darkness." And there is no reason to doubt Conrad's sincerity here any more than in that later work. His admiration of Britain was genuine. Conrad had himself enjoyed the hospitality of its people and had no doubt taken great pride in his profession with the British Merchant Marine. This does not have to mean that he was without reservations. His calling Britain "flagship of the race" must have roused British readers to take pride in their race, as in their nation. The context nevertheless introduces an atmosphere of ambiguity. The *Narcissus*, resembling a small boat returning to the mother-ship, insidiously lends something of its own self-centredness to the greater

vessel. A hint of contradiction, of the mixture of baseness and wretchedness that must accompany the qualities of even the strongest nations and peoples, is blended into the eulogy, not only in the paired phrases "priceless traditions and untold suffering" or "glorious memories and base forgetfulness," but also in the oxymorons "ignoble virtues" and "splendid transgressions." The nation is another *Narcissus*. Conrad repeats this view more expressly at the end of the tale. This time his microcosm is London, where the crew resemble castaways and the "roar of the town" resembles "the roar of topping breakers, merciless and strong, with a loud voice and cruel purpose," where the sun shines on "the mud of the earth," on "greed," "selfishness" and the "anxious faces of forgetful men," and where the Mint, "cleansed by the flood of light, stood out for a moment dazzling and white like a marble palace in a fairy tale" (NN 107). Here are a few of the components of narcissism, and the whiteness of the Mint is only another passing illusion.<sup>45</sup>

The contradictions and ambiguities in "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" indicate Conrad's genuine repulsion at the premises on which racist, imperialist and extreme nationalist attitudes are based: the short-sighted and foolish belief in one's own or one's racial or national superiority.<sup>46</sup> Such an idea went against the convictions Conrad expressed in his prefaces (discussed in Chapter I of this study), against his faith in the bond of shared existence that unites all the peoples of the world. He related ideas of racial and national supremacy to materialistic exploitation, and regarded as pure vanity and foolishness all conceited and complacent views of self and society, of race, nation and culture. The fellowship of men, the sense of sharing the human condition, is the moral intent behind all his writings. It is a state of mind rather than a specific thought, a general consciousness rather than a concept. Accordingly, it is best conveyed through mood, tone, incident, example, and the relation of another's experiences rather than by direct appeal to logic or reason which are themselves more restricted by our cultural environment than we like to admit.

Conrad vigorously attacks the corruption and hypocrisy of colonial exploitation, the 'civilized' European's tendency to pay homage to appearances, to outward expression and illusion over essence and reality, and the self-centredness, individual or collective, that obstructs human discourse in all its forms. The aggressive thrust of these attacks, and the mood of disgust or tone of biting irony behind them can lead us to uncover the quieter, more hidden scepticism, questioning, or psychological resistance towards customs and attitudes that may have been generally accepted at the time, but that fostered all he denounced. In the final analysis, the hidden intent behind Conrad's more conspicuous themes, being subtle and subdued, will be interpreted according to the reader's own world view. We receive back from the works what we bring to them: "you shall find there according to your desserts," says Conrad in his preface to "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*," then adds " -- and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask" (JCF 162). It is Kurtz's utterance in "Heart of Darkness" ("The horror! The horror!") that for Marlow has "candour," "conviction," "the appalling face of a glimpsed truth" (HD 69). Conrad believed the truths hidden within his works had to be glimpsed because explicitness would rob them of all power of conviction. He felt strongly that fiction as art must appeal to the temperament and must therefore be "conveyed through the senses" ("to make you hear, to make you feel . . . before all, to make you see") because "temperament, whether individual or collective, is not amenable to persuasion" (JCF 162). In a sense Conrad sounds the depths of his reader's inner thoughts in the process of searching (or having Marlow -- or Kurtz -- search) within himself.

"An Outpost of Progress" and "Heart of Darkness" emphasize cultural isolation and the institutionalized corruption of colonialism which make intercultural interaction on a collective scale impossible. "Typhoon" and "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" illustrate the collective reaction of a ship's crew to a given situation

of danger or difficulty. They highlight individual responses, moving from one to the other, comparing and contrasting, but always returning each individual to the group, with its collective being and behaviour. When Conrad develops one-to-one intercultural relationships in his fiction or focuses on an individual character's reaction to cultural isolation and to other cultures and classes, he tends to be more explicit, less reserved or obscure in his descriptions. Such is the case with many of the novels and a number of other tales and short stories in which, as we shall see, the individual characters' reactions are sharper, the message clearer, the author's own viewpoint more in evidence.

## CHAPTER THREE

The Inner Self and Individual  
Cross-Cultural Relationships

The broad picture of cultural interaction on a general, collective scale would necessarily be vague and abstract were it not for the specific individual characters who give substance and support to the themes, moral values and overall atmosphere of Conrad's works. The values and convictions that invest "Heart of Darkness" would be no more than hazy notions, generalizations, and "sounds" that "everybody . . . and his fellows can make" (TU 99) if they were not filtered through Marlow who is the most important character in the tale. Even those works that emphasize collectivity ("The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" and "Typhoon") focus on specific characters at different moments, highlighting their reactions to given situations.

As Conrad moves from the '-isms' and abstractions of collective social beliefs and practices into the inner world of the individual character, the tension he sets up between cultural integration and alienation reflects other problems or states of that character's psyche. The hidden, enclosed or remote settings of the majority of tales attest to isolation as the continuing dominant theme, of which intercultural interaction necessarily becomes a negative correlative, yet another expression of alienation from the main character's own culture and community, and a form of evasion *from* the known and familiar instead of the ideal awakening *to* the new and different through a healthy curiosity.

"The Lagoon" and "Karain"

"The Lagoon" and "Karain" from *Tales of Unrest* are two early stories that concentrate on individuals, in both cases Malays communicating with white men. Thus the dominating cultural viewpoint is that of the non-Western central characters, although in "Karain" it is cunningly shared and intermixed with that of the Western narrator. The greater part of each story, set in a narrative frame, is told by the character himself in the first person and in a 'noble savage' style that is romantic/exotic in the extreme and represents the outstanding weaknesses of these works (see chapter iv of this study); but as with "An Outpost of Progress" and "Amy Foster," the greater simplicity and more direct presentation of certain themes in these stories offer insights into more complex works where the same themes appear.

The Malay narrators of the inner stories bear no hostility towards their white listeners because the relationship is based either on chance acquaintance freely developed or on trade. They have more personal dignity as individuals than the Africans in "Heart of Darkness," for example, or the coolies in "Typhoon." But they also cultivate the acquaintance of their white friends because they cannot tell their stories to their own people and are (or feel they are) alienated from their own communities precisely on account of the events in their past which cause them shame. Arsat in "The Lagoon" tells of how he fled with the woman he loved whom he had abducted from the Rajah with the help of his loyal brother. He then betrayed his brother by letting the Rajah's men kill him as they were escaping attack. Since that betrayal and escape Arsat has brought the woman, Diamelen, to live with him in a deserted house far from their community and even cut off from all Malay society. Even those who take the white man to visit him in their canoe "disliked Arsat, first as a stranger, and also because he who repairs a ruined house, and dwells in it, proclaims that he is not afraid to live amongst the spirits that haunt the places abandoned by mankind" (TU 173).<sup>1</sup> They sense that there is a reason for

his isolation. Only those outside Arsat's culture can associate with him, especially white men because they are "unbelievers and in league with the Father of Evil" and because of their "offensive pretence of disbelief" (TU 173).

Modern Western secularism has long been held offensive by Eastern cultures influenced by Islam. Its easy tolerance can swiftly degenerate into indifference or into nihilism. This is the spirit in which the Malay boatmen regard the whites in "The Lagoon," a spirit that Conrad apprehends and transmits with a high degree of intuitive perception and understanding. When Arsat exclaims to himself aloud after Diamelen's death "I can see nothing" the white man's answer "There is nothing" (TU 185) accords with the Malays' view of him. The white man has no name, no specific identity: he is 'every white man.' His friendship for Arsat is superficial, a matter of habit and convenience. He leaves Arsat without expressing any deep response or reaction to his story and we must question the possibility of any depth of response in one whose liking for the Malay is rendered in such superior terms as he "liked" Arsat " -- not so much perhaps as a man likes his favourite dog -- but still he liked him well enough to help and ask no questions" (TU 175). But this ambivalent aspect of the white man is not developed; he is merely Arsat's listener.

What Arsat did he cannot confess to other Malays whose sense of honour and concomitant shame of betrayal -- especially of a brother -- is reinforced by the Islamic religion and Malay society's contact with the Arab culture.<sup>2</sup> Even so it is only after several visits from the white man, and only on the night that Diamelen dies of fever, that Arsat is able to unburden his heart to his white friend. He relates his story when nothing is left, when he is beginning to pay the price for those shameful days by losing the person for whom he betrayed and sacrificed his brother in the first place. Only at this point does he consider going back to avenge his brother's death. But it is too late to regain his honour by revenge even if he follows it through. The story ends with the white man leaving Arsat standing on the shore

of the lagoon looking beyond the sunshine "into the darkness of a world of illusions" (TU 185). The imagery of darkness in the midst of bright sunshine looks forward to the *Nostramo* scene of Decoud on the point of committing suicide, on the shore of the Great Isabel bathed in sunshine, though the inner darkness within Arsat is that of illusions, and in Decoud it is that of solitude and despair brought on partly by cynicism -- a highly complex example of the white European 'unbelief' or "disbelief" alluded to simplistically in "The Lagoon." Decoud does believe initially in certain ideals (different from those materialistic ideals of Charles Gould) such as the Republic of Costaguana, especially if they are tied to his love for Antonia, but his faith is so abstract and cerebral that he cannot maintain it in the face of the more concrete torments of reality if they are unusually intense, particularly in the case of solitude.

Until Diamelen's death Arsat had believed that he could be sustained by his great love, an illusion that the reality of her loss destroys. Edward Said's interpretation of the eagle that takes flight over the lagoon at the moment of her death as representing that illusion of love -- "his selfish image of love's bliss . . . passing out of reality" -- is justified by Conrad's description.<sup>3</sup> The eagle is "white," at first "dazzlingly brilliant" in the sunshine, then a "dark and motionless speck" that finally vanishes "into the blue as if it had left the earth forever" (TU 184). In "Amy Foster" the plodding life and "heroic uncouthness" of the ordinary man are concentrated in the tip of the carter's whip quivering "high up in the blue," affirming itself against the void of the "Infinite." In "The Lagoon" the illusion of love departs with the spirit of the loved one; noble and romantic, it soars with the bird in a momentary flash of brilliance before disappearing altogether. The minutiae of vulgar reality persevere in the face of the void; romantic illusion, bright and overpowering in its transience, is totally lost in the void.

Ronald J. Nelson, in a short article on Arsat's psychological attitude towards his brother and his betrayal, suggests that Arsat lived "under the illusion that he was responsible for his brother's death," that his brother "perhaps deserved his lot" and that in fact Arsat could hardly be held responsible.<sup>4</sup> True, Arsat says that there is "no worse enemy and no better friend than a brother, Tuan, for one brother knows another, and in perfect knowledge is strength for good or evil" (TU 178), but the rivalry of brotherhood and its possible evil consequences are not developed by Conrad to the extent that Nelson believes. In fact, Nelson brings a characteristic white Western understanding of brotherhood to the story.

The legendary hostility of sibling rivalry in Western culture has no equivalent in the East, either in reality or in lore. It appears rarely, and never without the most destructive consequences, usually death. This is owing not to any innate moral superiority but to the different construction of the family and of the individual's role within it, even when we do not take into account the encouragement of religion. Conrad, in spite of criticism that he did not really know Malay society, remains true to the general spirit of an Islamic/Arab-influenced Eastern society in its attitude to brotherhood.<sup>5</sup> That attitude is that Arsat is indeed responsible for his brother's death and that guilt and remorse are the only possible outcomes of betrayal.

Strictly speaking, "brother" in "The Lagoon" means 'sibling,' but beneath the surface narrative, and waiting to be developed in other cases of betrayal in Conrad's later works, flows a hidden current of possible broader meanings of "brother" as a member of the same community or the same social and cultural group, and even as a fellow human being. In "Karain" a close friend is betrayed. In *Lord Jim*, the pilgrims of the *Patna*-- victims of Jim's initial betrayal -- are people of another culture, treated little better than the coolies in "Typhoon." This is no mere coincidence, but serves Conrad's moral message, for it is the reason why the white

captain and crew entertain no scruples about abandoning ship. The skipper refers to the pilgrims as "cattle" (LJ 54) and from the beginning of the voyage the five whites live entirely apart from the "human cargo" (LJ 55). Later one of the crew escapes the enquiry by drinking himself into a delirium and protests loudly from his hospital bed that he saw the ship go down and that "she was full of reptiles" (LJ 81). The enquiry itself emphasizes professional betrayal over human betrayal, as Brierly's comments indicate: "frankly, I don't care a snap for all the pilgrims that ever came out of Asia, but a decent man would not have behaved like this to a full cargo of old rags in bales" (LJ 93). And for Jim himself, public disgrace appears to outweigh the inner shame of betrayal.

In discussing this incident critics have tended to overlook the role of cultural difference, perhaps because it is not a hidden, complex influence inviting closer scrutiny, but appears simple and obvious. Jim is the only one of the white crew who calls the pilgrims "people," his least flattering epithet being "beggars" (LJ 123), which he uses in describing their "yelps" of fear and panic once they discover what has happened. Until then, Jim does not want to abandon the pilgrims, but at the last moment he acts with those of his race, impulsively and against his better judgement. That act results from a combination of different causes -- the tilt of the ship, the onset of a squall, his own imaginings of the ship going down, the dead man he stumbles over. But what finally moves him is the feeling of being abandoned by his own. They do not call out "jump" to Jim, who had refused to help them, but to the only other white man on board, who is already dead.

Until that time Jim had managed to maintain his innocence through his first exposure to the elements while on a training ship, but it is more difficult to deceive himself after jumping from the *Patna*, "I had jumped . . . it seems" (LJ 125), although he insisted that he kept his distance from the other whites, that "there was nothing in common between him and those men" (LJ 119). Still Jim clings to a notion of

blamelessness in the telling, and Marlow sees through it: "the infernal joke was being crammed devilishly down his throat, but -- look you -- he was not going to admit of any sort of swallowing motion in his gullet. It's extraordinary how he could cast upon you the spirit of his illusion" (LJ 123). Marlow is referring to Jim's illusion of innocence. It will later be left to 'Gentleman' Brown to rob Jim brutally of the last shred of belief in his innocence and heroism.

Ironically, hidden away in the tiny, remote country of Patusan, a people of a similar culture and the same religion as the *Patna* pilgrims provide Jim with his second chance to prove himself, but the loyalty and innocence are all on the side of the Malays of Patusan, especially Dain Waris. Jim's betrayal of his devoted young Malay friend, like a brother to Jim, re-enacts, in a more complex way, Arsat's betrayal of his brother. Jim ultimately betrays the Malays because he allows an unscrupulous white man to play subtly upon his weaknesses and susceptibilities, upon the memory of his disgrace and upon the re-awakened feeling of belonging to a brotherhood of white outcasts.<sup>6</sup>

This cultural aspect of the betrayal theme comes to the surface in *The Rescue*, where it plays an even more decisive role in Tom Lingard's betrayal of his Malay friends to save a small group of whites whose yacht is stranded on a sandbank. Apart from the important complication of his growing involvement with Mrs Travers, there is no interference from other matters, no question of professional loyalty, for example, and no life and death situation for Lingard himself, at least not directly influencing his decision as in Jim's case (on the *Patna*). His dilemma results simply from the fact that he cannot help his Malay friends and the whites at the same time. In the words of Eloise Knapp Hay, Lingard's "consciously chosen loyalties [are] subverted by his inherited loyalty."<sup>7</sup> In writing this novel Conrad seems not to have permitted himself to make of *The Rescue* what it is constantly on the verge of becoming -- a "fable of East and West, primitive virtue and Western

overcivilization," so that what appears in "Heart of Darkness" as critical irony and ambiguity towards this theme emerges in *The Rescue* as uncertainty concerning "what he meant to say to his English readers about progress, civilization, and the suppression of primal instincts."<sup>8</sup> Conrad himself states in an 1896 letter to Garnett that the novel revolves around the contrast between "the artificial civilized creatures" on the yacht and "the primitive Lingard" (JCF 6). Aware that he would probably betray the Malay prince and princess, Hassim and Immada, but still in a state of dilemma, Lingard begins to feel betrayed himself, by the circumstances, by the conflict raging within him, "by some secret enemy. He was ready to look round for that subtle traitor. A sort of blackness fell on his mind and he suddenly thought: 'Why! It's myself.' " <sup>9</sup> The honest and loyal Lingard achieves a degree of self recognition that Jim's illusions will not permit him. When Hassim and Immada are killed, Lingard with his old-fashioned sense of honour, will have no recourse, no possibility of recovery from his betrayal, no means of restitution.

Like the questions of brotherhood and betrayal, that of honour is also affected by cultural viewpoint. In "The Lagoon," Arsat appears to convince himself that he can regain his honour by avenging his brother's murder ("I am going back now . . . I shall see clear enough to strike -- to strike" -- TU 185), but the regaining of his honour through revenge is the foremost of those dark illusions with which the white man leaves him. Revenge, in his culture, is an obligation and a duty, but one which cannot restore honour, ease his conscience, or allow his reintegration into the Malay community. In fact he probably expects to die in the act of revenge, knowing that this is the only course open to him, the only way to regain his honour. He acts according to a code of honour imposed on him with or without his will, since his only choice is between absolute solitude and a consuming remorse on the one hand and revenge and death on the other. The view of honour represented by Falstaff's famous words in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* has gained ground over the centuries in Western society generally; honour is an abstraction, a

notion without substance, a word without meaning, being one of those concepts that must be believed to be true: "What is honour? A word. What is in that word honour? What is that honour? Air. . . . But will it not live with the living? No . . . . Honour is a mere skutcheon."<sup>10</sup> If the Malay people have been as strongly influenced by the Islamic religion and the Arab culture as books and articles on Malay society indicate, their sense of honour would not only be stronger than in Western society but also of a different nature, more closely related to religion and to the moral worth of both the individual and the family.<sup>11</sup> The Arabs' conservative notion of honour depends in part on the behaviour of their women and their puberulent daughters, who are not allowed to have any sexual intercourse before marriage, or they will be killed.<sup>12</sup>

In such a society honour may be lost for different reasons, but the greatest shame that is brought upon an entire family is caused by elopement or adultery on the part of one of its women members. Male members of the family are then duty-bound to kill the woman and her partner, since their death is the only means of effacing the shame and restoring the family honour. This is the situation of the central story of "Karain." Karain offers to accompany Matara, his closest friend, on a long search for Matara's sister and a Dutchman she eloped with. This is a mission of purging which will not be completed until the sister and the Dutchman are killed. But it is Karain who brings another form of shame upon himself when he kills his friend instead of the Dutchman because he has gradually succumbed to an illusion of his own making that he loves Matara's sister and is loved in return. Like Arsat, Karain cannot speak of this act of betrayal to his own people. Nor can he return home, but wanders alone, no longer obsessed by the image of Matara's sister, but haunted instead by Matara's ghost, until he meets an old pilgrim returned from Mecca who gives him a charm that wards off the spirit of his dead friend. With the old man Karain moves to another community which he conquers with the help of other warlike wanderers, and becomes a chieftain.

Karain seeks out this location because it is hidden and remote, like Jim's Patusan, in this case a plain enclosed by the waters of the bay and by steep hills. Karain cuts off his entire new community with him from the rest of the world, and soon discovers that even that step is not enough. His deeply felt guilt and remorse and his consequent sense of alienation will lead to an attempt to escape from himself and his community in the ship of the white traders. Once the ship has begun its regular visits the bay becomes an opening onto another world, a point of contact with an 'elsewhere', like the river mouth in *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*, or like the port in "Falk" or "A Smile of Fortune." Karain sees the ship and the bay as an escape route to a spiritual void, a wider world of belief in nothing, where he need not be constricted by values or a conscience, but the whites of the novels and other tales regard such locations as the last thread of contact with their own culture which they have most often been seeking to escape. Such settings constitute their void, at least until they have exchanged one set of values for another or, more often, until their own personality catches up with them, at which point the escape setting becomes another prison and brings into relief the growing sense that their real betrayal is of themselves, as with Jim, Almayer and especially Willems.

The inner story of "Karain" looks forward to the betrayal situation in *Under Western Eyes*, again as an extremely simple, preliminary sketch of a later and far more complex development. The direct murder of a friend in the relatively simple Malay society will translate into death by proxy, the formal (and superficially acceptable) execution of a chance acquaintance and fellow student by an autocratic State as the result of informing on his revolutionary activities. The complications of this form of betrayal in a decadent or overcivilized society, which only masks its brutalities and gives them an official stamp, can lull the betrayer into a sense of perfectly correct conduct, blunting awareness of who or what is betrayed and what the consequences are likely to be. Karain shoots Matara for the sake of his illusion

of love, and although it is an illusion, the readers sympathize. This is the 'hook' by which he becomes a challenge to their own values at the end of the story. Razumov betrays Haldin for equally selfish but more abstruse reasons, for which readers are permitted a glimmer of understanding as well as a spark of sympathy, because of Haldin's peculiar status in relation to Razumov as an intruder who brashly imposes upon his sense of loyalty. Although Razumov is cut off from the world by his deed of betrayal, he had already begun his life in a state of relative isolation, as an orphan. In an autocratic society he cannot afford to take the risk of being suspected of complicity by the authorities: "He saw himself deported by an administrative order, his life broken, ruined, and robbed of all hope. . . . Others had fathers, mothers, brothers, relations, connections, to move heaven and earth on their behalf -- he had no one . . ." <sup>13</sup> Razumov fails to realize that the State is bound to interfere now that Haldin has brought this complication into his life, irrespective of whether he denounces Haldin or not, and that the real betrayal is of himself.

Ghosts and images of the dead, the beloved and the betrayed, haunt both the story and the novel. Karain believes unquestioningly in the reality of Matara's ghost, more powerful in its "possession" of him than the vision of Matara's sister that previously fed Karain's illusion of love. "He ran by my side, without footsteps, whispering, whispering -- invisible and heard. . . . I wanted men around me! Men who had not died!" (TU 44) The disembodied voice, like the voice of Kurtz that fascinates Marlow, represents the man; it urges Karain to more bloodshed -- "Kill! Kill! Kill!" (TU 44) So that he fears being compelled into a mad rampage of violence and slaughter. Karain becomes as restless as his constant companion, Matara's ghost. His own voice becomes disembodied as he tells his story, and resembles the sounds of nature or things other than human, and possesses a life of its own: "His words sounded low, in a sad murmur as of running water; at times they rang loud like the clash of a war-gong -- or trailed slowly like weary travellers -- or rushed forward with the speed of fear" (TU 32).

The memory of Haldin also pursues Razumov, and at one point, before he actually betrays Haldin, he even hallucinates: "Suddenly on the snow, stretched on his back right across his path, he saw Haldin, solid, distinct, real" (UWE 81). Unlike Karain's restless ghostly vision, this figure lies before Razumov perfectly motionless, while Haldin is yet alive. Razumov, obsessed by the thought of Haldin as an obstacle to all his hopes and ambitions, an aborter of his future, perceives Haldin's physical being sprawled across the pure snow, obstructing the path before him. Only after several moments does he understand that "his thought, concentrated intensely on the figure left lying on his bed, had culminated in this extraordinary illusion of the sight" (UWE 81). Karain's 'ghost' steps out of the past, a direct consequence of his deed. Razumov's vision is a premonition of both the deed and the remorse. Karain's vision of Matara's sister does not return after the killing, but Haldin continues to haunt Razumov, especially through his sister, who is not a vision but a living presence. The love that takes root and would grow between Razumov and Natalia Haldin becomes a torture and a kind of nemesis for Razumov, ironically waiting for him outside Russia in the politically neutral, Western 'Utopia' of Geneva, where he might have hoped to escape the immediate, concrete reminders of his betrayal. Although the two works have so little in common that they do not at first appear to warrant comparison, it is interesting to note how very differently Conrad explores, develops, and makes use of the same or similar situations, themes, and conventions, in a naively romantic short story and a highly complex political novel.

The outer frame of "Karain" is more important and more fully developed than that of the "The Lagoon." Karain has been trading for some time with an English ship, buying mostly ammunition to protect from enemies the people of his new community, who honour and admire his courage and cleverness. The narrator makes no explicit reference to the cultural betrayal implied by this ammunition trade with a native people in which he and his two English friends are engaged,

shady activities common in the colonial world of traders, outposts and fringe life. Although he glosses over it smoothly in this early part of the story, the embedded situational irony is brought more forcefully to the reader's notice in the London scene at the end, in front of the munitions shop. Although Karain tells the story of his past to these three English sea adventurers, the outer frame is narrated by one of the Englishmen in the first person. The story acquires a greater complexity than "The Lagoon" because it is filtered through the consciousness of a first hand observer.

The narrator makes it clear from the outset that Karain became accustomed in the course of the ship's visits to informal and somewhat confidential conversations with the Englishmen on board their ship, always in the evenings when he tended to be more relaxed and could dispense with ceremony. In the day time, and especially under the bright light of the South-east Asian sun, Karain was inclined to be theatrical, in costume, manner, colourful trappings and retinue, being treated with "a solemn respect accorded in the irreverent West only to the monarchs of the stage" (TU 16). In "Karain" it is this theatrical imagery that represents illusion. At first the narrator cannot explain why Karain has the quality of always appearing to be "clothed in the illusion of unavoidable success" (TU 16). Only on their last visit, when Karain swims out to the ship entirely alone and in the midst of a storm, do the Englishmen learn of Karain's secret torment from his own lips. They glimpse the true Karain, with none of his trappings standing almost naked before them in a flash of lightning which reveals the nightmarish fear that haunts him and seems to offer its multiple reflection in the "two round sternports facing him" that "glimmer like a pair of cruel and phosphorescent eyes" and in the looking-glass that "leaped out behind his back in a smooth sheet of livid light" (TU 29). Karain's story could not be understood without the revelation of this contrast. The "effect" and "vividness" of his tale "cannot be made clear to another mind," says the narrator,

any more than the vivid emotions of a dream. One must have seen his innate splendour, one must have known him before -- looked at him then" (TU 32).

Karain seeks out the white men in the desperate hope that they will provide him with a means to lay the ghost of Matara. Ironically, Karain wishes to replace the protective presence of the old wise man who was so deeply religious, and who has now died, with the knowledge and power of the white men precisely because they are "unbelievers." Again he wishes to leave his community.

Take me away to your land. The old wise man has died, and with him is gone the power of his words and charms. And I can tell no one. No one. There is no one here faithful enough and wise enough to know. It is only near you, unbelievers, that my trouble fades like a mist under the eye of day. (TU 31)

To Karain "unbelief" becomes 'successful belief.' It has taken the place of religion to shield him from his own conscience. He looks round the ship's cabin, says the narrator, "as if appealing to all its shabby strangeness, to the disorderly jumble of unfamiliar things that belong to an inconceivable life of stress, of power, of endeavour, of unbelief -- to the strong life of white men, which rolls on irresistible and hard on the edge of outer darkness" (TU 31). The narrator sees Karain's seeking comfort and peace from the strange ship's cabin as an attempt, like his earlier wanderings, to defamiliarize the world around him and so to escape the knowledge within him that takes the form of a familiar shade. The illusions that deceive Karain are many, and all cause "unrest," from the illusion of love in the recurring image of Matara's sister to that of pursuit by the slain Matara's vengeful spirit. Desperate to go away with the white men, he is caught in yet another illusion of future peace and security in an alien culture which, as he sees it, places all its credence in the physical world and concerns itself only with material interests.

With you I will go. To your land . . . To your people, who live in unbelief; to whom day is day, and night is night -- nothing more, because you understand all things seen, and despise all else! To your land of unbelief where the dead do not speak, where every man is wise, and alone -- and at peace! (TU 46)

Karain knows nothing of the Westerner's reliance on action in the pursuit of material interests and the different kind of "unrest" it can bring, probably what Conrad refers to when he speaks in "The Lagoon" of the white man's fear and fascination of death soothing "the unrest of his race" (TU 176). When Karain realizes he cannot go with them, he wants something of their world to remain behind to protect him: "give me some of your strength -- of your unbelief . . . A charm! . . ." (TU 47, Conrad's suspension marks).

In spite of the pat solution, written to coincide with Victoria's sixtieth jubilee -- and probably the reason why the story was called "magazinish" by Conrad himself and "reminiscent of inferior Kipling" by Lawrence Graver -- "Karain" is more serious than it may appear at first glance, and the outcome can hardly be called "a joke at the native's expense."<sup>14</sup> Hollis's presentation of the jubilee sixpence with its engraved image of Victoria as a substitute for the protective presence of Karain's sword bearer tempts us to be condescendingly amused, to regard the very idea as a jest, but if there is jest, it rebounds on European civilization. The engraved image on British coins of Queen Victoria as 'defender of the faith' and yet ruler of an empire governed by monetary and material interests highlights the irony both of the coin's contradictory symbolic value and of the use Hollis finds for it as a charm against the hauntings of Karain's conscience. Some of Hollis's words ring with a recognizable patriotic ardour of the kind that appeared in "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" and was to recur in those passages we have already examined in "Youth" and "Heart of Darkness."

She commands a spirit, too -- the spirit of her nation; a masterful, conscientious, unscrupulous, unconquerable devil . . . that does a lot of good -- incidentally . . . a lot of good . . . at times -- and wouldn't stand any fuss from the best ghost out for such a little thing as our friend's shot. (TU 51, Conrad's suspension marks)

This time both the situational irony and that of Hollis's language are more obvious than in other patriotic passages, because Hollis is attempting to render it in uncomplicated terms comprehensible -- and meaningful -- to the Malay. But Hollis is not only speaking to Karain, for the narrator makes it clear that he "spoke to us in English" (TU 51). Hollis is also trying to convince himself and the two other crew members that the nation does good. His manner is hesitant and defensive ("-- incidentally . . . a lot of good . . . at times -- "). The narrator focuses on the reactions of the whites, passing only briefly over that of Karain, and even Hollis's words at the end of the above quoted speech draw our attention to the other two crew members, Jackson and the narrator: "Don't look thunderstruck, you fellows. Help me to make him believe -- everything's in that." No matter how amusing this manner of spending the jubilee sixpence may appear to the reader, the significance of these words goes well beyond the limits of the circumstances and context in which they are spoken. They are the simplest enunciation of Conrad's own credo of the art and the artist. All the power of art is vested in his ability to make believe, in the credibility and conviction of the illusion which must ultimately convey a deeper truth than the innumerable small truths of everyday reality.

Karain is able to leave the ship satisfied with his new charm, persuaded that it works. It was Hollis who took upon himself the role of priest or of magician, whose main function is to build up faith, to convince. Although Hollis speaks "ironically" when he first produces the box containing the coin, his face becomes "as grave as though he were pronouncing a powerful incantation over the things inside." He has already told his companions to "Look as solemn as you can" and later adds:

"We can't . . . turn our backs on his confidence and belief in us" (TU 48 - 49). And, at a less superficial level than the theatrical act in which the three Westerners engage, Karain represents the reader who must come away satisfied by the illusion of the work, though the reader must simultaneously be aware of its illusory nature, which Karain is not. This is the point at which the narrator's role enters into play. The shadowy "I" of "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" has taken on a fully fledged identity in "Karain," and looks forward to Marlow in whom a definite personality will be developed. In this intermediate text he is still 'evolving' from a voice into a complete and convincing character. Through him comes the double message: the enjoyment of Hollis's clever solution to Karain's problem, and a refusal to allow it to degenerate into mockery. If we are too ready to laugh at Karain's credulousness, the narrator is quick to remind us that 'civilized' white men often place no less faith in trifling objects of sentimental attachment. Hollis's box contains, besides the coin, "a bit of silk ribbon," "a cabinet photograph" which was a "girl's portrait," "a bunch of flowers," "a narrow white glove" and "a slim packet of letters carefully tied up" (TU 50). This list is a contrast to Chaucer's description of the pardoner's bag of relics and religious objects in The Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*.

His walet lay biforn him in his lappe,  
Bretful of pardoun, come from Rome al hoot.

. . .

For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,  
which that he seyde was Oure-Lady veyl:  
He saide he hadde a gobet of the seyl  
That Seinte Peter hadde, whan that he wente  
Upon the see, til Jhesu Crist him hente.  
He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones,  
And in a glass he hadde pigges bones. <sup>15</sup>

The narrator in "Karain" even makes an allusion to religion at the end of his description of the "charms," and to the enormous distance between the spiritual meaning invested in things as signs and the things in themselves.

Amulets of white men! Charms and talismans!  
 Charms that keep them straight, that drive  
 them crooked, that have the power to make a  
 young man sigh, an old man smile. Potent  
 things that procure dreams of joy, thoughts of  
 regret; that soften hard hearts, and can temper  
 a soft one to the hardness of steel. Gifts of  
 heaven -- things of earth. (TU 50)

Hollis converts things into signs. The artist attempts to give transcendental meaning to the tangible, perceptible world. When the box is opened the cabin is filled with "all the homeless ghosts of an unbelieving world . . . exiled . . . shades of loved women . . . friends," "ghosts of ideals" (TU 50), and when he holds up the jubilee sixpence, the narrator immediately gives his own and Jackson's reactions: "we said nothing. We did not know whether to be scandalized, amused, or relieved" (TU 51). This ambiguous response they conceal from Karain. The narrator himself, pointing to Hollis, says to Karain "believe him!" (TU 52) and describes Karain's leavetaking as a stepping back into the stage of illusions, of his former dramatic splendour. Karain "seemed straightway to step into the glorious splendour of his stage, to wrap himself in the illusion of unavoidable success" (TU 53). A crucial moment in the story comes when the white men cheer Karain on his way in the canoe and "the Malays in the boats stared -- very much puzzled and impressed. I wondered," says the narrator, "what they thought; what he thought; . . . what the reader thinks?" (TU 53, Conrad's suspension marks). The illusion has no power without a subject. Without the reader the creative process is not complete. In fact the reader can be no more passive than the narrator who is no mere observer, but a participant and mediator, first between Hollis and Karain by encouraging the Malay's belief in Hollis's magic and assisting at a cross-cultural communication rite, and also between the author and the reader. The cross-cultural element is significant in that the beliefs and superstitions of Karain must first find their nearest equivalent in Western society (as with the charms and talismans of white men), and these must then be translated, endowed with a meaning comprehensible

to Karain. Readers of "Karain" are directly invited to bring their own values to the story, even to form an opinion.

Before bowing out, the narrator adds a short scene in the nature of an epilogue. He and Jackson meet in the Strand some years later and reminisce about Karain. Jackson hopes that the charm really worked and insists that Karain's story is more real to him than the sights and sounds of London. This is partly because, as the narrator says, Jackson has been "too long away from home" (TU 56). But Karain's story also has conviction because it is charged with a meaning that seems to be missing from the alienating "jumble" of unrelated people and activities in London's streets. Throughout the story illusion and reality alternate with Protean suddenness and celerity. Jackson may wish to remember only the fascination of Karain's story and Hollis's charm. But the first thing that reminds him of Karain is the window of a gun shop where Jackson stops because he had "a passion for firearms" (TU 54). This location also serves to remind the reader that trade in munitions was the basis of their acquaintance with Karain, and that these three white men were engaged in what could be termed at best a quasi-legitimate business transaction. They and their shady activities are part of the flotsam world of independent adventurers, a distinctive colonial world shaped partly by the topography (scattered islands, remote outposts), and partly by Europe's ever expanding colonialist system. A number of the characters in Conrad's exotic island or outpost fiction live at the edge of this colonial society. The three white traders in "Karain" are in fact better integrated than most of them.

Again it is the narrator who notices that Jackson's reflection peers back at them "from amongst the dark and polished tubes that can cure so many illusions" (TU 55). With his image reflected in the glass of the window, Jackson also reflects upon the past, as does the narrator in telling the story whose full title is "Karain: A

Memory." In a sense all creation is recollection, since even when we compose anew, we draw upon experience. In this case it is not only the narrator's (and Jackson's) memory of Karain as a stunning figure in their past, but Karain's memory of the shame of betrayal in his own past. Memory plays a vital role in setting up or widening the rift between illusion and reality. The reflection of Jackson's bearded face in the shop window is also a false image, an illusion superimposed upon the 'real picture,' the display of guns. Their confusion underscores the tension of illusion and reality throughout the tale. Jackson himself unwittingly invokes reality when he gives the latest news from the papers: "they are fighting over there again. He's sure to be in it" (TU 55). In that news the Englishmen witness the fruit of their questionable trading practices. "Karain" adumbrates the more fully developed themes of exploitation and material interests in "Heart of Darkness" and *Nostramo*, especially the illusory idealism transformed into egoistic possessiveness and corruption in Kurtz or, more subtly, in Charles Gould. Karain has laid a ghost to rest with his Western amulet, a jubilee sixpence, but the price is higher than he could have foreseen. Together with Western weaponry he has purchased the perpetual unrest of material interest and modern warfare.

#### "FALK"

"Falk" is another tale that revolves around memory. The narrator/participator recalls a certain character who in turn confesses nightmarish deeds of his past, the shameful memory of which still alienates him from society. This story, too, is fully titled "Falk: A Reminiscence," "Living with memories," says Conrad in a letter to Cunninghame Graham, "is a cruel business."<sup>16</sup> He is referring to the cruelty of nostalgia, but the statement can be equally applied to those events preferred forgotten.

In "Falk" Conrad moves away from concern with illusion back towards a preoccupation of earlier tales like "An Outpost of Progress" and "Heart of Darkness" -- the cloak of civilization that cannot overcome primitive human instincts but only conceals or disguises them. "Falk" examines more closely people's reactions on the few occasions when those instincts are laid bare. The setting, as in "The Lagoon," is South-east Asia, where the story centres not around natives but around people of different European nationalities. However, the cultural interest does not lie merely with the interrelation of a German family, a Scandinavian, and an Englishman, but rather with the response to the revelation that one of these characters had once been so isolated from normal human existence that he had to resort to a form of cannibalism to survive. The eating of human flesh is not the central fact of the tale. It serves as a catalyst. What matters is the subsequent development of Falk's personality and the repercussions on those around him, particularly the few to whom he ultimately reveals his secret.

My intention in writing "Falk" was not to shock anybody. As in most of my writings I insist not on the events but on their effect upon the persons in the tale. (JCF 181)

That effect is brought to a climax when Falk decides to marry. Like Arsat and Karain, Falk is haunted by an episode in his past which he keeps locked in his breast for many years, but where Arsat and Karain could not have revealed their secret to anyone in their communities, Falk is finally able to do so without suffering retribution. He finds the courage to speak of his past as he finds it to propose marriage, to which he is spurred on by love, loneliness, and the very same instinct of self-preservation that led him to that earlier 'abominable' deed. From that time forth, he has completely abstained from meat, alienated himself from the community of fellow Europeans in the port where he owns and operates the only tug, and leads such an antisocial life that his frequent visits to Hermann's boat, the *Diana*, to sit with the German family in the hopes of winning Hermann's niece, are so out of character as to cause a stir. Having learned no social graces, he appears brusque

and uncouth, but his abrupt manner is also a sign of his fundamentally frank and honest nature, another reason why the constraint of secrecy about his past is unbearable to him. This honesty at last obliges him to disclose everything before he can feel secure that his proposal has been unconditionally accepted. In fact, his marriage request, made to Hermann, accompanied as it is by his disclosure, is also a plea for social acceptance and reintegration in spite of that past for which some would blame him. Falk is the reverse of characters like Kayerts and Carlier in "An Outpost" or the accountant dressed in white in "Heart of Darkness" whose civilized mask hides corruption and emptiness. His gruff exterior is not only the result of a self imposed isolation in the busy life of the port, but turns out to be a defence, a shield protecting an essentially honest, moral and sensitive being. Even his ruthless business conduct is part of that defence.

. . . Falk is absolutely true to my experience of certain straightforward characters combining a perfectly natural ruthlessness with a certain amount of moral delicacy. Falk obeys the law of self-preservation without the slightest misgivings as to his right, but at a crucial turn of that ruthlessly preserved life he will not condescend to dodge the truth. . . . he is . . . sensitive enough to be affected permanently by a certain unusual experience . . . but it is not the subject of the tale. (JCF 181)

In his honesty and ruthlessness Falk is identified with the sea; like the sea he is "elemental." The narrator is amazed at the sea's apparent restraint before the "venerable innocence" of Hermann's "patriarchal old tub."

. . . I have known the sea too long to believe in its respect for decency. An elemental force is ruthlessly frank. . . . it looked as if the allied oceans had refrained from smashing these high bulwarks . . . out of sheer reticence. It looked like reticence. The ruthless disclosure was, in the end, left for a man to make; a man strong and elemental enough and driven to unveil some secrets of the sea by the power of a simple and elemental desire. (T 171 - 172)

Falk's own reticence of many years concerning his past gives way suddenly in the crude onrush of his confession. His "elemental" nature, though it may be partly inherent, also derives from that experience in his past which drove him to the most primitive means of self-preservation, leaving in its wake the natural ("elemental") instincts that continue to command his life. They compel him to a direct, blunt manner and ruthless conduct in all his dealings with others, as they drive him now to disclose those past secrets which are their cause. This secret chamber within Falk the man is also the innermost of three boxed stories in "Falk" the tale.

In the ship, *Borgmester Dahl*, that becomes lost in the Antarctic seas Falk is cut off not only from his own specific culture, like Kayerts and Carlier, or like Kurtz, but from all human society, for when the solidarity of his ship's crew breaks down, there does not even remain the force of community that can be found among primitive tribes. Instead a kind of survival egoism sets in amongst the strongest of the few remaining men.

. . . the bonds of discipline became relaxed . . .  
 (T 250) The organised life of the ship had come  
 to an end. The solidarity of the men had gone.  
 They became indifferent to each other. (T 254)

Baines points out that in the description of this episode "Conrad touches on the theme of the 'The Nigger of the *Narcissus*,' human solidarity threatened, and shows how an elemental impulse to live may in extremity sweep aside the assumptions of civilised society." <sup>17</sup> In spite of Falk's antisocial behaviour later in his life, his personality was not originally marked by that characteristic. When he was serving on the lost ship he was the only man who tried to maintain the solidarity of the crew to the last, and did his utmost to keep up some semblance of organized life, knowing that this was the best way to preserve the few survivors. Superficially, "solidarity" and "society" may appear to be one and the same. But beneath the unfolding of the narrative, "Falk" is in fact built entirely around the contrast between

these two concepts as they emerge in reality. The superficiality and essential dishonesty of the social/cultural life of men is irksome to Falk, even repulsive -- a futile vanity needlessly added to the self-preservation that everyone owes himself. He wishes to be accepted, to be respected, but not to play the game of social niceties and hypocrisy. When he is angered by Schomberg's gossip, the narrator says of him:

This was the first of my knowledge of Falk. This desire of respectability, of being like everybody else, was the only recognition he vouchsafed to the organisation of mankind. For the rest he might have been the member of a herd, not of society. Self-preservation was his only concern. Not selfishness, but mere self-preservation. Selfishness presupposes consciousness, choice, the presence of other men; but his instinct acted as though he were the last of mankind nursing that law like the only spark of a sacred fire. (T 217 - 18)

"That law" refers back to self-preservation, and the "sacred fire" is not in this case the torch of knowledge or discovery (as of explorers and adventurers), but man's consciousness of his existence.

Falk himself represents the individual expression of self-preservation, of which solidarity is the collective aspect. The falseness of social custom, received opinion and learned behaviour, the superfluosness of the bulk of social culture, are represented to a greater or lesser degree by most of the other characters in the story. The lowest and most vile of these is Schomberg with his unhealthy curiosity, spying and eavesdropping, and especially his malicious gossip. He is particularly repulsive to Falk because his gossiping resembles the most repulsive aspect of the act of eating. It is in fact a symbolic form of cannibalism without the excuse of self-preservation. The narrator implies this comparison before revealing the story of Falk's experience on the lost ship.

He had for Schomberg a repulsion resembling that sort of physical fear some people experience at the sight of a toad. Perhaps to a man so essentially and silently concentrated upon himself . . . the other's irrepressible loquacity, embracing every human being within range of the tongue, might have appeared unnatural, disgusting, and monstrous.<sup>18</sup>

The passage emphasizes the tongue as the organ of both speaking and eating. Gossip is a form of cannibalism and yet is paradoxically seen as part of the 'glue' that holds society together, as the word "embracing" ironically illustrates.

Falk rarely patronizes Schomberg's hotel, and even then only to drink, never to eat. Schomberg, who goes to the trouble of importing expensive but tasteless lamb chops to please his clients, feels personally offended by Falk's refusal to eat meat. As a result Schomberg turns to his favourite weapon to 'punish' Falk -- the culturally acquired and social 'cannibalism' of gossip. As the later developments of the story will illustrate, society lives on this form of cannibalism. At this point, completely unaware of Falk's reasons for abstaining from meat, Schomberg gossips complainingly about that strange and eccentric (to him) habit in Falk, thus setting up a truly 'vicious' circle of enmity between them.

Schomberg's gossip is extremely harmful, as other works demonstrate even more clearly (in *Victory*, where he spreads rumours about Axel Heyst that contribute to the tragic outcome of that novel), but at least the harm he does is obvious. More insidious than gossip is the exaggerated cultivation of certain feelings and emotions encouraged by a petty bourgeois society. In "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" the solidarity of the ship's crew is broken down by a selfish sentimentality and false pity. Such are the very attitudes fostered by the Hermann family in "Falk." In fact "Falk" emphasizes the cultural origins of such sentiments. During his ordeal in the Antarctic seas, Falk is described as displaying "*pitiless*

resolution, endurance, cunning and courage -- all the qualities of classic heroism " (T 257, my italics). Far from heroic, and more closely resembling the "wave of sentimental pity" described in "The Nigger," the cultivated pity of the Hermann family allows no room for real compassion. It proves to be no more than a "childish comedy," a selfish and sentimental 'squeamishness' (T 173, 244 and 260).

The artificiality of these socially learned ways of thinking is emphasized by an important motif that reappears several times throughout the story. Hermann's little girl, Lena, the eldest of his four children, is extremely attached to a dirty, limp rag doll which she and the other children pretend is sick.

This object led a sort of 'in extremis' existence in a wooden box placed against the starboard mooring-bitts, tended and nursed with the greatest sympathy and care by all the children, who greatly enjoyed pulling long faces and moving with hushed footsteps . . . . Only the baby -- Nicholas -- looked on with a cold, ruffianly leer, as if he had belonged to another tribe altogether. Lena perpetually sorrowed over the box, and all of them were in deadly earnest. It was wonderful the way these children would work up their compassion for that bedraggled thing I wouldn't have touched with a pair of tongs. I suppose they were exercising and developing their racial sentimentalism by the means of that dummy. (T 172)

The " 'in extremis' existence" appears particularly hollow on a second reading, compared with the very real struggle for survival of the men in the ship, *Borgmester Dahl*. It strikes us with the same hollowness as the clothes hung out to dry on the deck of Hermann's boat the *Diana*, which flap in the wind, billowing and collapsing in a ghost-like foreshadowing of the narrative of the sea disaster. Any genuineness of feeling that might be evoked by the word "compassion" is precluded by the verb that introduces it, "worked up," suggesting artificiality, an unusual trait in children, and calling to mind the children in "Amy Foster" who appear to have been "taught"

to throw stones. That such "worked up" compassion and "sentimentalism" are culturally absorbed is evident in the brief, contrasting description of Nicholas, the baby of the family, not yet old enough to emulate the behaviour of his siblings, and therefore still in his primitive or "elemental" state, as the word "tribe" indicates. The "racial sentimentalism," so sympathetically encouraged by Mrs Hermann, prepares us well in advance for the reaction of horror, repulsion and moral righteousness expressed by the Hermann family when Falk makes his brutally frank confession, his "ruthless disclosure." Although "that dummy" refers specifically to the children's doll, it also sets up an analogy with the fuss and commotion of the adults around Hermann's silent and quiescent niece.

The contrast between Falk and the German family is also represented by their boats. The narrator compares Falk to a centaur, that mythological figure of natural lust and crude sensuality who takes what he wants with a frank boldness, ravishing and abducting if need be. Falk resembles this woodland creature in three ways: in his virile physical appearance and conduct -- "regular severe features and an immense curled wavy beard, flowing down his breast" (T 178), "virility of nature as exaggerated as his beard, and resembling a sort of constant ruthlessness"; in his general behaviour and lack of "manner," his "cupidity," and his "frank disregard of susceptibilities" (T 231 - 3); and finally in the impression he gives of being a "composite creature" -- not a "man-horse" but a "man-boat" (T 178). Like the centaur he appears an alien figure, straddling the border of the human and non-human. This resemblance to the centaur explains why, when Falk appears with his tug and brutally tows the *Diana* with Hermann's niece on board at full speed out of the port, the narrator can say "I could not have believed that a simple towing operation could suggest so plainly the idea of abduction, of rape"; and he describes the *Diana* as waltzing round on the water and flying "after her ravisher" (T 187). The tug itself, "incomplete" and looking "mutilated" without Falk (T 187), is compared to "a ferocious and impatient creature" (T 181). The *Diana*, on the other

hand, could not be more ironically named, being "physically incapable of engaging in any sort of chase" and exuding an atmosphere "unexceptionable and mainly of a domestic order" (T 164). A picture of "vulnerable innocence" (T 171), the *Diana* "evoked the images of simple minded peace, of arcadian felicity" (T 173). The "meticulous neatness" of this boat and the way in which she is constantly scrubbed and painted reflect the domestic preoccupations of this stereotypical German family with their love of order and "civic virtue," and are expressly related to their sentimentalism: "purity, not cleanliness is the word. It was pushed so far that I seemed to detect in this too a sentimental excess, as if dirt had been removed in very love" (T 173). To the narrator the filthy rag doll is out of place in this setting, "a disgrace to the ship's purity," a stain on its "arcadian felicity," and the "childish comedy of disease and sorrow struck me sometimes as an abominably real blot upon that ideal state" (T 173). Sentimentalism replaces love and the doll is a mere token of the dirt of humanity. When Falk makes his confession, Hermann outdoes his children's comedy by giving a highly theatrical performance of choking, staring and raving, all of which implies a *regression* to animal-like behaviour even more primitive than that of Falk whom he calls "Beast!" (T 239). His shock arises not so much from the content of Falk's disclosure as from its "awful sincerity" (T 239). He responds as he is culturally expected to respond, believing it the duty of a human being in Falk's circumstances to starve because this was "the opinion generally received" (T 243).

Hermann is the unexpected reminder of primitive man as described in the opening passages of the story -- the reminder of rudimental times that we at first assume Falk should be. Hermann and Schomberg, and the ape-like Johnson, are the real 'throwbacks' to animal behaviour which makes Falk's primitiveness dignified. Johnson, the pilot, who had known the river, but who has since taken to drink, married a native, and "gone utterly to the bad" (T 208); he lives behind a "mound of garbage" (T 210). He is found standing with a banana in his left hand;

with his right hand he is flipping silver dollars onto the floor where his native wife, on all fours, is crawling for them. She is brutally exploited and humiliated to an animal position of subjection on the floor. The constable and the captain-narrator leave Johnson flat on his back in the mud, and "at the slight blow of the banana the brute in him had broken loose. . . . He was like a wild beast" (T 212). Johnson lives like an ape in his hovel, munching bananas; he is a zoo specimen down even to the paper collar he wears about his bare neck, and he is surrounded by reminders of human animality: empty beef tins, dead carcasses, and rotting rubbish. Johnson in particular typifies the regressive white loners and drifters stagnating at the edge of European society in far-flung outposts and islands. Matching these character depictions are the regressions in narrative movement throughout "Falk." Modern-day 'civilized' scenes such as a Thames hostelry give way to descriptions of mankind's primordial past or to 'primitive' experiences in the past of an individual character (Falk's ordeal on the *Borgmester Dahl*). The story pushes its way with each narrator, and through various mental associations such as food (lamb chops, bananas), deeper into the past, groping towards the tenebrous period of a common primordial ancestry.

Some characters in the story who represent present-day social man, however, have little to offer in the place of Falk's elementalism or these three characters' regressiveness, and prove to be decidedly lacking in depth or interest. Mrs Hermann is one of the most stereotypical characters, even though her depiction as a stout, industrious, and cheerful German housewife is colourful and convincing, as is her sudden change of attitude towards both Falk and the narrator at the end of the story.

Lena, a little pale, nursing her beloved lump of dirty rags, ran towards her big friend [Falk]; and then in the drowsy silence of the good old ship Mrs. Hermann's voice rang out so changed that it made me spin round in my chair to see what was the matter.

"Lena, come here!" she screamed. And this good-natured matron gave me a wavering glance, dark and full of fearsome distrust. The child ran back, surprised, to her knee.(T 263)

Even more than her husband, Mrs Hermann represents the social conventions and well-meaning but essentially false values without which she is lost, and which she passes on to her children. She cannot bear to have those customs and conventions disturbed by the "awful sincerity" of Falk's "ruthless" confession or by the suspicious mediations of the English captain-narrator.

The hint of an intermediary role for the narrator in "Karain" is fully developed in "Falk," although as a character he is not as well defined as Falk and Hermann. The narrator is caught up in what he describes as a mission of diplomacy. The diplomat or ambassador is the quintessential mediator between peoples of different countries or cultures, not only different geographically but also in an inner, moral sense. However, the narrator becomes excited by his role and carried away by his sense of self importance: "I listened impassive, feeling more and more diplomatic" (T 223); "my heart beat fast with the excitement of my diplomacy" (T 224); "my diplomacy had brought me there, and now I had only to wait the time for taking up the 'role' of an ambassador. My diplomacy was a success" (T 229). This, too, is a theatrical performance, the narrator relishing his role and expecting to be entertained by it. Diplomacy represents the civilized world, its social games and play-acting, its unspoken 'understandings'; in antithesis to Falk's frankness and 'elementalism.' When the narrator goes to request the hand of Hermann's niece on Falk's behalf, his role becomes surprisingly real and solemn. The significance of the narrator's part in the story lies in the emphasis it places on the contrast between appearance and reality, between social convention and real or natural life and behaviour. This contrast is in fact another version of the dichotomy of essence and expression. The expression of seriousness and sincerity is fostered in the Hermann children's sick doll act, but is not substantiated, while the role of intermediary that

the narrator sees himself as superficially acting out becomes essential in its meaningfulness to the parties concerned and in its effect on the final outcome of the events. Again the setting is significant: a port at the mouth of a river, a point of contact between "us" and "them," but also a compromise for the white characters half way between isolation and the outer world of their own communities that is brought to them by ship. The narrator's profession of ship's captain underscores his message-bearing and mediating role.

Unfortunately the narrator's thoughts and feelings are not given when we most want to know them. The reticence and consequent vague development of the narrator as a character is related to the sense of embarrassment -- and even the suspicion of guilt -- surrounding some of his activities. In fact Conrad seems to look upon his narrator with a mildly ironic eye. The predicament in which the captain finds himself with his own ship and crew, the discovery of his unromantic responsibilities as a first-time captain of a ship whose former master committed suicide (as do the captain and many of the crew in the inner story of Falk's sea disaster), and the foolish discomposure he feels in the face of a number of incidents, such as the theft of his money by the newly engaged Chinese hand together with a ludicrous chase through the port, all contribute to an impression that the narrator, embarrassed by aspects of his own conduct, prefers not to reveal too much about himself in the course of his story about Falk. He describes openly and honestly his own youth and inexperience, but reacts with a sense of insult when told the same by Hermann: "this horrid aspersion . . . made me huffy" (T 202). There are things which he seems to avoid mentioning, among them a certain voyeurism that makes its appearance several times in the story. A number of characters are constantly looking, gazing, staring at Hermann's niece or speak of her as if they had been doing so. Every one seems to know of the supposed rivalry over the niece between the young captain and Falk, from Schomberg and all his customers (" ' a fine lump of a girl.' He made a loud smacking noise with his thick lips. 'The finest lump of a girl

that I ever . . . ' " T 213, Conrad's suspension marks), to every one in the shipping chandlers office and the consulate (" 'if you hadn't quarrelled with that tugboat skipper over some girl or other, all this wouldn't have happened' " (T 212).

Although the narrator has every reason to be incensed by the spreading of the rumour of rivalry and its effect on him professionally, neither the narrator's excuses for visiting the *Diana* every day (to seek domestic repose in the midst of his troubles with his ship), nor the 'proof' he gives Falk that he is not in the least attracted to Hermann's niece (because he has not spoken to her) are very convincing. More impressive is Falk's belief that no one can remain indifferent to Hermann's niece: "any man with eyes in his head, he seemed to think, could not help coveting so much bodily magnificence" (T 219). There is something evasive in the narrator's response to Hermann's asking "whether I had not remarked that Falk had been casting eyes upon his niece."

"No more than my self," I answered with literal truth. The girl was of the sort one necessarily casts eyes at in a sense. She made no noise, but she filled most satisfactorily a good bit of space. (T 201)

The niece makes no noise because she is a visual object. Sound and the auditory sense are played down for the pleasure every one experiences, not least the narrator, in seeing how she fills physical space.

In her speechlessness and passive role as object of the men's attention, Hermann's niece resembles a kind of doll, even a primitive fetish or fertility idol, but one that is invested with more meaning for Falk than the hollow shamming and sentimentalism that surround the dirty and flimsy little rag doll of the Hermann children. Like Falk, Hermann's niece is compared to mythological figures, in this case a lusty woodland nymph and the earth goddess. With her tall and slightly

heavy stature and well built frame -- also calling to mind the Brünnhilde of German mythology -- she strikes onlookers as a natural or "elemental" creature, and turns out to be a perfect partner for Falk (unlike the Miss Vanlo he courted two years earlier, "a 'lady-like' woman" who kept "playing the piano and singing"). Baines finds Conrad's explanation for the total silence of Hermann's niece unconvincing.<sup>19</sup> Says Conrad: "whenever she happens to come under the observation of the narrator she has either no occasion or is too profoundly moved to speak" (JCF 182). This argument is certainly far from persuasive. A more plausible reason is that the niece functions more as a symbol (even icon) than a character; she is the pivot (like Wait and Nostromo in "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" and *Nostromo* respectively); she is a centre of uncritical admiration, almost of worship, and remains voiceless so as not to detract from her role as a visual sign and as an object of voyeurism, itself at the centre of the port gossip.

Falk's primal and "unconscious need" for Hermann's niece has its root in the same instinct that caused him to eat human flesh: "he was hungry for the girl, terribly hungry as he had been terribly hungry for food" (T 245). The association of two kinds of hunger and their relationship to the visual motif appear very early, in the opening and outer frame of the story. The narrator happens to be dining in an old Thames river hostelry when he tells a few friends the story of Falk. From the "wide windows" they have an "enfilading view" down the Thames.

But the dinner was execrable, and all the feast  
was for the eyes. (T 159)

Eating and seeing. Satisfactions of the senses, of the primal instincts -- not of culturally inherited taste. The chops, no better than those of Schomberg's hotel, "recalled times more ancient still . . . when the primeval man, evolving the first rudiments of cookery from his dim consciousness, scorched lumps of flesh at a fire of sticks . . . then, gorged and happy, sat him back among gnawed bones to tell his

artless tales of experience -- the tales of hunger and hunt -- and of women, perhaps!" (T 160). The narrator alludes to primeval man as Marlow alludes to Britain at the time of the Roman conquest in "Heart of Darkness," and his allusions will again have bearing on the inner story. Hunger, the hunt and women, the most primitive needs and the first cravings of men, will be at the centre of the story about Falk, the "elemental" man, as they once dominated the "artless tales" of those primitives around their campfires. The first narrator explains how he and his seafaring friends also "sat back and told our artless tales." But theirs were "of the sea and all its works . . . of wrecks, of short rations and of heroism . . . a manifestation of virtues quite different from the heroism of primitive times" (T 160).

The later reference to the "classic heroism" of Falk and the carpenter proves indeed to be that of primitive times. It is all that remains to them, fired by nothing other than the will to survive after the ship's solidarity breaks down. Solidarity lies midway along the spectrum between the extremes of social sentimental pity and ruthless, individual self-preservation. Falk's story demonstrates that there are times when the "pitiless resolution" and "cunning" of classic or primitive heroism, of the individual as one against all, must prevail. The only heroism that prevails in the artless tales of the outer narrator and his friends is that of wrecks and short rations -- what he says "the newspapers would have called heroism at sea" (T 160), at least until one of them begins the tale of Falk in which real (natural) and false (conventional) forces and sentiments are pitted against each other, as are real and false 'tale telling' -- Falk's true story and Schomberg's gossip. I will return to the question of gossip, voyeurism, and the captain-narrator's role in my final chapter on narration and form. For the present I wish only to point out that the inner narrator in "Falk" is not only an intermediary between the elemental self-preservationist and a conventionally sentimental society, but also stands half way between the frankness and falseness of these positions. He consequently finds his own sense of integrity compromised. Contact with the culture of social convention, while it has

given him the grace and manners totally lacking in Falk, has also tainted him with some of society's inevitable corruption, and has contributed to his quality of go-between, which he prefers to call his "diplomatic" flair. The suspicion that he is not always completely honest about his own attitude in the affair of Falk's seeking to marry Hermann's niece remains vague and undeveloped, and the shade of voyeurism largely camouflaged, no more than a hint. In a later story a much heavier atmosphere of voyeurism and moral decay hangs about the two central characters, one of whom is the narrator.

#### "A Smile of Fortune"

"A Smile of Fortune" has no outer frame, but unfolds directly in the first person. A young ship's captain, closely identifiable with the narrator of "Falk" (and later "The Shadow-Line"), arrives at an island in the Indian Ocean called the Pearl of the Ocean, whose great beauty seems from sixty miles offshore to beguile with promises. He wonders if this "dreamlike vision" could be a good omen. Business considerations soon crowd out his more poetic thoughts, especially as he is surprised by the early morning visit of a shipping chandler, Alfred Jacobus, keen to impose on the captain his provisions and services. The captain receives him cordially nonetheless, mistaking him for his older brother, Ernest Jacobus, the sugar merchant recommended in a letter from the ship's owners. Vexed by the deception, the captain turns out to be even more disgusted by the behaviour of the older brother whom he meets some days later, so much so that he accepts the invitation of the younger Jacobus to see his house and garden. There he meets Alice, Alfred's eighteen year old illegitimate daughter, whose deceased mother had been a horse rider with a travelling circus. He is moved by Alice's gloomy sullenness, behind which he perceives a tragic hopelessness. This he self-deceptively attempts to reverse in his subsequent daily visits, all the while increasingly lured by her desultory and languid manner. Towards the end he kisses

Alice in a sudden and rough embrace, afterwards experiencing both shame and detachment, and feeling under an obligation to buy an unwanted cargo of potatoes from her father who appears at that moment. Before the captain leaves, Alice herself gives him a hasty and awkward kiss which reveals the extent to which she has become emotionally involved. When he arrives in Melbourne, he discovers there a shortage of potatoes and is able to make a handsome profit on those he bought from Jacobus. He also sends a letter of resignation to the ship's owners, believing he must pay the "full price" for that kiss from Alice, and preferring to give up his command sooner than return to the Pearl of the Ocean.

The events of this story have little significance in themselves, less than the manner in which they occur and the background circumstances that lead up to them. Although Alice's languid movements are seductive, she is largely unaware of their effect. In fact she is only a step above the statuesque immobility and voicelessness of Hermann's niece in "Falk." She is frequently still and quiet, crouched in a chair that she does not vacate for hours on end, and "looking at nothing."<sup>20</sup> These words echo Nostromo's "suddenly steadied glance fixed upon nothing" (N 347), when he wakes from his fourteen hours' sleep below an old abandoned fort at the entrance to Sulaco's harbour. However, although Nostromo initially resembles prelapsarian Adam, with his "lost air of a man just born into the world" and his "leisurely growling yawn of white teeth, as natural and free from evil in the moment of waking as a magnificent and unconscious wild beast," his sudden stare is that of gathering consciousness "under a thoughtful frown" revealing "the man" (N 347), while Alice's stare is the vacant expression of another of Conrad's elemental beings, inexperienced and confined, as well as unable and unwilling to awaken to full (tragic) consciousness. The few words Alice utters are usually snapped out petulantly, in the manner of a child: "won't!" "shan't!" "don't care" (TLS 47). But she is more interesting than Hermann's niece because she is neither a stereotype nor a mythological symbol, even though her character is not fully

developed, and because she has been born of special circumstances and raised in unusual conditions. Being an illegitimate child of mixed racial origins, she has not stepped outside her father's house since attaining puberty. Alice's background and parentage, reflecting in a briefer, more concentrated form the situations that develop out of exogamous relationships (more fully explored in earlier works such as "Amy Foster" and the novels *Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands*, *Lord Jim*), indicate how culture as a form of ethnic group distinction and culture as social convention and behaviour strongly affect each other and work their dual influence on people in a manner peculiar to island life.

In his "Preface to Shorter Tales," Conrad affirms that each of his "short-story volumes had a consistent unity of outlook covering the mingled subjects of civilization and wilderness, of land life and life on the sea."<sup>21</sup> Several of Conrad works set in the Pacific or Indian Oceans reproduce the pettiness of European society in the island colonies. It was not so very rare for European men in these communities to have bastard children by native or mulatto women. Temporarily frowned upon for such indulgences they were not completely ostracized unless they married or -- 'worse' -- tried to introduce either the partner or the child of mixed blood into European society as does Alfred Jacobus. The calamitousness of their fall from grace also depended on the 'heights' from which they fell, the social level at which they first entered their community either at birth or as an immigrant. Several characters in Conrad's early novels represent varying degrees of offence in this respect and a corresponding acceptance or rejection. Hudig, the owner of a successful trading company and the employer of Willems in *An Outcast of the Islands* has an illegitimate daughter by a woman of mixed native Malay and Portuguese descent. Hudig can remain respectable with the event behind him, especially if he can find a dupe who will marry and provide for his daughter and her numerous relatives. Willems, on the other hand, could never attain that position of respectability, even if he were not to embezzle from his employer. Unaware that

Hudig is palming his daughter off on him, Willems believes his marriage to be a worthwhile sacrifice, ultimately a step up the social hierarchy, because it pleases Hudig, cements their friendship, and so secures his own position and chances of promotion within the company. He dreams of becoming Hudig's partner. It gradually becomes clear to him that marriage with a half-caste is more likely to impose social limitations, though he regards himself as extremely clever and hopes that "in another five years those white people who attended the Sunday card-parties of the Governor would accept him -- half-caste wife and all".<sup>22</sup> When his embezzlement is discovered, he also learns that his wife is Hudig's daughter. Then it is Willems who feels cheated: "taken in! Taken in! Hudig . . . had shifted the burden of his youthful vagaries on to the shoulders of his confidential clerk . . . the master had cheated him; had stolen his very self from him" (OI 38). If Willems is initially 'cast out' because he embezzled from Hudig's company, he feels he was already victimized in his marriage, and in despair he further entrenches himself in the position of out-cast by leaving his wife and community altogether to live with Aissa, the daughter of a once outlawed Arab pirate and a native Malay.

"A Smile of Fortune" comes close to repeating the situation at the beginning of *An Outcast of the Islands* in that Alice's father is trying to find someone who will take her off his hands. The brothers Jacobus, like Hudig and Willems, represent different levels of acceptability in ethnic relations. Ernest, the merchant, 'redeems' his "youthful vagaries" by treating his illegitimate mulatto son in the most abominable manner possible, employing him as an office boy and boxing his ears regularly. He has also been smart enough not to set up his office in the commercial centre of the town, but in an old warehouse area, out of the way and slightly derelict. This is probably the highest price he pays, however, since he accumulates wealth and apparently achieves a measure of social reintegration, for the captain is told that the older Jacobus had always been "a highly respectable bachelor," that

"there had never been open scandal in that connection," and that his life, having been "quite regular," could "cause no offence to any one" (TLS 34).

The younger Jacobus, however, had been married, with a daughter, when he became infatuated with the circus rider and followed her round the world. After his wife died of grief and the older daughter was married, he returned to the island, bringing his illegitimate daughter with him. The comparison between the two brothers is made not by the captain-narrator, but by one of his acquaintances on the island, a Frenchman, and member of one of the oldest French families:

. . . descendants of the old colonists; all noble, all impoverished, and living a narrow domestic life in dull, dignified decay. The men, as a rule, occupy inferior posts in Government offices or in business houses. The girls are almost always pretty, ignorant of the world, kind and agreeable and generally bilingual; they prattle innocently both in French and English. The emptiness of their existence passes belief.  
(TLS 34)

Like the accountant dressed all in white in "Heart of Darkness," these old colonial families give priority to appearances. For them the culturally acquired modes of behaviour and rules of conduct -- etiquette, convention and "the proprieties" -- have replaced the substance of civilized values. Behind the masks of dignity and agreeability can be found only emptiness and decay. By keeping up appearances these families meant to disguise their impoverishment, but their excessive reliance on the formalities of polite society and their insularity (geographical and attitudinal), have weakened their moral fibre and led them to forget the ethical principles upon which social conduct is founded. Offended by the younger Jacobus, they regard him as "naturally shameless," because he kept "that girl with him" (TLS 37). With scathing irony directed specifically at the older brother and generally at the artificial moral values of the island community, the captain - narrator objects that no doubt if Alfred Jacobus had employed his daughter, Alice, as a scullion "and occasionally

pulled her hair or boxed her ears, the position would have been more regular -- less shocking to the respectable class to which he belongs" (TLS 37 - 8). The Frenchman characteristically responds that "she is not a mulatto. And a scandal is a scandal" (TLS 38), implying not only that because Alice's mixed blood does not show in her colour, it would be less acceptable for her father to treat her as the older Jacobus treats his mulatto son, but also that in bringing his daughter home and providing for her, the younger Jacobus is perpetuating the scandal initiated by his illicit love affair.

Coming from the outside world the captain recognizes that if father and daughter live an isolated life in spite of the father's business which brings him into contact only with visitors to the island, it is because the community has ostracised them. Even before meeting Alice he imagines the two as "a lonely pair of castaways, on a desert island . . . exactly like two shipwrecked people who always hope for some rescuer to bring them back at last into touch with the rest of mankind" (TLS 38). The comparison is reminiscent of another, a real castaway in Conrad's fiction: Yanko Gooral in "Amy Foster." But where Yanko was literally washed ashore among an alien people who treat him cruelly, Jacobus and his daughter are cast out by their own community, no less cruel and savage in its rejection of them. The cruelty is more subtle, never expressing itself physically. This only increases the irony, since the island community behaves as it does for the sake of appearances -- to preserve the aspect of civilized society maintaining its moral standards despite the great distance from its European 'seat of civilization.'

The 'essence' of civilized behaviour would in fact be as out of place in this world so dependent on form and appearances as are the story's numerous romantic, folktale and classical images and allusions that keep collapsing into raw sensuality or everyday banality.<sup>23</sup> Even the story of Alice's father's love affair seems too romantic in the telling to apply to this "heavy, tranquil" business man (TLS 12).

The grotesque image of a fat, pushing ship-chandler, enslaved by an unholy love-spell, fascinated me; and I listened rather open mouthed to the tale as old as the world, a tale which had been the subject of legend, of moral fables, of poems, but which so ludicrously failed to fit the personality. What a strange victim for the gods! (TLS 36)

The captain begins to feel that his conception of father and daughter as castaways does not seem quite apposite because "Jacobus's bodily reality did not fit in with this romantic view" (TLS 38).

Alice herself is even more ignorant of the world than the young women -- her counterparts -- in the old French families. Her complete lack of exposure is also reminiscent of Yanko.

The girl [Alice] had learned nothing, she had never listened to a general conversation, she knew nothing, she had heard of nothing.  
(TLS 55)

She had formed for herself a notion of the civilized world as a scene of murders, abductions, burglaries, stabbing affrays, and every sort of desperate violence. England and France, Paris and London . . . appeared to her sinks of abomination, reeking with blood, in contrast to her little island where petty larceny was about the standard of current misdeeds.  
(TLS 55 - 56)

Alice acquires this perception of Europe from the newspapers her father brings to the store -- the only "reading matter that ever came in her way" (TLS 55). As with Yanko's first sight of ships, trains, and European cities, Alice's peculiar view of Europe simultaneously defamiliarizes it to the reader and builds up the conviction of Alice's ignorance and lack of exposure. It also indicates to what degree the captain himself must have been aware of Alice's isolation and consequent vulnerability.

This brings us to the most interesting but problematic aspect -- and perhaps the core -- of the story: the role of the narrator, at which I hinted earlier. Growing up in isolation Alice has come to resemble a wild creature. A child of nature and of the senses, like the "elemental" Falk, she responds frankly to her own needs, feelings, moods. On several occasions the captain-narrator is pleased to regard himself in the light of a tamer, of a person who attempts to assuage and attenuate the rude, wild side of Alice, to coax her gently out of her ignorance and fierceness by persisting in kindly talk and responding with patience most of the time to her abrupt manner and moody whims. Whether he adopts this role consciously or not, there can be no doubt of the contrast between the knowledgeable, cultivated, world-travelled captain and the ignorant, unexposed, almost 'primitive' girl. And yet by the end of the story we are left with a vague impression of reversal of roles -- a comparatively healthy mind in Alice and an unhealthy decadence in the captain, whose primitive self must have been more unwillingly chained down by culture and civilization than Alice was trapped in her decadent house and garden. This primitive self seems to have been awaiting the opportunity of an encounter with such an elemental creature in order to be freed. He does not have the same excuses for his behaviour as Falk because he lacks both Falk's initial experience of a self-preserving struggle to survive and Falk's honesty. He is constantly deceiving himself, and the savage kiss he gives Alice is more akin, at least in mental attitude, to Kurtz's brutalities in "Heart of Darkness" than to Falk's 'ravishing' of the *Diana* with his tugboat.

The captain-narrator is highly critical of the island community's moral decadence, which is matched by the heavy death and decay imagery, especially in descriptions of the garden.

The garden was one mass of gloom, like a cemetery of flowers buried in the darkness, and she, in the chair, seemed to muse mournfully over the extinction of light and colour. Only whiffs of heavy scent passed like wandering, fragrant souls of that departed multitude of blossoms. (TLS 50)

The atmosphere of this house and garden sets the tone for the "sense of moral discomfort" which assails the captain whenever he returns to "that house lying under the ban of all 'decent' people" (TLS 52). Frederick Karl points out that "the captain enjoys the masochistic-sadistic overtones of the relationship, even while maintaining a playful and debonair attitude toward Alice."<sup>24</sup> Baines takes this line of thought further when he states that "it is doubtful whether he [Conrad] realised how reprehensible he made the conduct of the captain appear. There is something very distasteful about the way in which the captain goads and, rather lubriciously, flirts with Alice; by rousing her feelings he may well have done irreparable harm to her."<sup>25</sup> Conrad's narrator is more honest in describing his behaviour than is the narrator of "Falk" about his voyeuristic impulses:

I was looking at the girl. It was what I was coming for daily; troubled, ashamed, eager; finding in my nearness to her a unique sensation which I indulged with dread, self contempt, and deep pleasure, as if it were a secret vice bound to end in my undoing, like the habit of some drug or other which ruins and degrades its slave. (TLS 57)

Moreover, the narrator makes it clear that he knew what he was doing, that he did not lose his head: "even her indifference was seductive. I felt myself growing attached to her by the bond of an unrealizable desire, for I kept my head -- quite. And I put up with the moral discomfort of Jacobus's sleepy watchfulness."<sup>26</sup> The captain describes himself as "the slave of some depraved habit. . . . not even moved by pity for that castaway" (TLS 54 - 5), and can even exhibit a touch of humorous self irony: "I gripped her shoulder with one hand and held a plate of chicken with the other" (TLS 55) -- an echo of the food/desire pairing in "Falk." The narrator's honesty suddenly stops short, however, in the story's resolution, which is in fact no resolution at all, as his conduct at the end follows the pattern of evasion and escape. He gives an immediate impression of rescuing himself from a

trap and from the atmosphere of "moral poison" (TLS 59) that hung around the house and garden of Alfred Jacobus, a poison of which his own behaviour had nonetheless been a necessary ingredient. He leaves the reader with the same sense of "moral discomfort" that so disconcerted him at the time of his first visit to the house. By accepting the potatoes that Jacobus has been trying to foist upon him, by making the decision not to return, and by resigning his command, the captain-narrator wishes it to be understood that he is punishing himself, paying the price of his conduct that roused Alice's feelings to the point that she kissed him. On the one hand he encourages us to share his disgust at the island community's hypocritical attitude to the two brothers' different treatment of their illegitimate children; on the other hand he treats the reader to a series of scenes in which he toys with a young girl's feelings, achieving complete detachment and disinterest only at the moment when Alice at last responds emotionally to his titillating pretence of concern for this "unfortunate creature" (TLS 70).

Hypocrisy performs its ugliest work when it lacks self awareness. As Baines puts it, "although he does in the end pay for his behaviour, this is fortuitous because he might have avoided doing so if the owners had agreed to his suggestion that he should take the ship into the China Seas; nor is the resignation of a command the 'full price' for such an action."<sup>27</sup> In fact, at first he believes he is paying sufficiently by taking on the cargo of potatoes. Only when he discovers these to be profitable does he 'punish' himself by resigning his command. Unless we are to understand the misgivings that develop when he heads back out to sea as the beginnings of a deeper remorse to come, he does not attain a full understanding of his action as evasion. To disappear is easier than to return to the island and the embarrassment of those memories, as it was easier to compromise the feelings of a young girl in the position of social outcast than to engage in a relationship requiring commitment or simply to abstain from visiting Alice at all. The captain experiments with his seductive powers on some one of no social importance, rather like Marlowe

in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, but with far more serious consequences. Moreover, he knows that he is only a visitor to the island, outside its social and cultural mores, and can evade all responsibility for the consequences of his actions.<sup>28</sup>

The difficulty for readers is that no sooner are their sympathies roused in favour of the narrator's critical and ironic exposure of the island community's hypocritical adherence to the letter of moral principles than they are themselves compelled into the perturbing position of 'voyeurs,' having to watch that same narrator behave in a manner not so very different from those he has been criticizing. And the readers know that however the narrator conducts himself, he will be able to 'cut loose' at the appropriate moment. It is no wonder that this particular story, though admired by a few critics, is generally held to be too enigmatic and perplexing, and not wholly a success, as if something were missing; for the two kinds of hypocrisy are not overtly related, and the gap is felt if not always consciously noticed. But what of Conrad's own awareness of this inconsistency in his central character? We may or may not agree with Baines that "it is doubtful whether he realised how reprehensible he made the conduct of the captain appear," but Conrad must have arrived at some measure of realization to bring his narrator to speak of "moral discomfort" and "moral poison" at all. Here we meet with the same problem as in several other stories with a narrator, especially Marlow: the question of narrative reliability and author/narrator identity, which I will discuss separately in the final chapter of this study. Of interest at this point is the presentation of a narrator at once overtly self-critical -- more than most other Conrad narrators -- and yet unaware of all the possible repercussions and the full significance of his conduct. Several phrases in the story suggest that he only allows that awareness to enter his mind after he is well out to sea, safely removed from that 'house of ill repute' as he very nearly describes the Jacobus home on several occasions ("where no respectable person had put foot for ever so many years" -- TLS 46, and "that

house lying under the ban of all 'decent' people" -- TLS 52). Before he leaves, Alice asks him pointedly "why do you keep on coming here?" -- a question which he sidesteps with another to Alice, but only after admitting to the reader that he is "taken by surprise."

I could not have told her. I could not even tell  
myself with sincerity why I was coming there.  
(TLS 58)

He promises to do nothing, but feels cheated when she appears visibly relieved by his promise. It is only moments later that he grabs Alice and kisses her in "a vicious" manner which he says has "no hypocritical gentleness about it" (TLS 63). Like Marlow in his reference to the Romans in "Heart of Darkness," he prefers brutal conquest to hypocritical pretence, but also like Kurtz, he falls into the trap of committing brutality because it is not self-consciously hypocritical. He fails to perceive that in this line of approach he is moving beyond the petty deceit and bluffing that is accepted as a social necessity in certain contexts, towards hypocrisy at its furthest and most pernicious extreme of an avowed honesty born of self deceit.

He feels a "sort of terror" at the discovery of his detachment when she returns his kiss: "I was no longer moved. . . . only a sense of dignity prevented me fleeing headlong from that catastrophic revelation" (TLS 71). On the way to the port he begins to realize how fleeting and insignificant were the feelings he had enjoyed in Alice's presence: "I felt in my heart that the further one ventures the better one understands how everything in our life is common, short, and empty; that it is in seeking the unknown in our sensations that we discover how mediocre are our attempts and how soon defeated!" (TLS 71) A truistic echo of the Romantic Decadents.<sup>29</sup> For the narrator the port itself, a threshold between innocence and experience, represents the decadent colonial society into which he has been drawn, in contrast to the unpolluted sea which forces the mind to concentrate on daily

tasks and binds it by the necessity to live in the present. But in this case the sea offers no escape, since the cruelty of memory intrudes on the "blessed forgetfulness" of sea life.

. . . that forgetfulness natural and invincible, which resembles innocence in so far that it prevents self-examination. Now, however, I remembered the girl. During the first few days I was for ever questioning myself as to the nature of facts and sensations connected with her person and with my conduct. (TLS 73)

Readers may well find themselves questioning with him, and feeling to some extent inculpated in his actions and conduct and sharing in his shame. Irrespective of whether it is consciously intended, Conrad has his narrator pass his "moral discomfort" on to the reader, and also leaves the reader with a sense of irresolution while neatly closing the episode for himself by paying what *he* believes to be "the full price" in resigning his command.

In her isolation Alice has grown wild, with a natural grace of movement except when made to feel self-conscious, for she lacks social grace. The old woman living with her "had never taught her any manners. Manners I suppose are not necessary for born castaways" (TLS 55). And when the narrator first meets her he speaks to her "as one talks to soothe a startled wild animal" (TLS 42). In this respect Alice resembles Falk who, in his "elemental nature" and social alienation, "had no more of what is called 'manner' than an animal -- which, however, on the other hand, is never, and can never be called vulgar" (T 233). Alice can hardly be anything but 'farouche,' for in her Conrad has combined three common attributes of many of his characters: she is a half-caste, an outcast and (figuratively) a castaway. Although the exact origin of her mixed blood is not specified (unless we take literally the references to her "long, Egyptian eyes" or "the forehead of a goddess crowned by the dishevelled magnificent hair of a gypsy tramp" -- TLS 54 , a reminder of the

villagers' view of Yanko in "Amy Foster"), it is clearly not European on her mother's side, and her position recalls both that of Joanna before Willems marries her and that of Aissa after Willems leaves Joanna in *An Outcast of the Islands*. Alice differs from other half-castes in Conrad's works, however, in one important respect. Although she is not spared the major problem of cultural dilemma, of not knowing in which of her inherited ethnic roots to seek her identity, her equal (or more) miserable fate of complete isolation and almost total ignorance is emphasized over the affiliative confusion we find in characters like Joanna in *An Outcast*, Jewel in *Lord Jim*, and especially Nina in *Almayer's Folly*.

"It's the big novels that tell," wrote Conrad to Pinker in 1909.<sup>30</sup> And it is in fact impossible to speak at length about half-castes and outcasts in Conrad's short fiction without referring to some of his novels in which it becomes clear that, although a half-caste child may ideally embody the union and harmony of two different cultures, the reality is otherwise. Nina Almayer spends some years away from her father and her home in Sambir, attending a European school in Singapore where she meets only the daughters of pretentious colonial families who treat her condescendingly at best. "Those two Vinck girls are no better than dressed-up monkeys. They slighted her. You can't make her white."<sup>31</sup> Her "evident preference" for her father before she goes away rouses her mother's jealousy, but after her return she spends long hours with her mother and often gives her father "a contemptuous look and a short word" (AF 29). Ultimately she opts for elopement with her Malay suitor, Dain Maroola, over her father's dream of returning wealthy to Amsterdam. Cultural dilemma and inner conflict in the child, which must forcibly end in a choice of one culture or the other, simply repeat the original conflict of the parents.

There is not a single enduring, relatively happy exogamous marriage or relationship in any of Conrad's works. Even Alice's father in "A Smile of Fortune,"

following the circus rider around the world, attains only moral degradation as his illusion of romantic love degenerates into a masochistic subservience. "The woman soon ceased to care for him, and treated him worse than a dog" (TLS 36), and although she returns to the island to die, "she ordered Jacobus out of the room with her last breath" (TLS 37). He is rejected in the end by both his lover and the community he had forsaken for her, and to which he later returns. In the case of *Almayer*, Nina's father, Conrad more closely approaches the central problem of intercultural marriage, love and courtship: that of communication. Although *Almayer's* wife, the adopted daughter of captain Lingard, had known "the high walls, the quiet gardens, and the silent nuns of [a] Samarang convent," she felt herself to be a Malay, and so she "bore it all -- the restraint and the teaching and the new faith -- with calm submission, concealing her hate and contempt for all that new life" (AF 22). She marries *Almayer* to please Lingard, and *Almayer* marries her for the same reason. She grows to hate *Almayer*, and her hatred is fed by jealousy when their daughter shows preference for the father. She soon comes to treat her husband "with a savage contempt expressed by sulky silence, only occasionally varied by a flood of savage invective." She goes so far as to burn furniture and tear down curtains "in her unreasoning hate of those signs of civilization"(AF 24 - 5).

"Through the development of exogamous relationships," says Frederick Karl in his biography, "Conrad would indulge his theme of individual isolation; that is, despite union, each remains separate. Part of this is a concomitant of language -- each speaks a different language, sometimes literally -- but also, each invests his own world with a different set of values, a distinct kind of longing. In this arrangement both men and women move vertically along the lines of their lives; there is little associational or lateral relationship."<sup>32</sup> Language is nothing without that investiture of values, as the several parrot scenes in Conrad's works indicate. In "Amy Foster" the parrot's screeching for help that drives Amy away heralds the final scene between her and Yanko, and the parrot in *Nostromo* puffs up its many-

coloured feathers in a great show of self-importance to cry out "*Viva Costaguana!*" The breakdown of communication between Amy and Yanko in "Amy Foster" is literally linguistic at its climactic moment. Although Yanko thinks he is speaking English, Amy's mind absolutely refuses to understand this foreign man who is her husband.

Parrots produce unintelligible sounds (like Yanko's) which are only an imitation of human utterance. The green parrot in *Nostramo*, is "brilliant like an emerald in a cage that flashed like gold, screamed out ferociously, '*Viva Costaguana!*' then called twice mellifluously, '*Leonarda! Leonarda!*' in imitation of Mrs Gould's voice, and suddenly took refuge in immobility and silence" (N 88); "Parrots are very human" (N 99). At the end of the novel they are described "as calm as . . . bird[s] of stone" (N 397).<sup>33</sup> "*Viva Costaguana!*" is the political rallying cry of the whole novel *Nostramo*, but is rendered both meaningless and ironic by its source of utterance (the parrot), by the consequent scant attention paid it among Mrs Gould's guests, by its otherwise perfect timing and relevance at the close of a political gathering, and by our own awareness of the more selfish underlying motives of many of the characters involved in this quest for political change.

Language is one among many systems of signs; in *Almayer's Folly* in the furniture and trappings of Western civilization Mrs Almayer sees a semiotic conspiracy which she intuitively seeks to dismantle and destroy. To Willems in *An Outcast of the Islands* both his marriage to Joanna and his passion for Aissa are debasing because they both detract from his real aspirations, which are more closely related to his own (white, European) heritage than he realizes. Like Kayerts and Carlier in "An Outpost," he inherits a sense of self-importance from the civilized system that has nurtured him rather than achieving a sense of worth through honest effort. The two women can only represent for Willems the degrees by which

he moves towards the abandonment of his own culture through loss of self esteem. Ultimately, as Conrad explains in an 1895 letter to Garnett, he wants "to escape from *both* women," and when his passion for Aissa is spent he grasps at it in "an impulse of thought not of the senses," as a drowning man grasps at a straw, and makes a "deliberate effort to recall the passion as a last resort, as the last refuge from his regrets, from the obsession of his longing to return whence he came." Aissa herself cannot possibly understand the complex psychological forces that first drove Willems into her arms and are now driving him out again. Her own hopes and longing run along an entirely different track -- "to be something for him . . . to shelter him in her affection -- her woman's affection which is simply the ambition to be an important factor in another's life" (JCF 3). Her intentions in fact run counter to his own half conscious and innermost promptings. "She had a right to his love which was of her making . . . She must put between him and other white men a barrier of hate"(OI 130). "And even I do not understand. I do not understand him! -- Him! -- My life!" (OI 205) In his own longing "to return whence he came" Willems arrives at a point where he can no longer bear even the presence of Aissa.

Always there. Always near. Always watching  
 . . . her eyes. . . . They are big, menacing --  
 and empty. The eyes of a savage; of a damned  
 mongrel, half-Arab, half Malay. They hurt me! I  
 am white! I swear to you I can't stand this!  
 Take me away. I am white! All white!

He shouted towards the sombre heaven,  
 proclaiming desperately under the frown of  
 thickening clouds the fact of his pure and  
 superior descent. He shouted, his head thrown  
 up, his arms swinging about wildly, lean,  
 ragged, disfigured; a tall mad man making a  
 great disturbance about something invisible; a  
 being absurd, repulsive, pathetic, and droll.  
 (OI 222)

The simian aspect Willems presents in his wild behaviour (head thrown back, swinging arms) recalls Yanko in "Amy Foster" as he is perceived running across the fields by the people of Colbrook. But where Yanko's physical and mental state results from his being literally a castaway and his savage appearance is depicted through the eyes of the villagers, Willems can only hold himself responsible for his condition of social outcast, and his wild conduct is produced entirely by the inner agitations of his own mind and spirit. The scene is charged with an appalling irony of contrast between his proclamations of pure, civilized descent and his antics of an enraged wild animal. In this he also resembles the bestial gurgling, choking and raving of Hermann in "Falk" when told that Falk has eaten human flesh.

Exogamous relationships in Conrad's works often follow upon the failure of an individual to achieve full cultural integration in his/her own society. Willems' embezzlement at Hudig's trading company is only a symptom of a deep malaise and restlessness, though he is not formally 'cast out' until his crime is discovered. His new status is a cause of bitter resentment as well as shame from the moment he enters into it. When he first meets Aissa he describes himself as "the outcast of my people" (OI 64). Even before that meeting he wanders about the settlement aimlessly, feeling not only cast out from European white society, but from the Malay community -- in fact from the company of all human beings and even from nature.

When Willems walked on the path the indolent men stretched on the shady side of the houses looked at him with calm curiosity, the women busy round the cooking fires would send after him wondering and timid glances, while the children would only look once and then run away yelling with fright at the horrible appearance of the man with a red and white face . . . the very buffaloes snorted with alarm at his sight, scrambled lumberingly out of the cool mud and stared wildly in a compact herd at him as he tried to slink unperceived along the edge of the forest. (OI 61)

Again Willems' simian aspects are apparent when he tried to sneak to the forest like an ape. Willems is only one of a number of moral outcasts in Conrad's works. To return to "A Smile of Fortune," Alice owes her isolation to her father's status of moral outcast which he in turn owes not so much to his past conduct as to the fact that he brought Alice with him when he returned to the island. Frequently described as shameless, Alfred Jacobus is an elusive character whose motives are difficult to discern. His preoccupation with business, "the sacred business," stands out as the only aspect we can know about him. The captain-narrator cannot take us into his mind as the omniscient author of *An Outcast of the Islands* can take us into the mind and spirit of Willems who suffers from his shame. Willems, however, does not arrive at a point of self-knowledge and confrontation that might enable him to accept reality; he blames others or his circumstances for all his misfortune even to the end.

Conrad treats quite differently his other and best known outcast, Jim. Conrad falls back upon the device of the removed story in *Lord Jim*, using a narrator, Marlow, as well as several interlocutors, and letters Marlow sends to one of his listeners some years later. Thus Jim's character must be patched together from several impressions over a period of time, but Marlow's keenness to understand Jim, to enter into his inner life produces a more thorough composite picture of Jim and allows us to perceive his own dilemmas, self-discovery and waking from illusion, though the process is not complete. As with Arsat, Karain and Willems, Jim's isolation is founded in betrayal, the desertion of the ship, *Patna*, carrying eight hundred Muslim pilgrims, when it seemed about to sink after striking a submerged wreck. But like Karain and Falk, he has chosen to 'cast' himself out of his own society physically and literally, refusing to return to Europe and cutting himself off entirely from his family there. He makes the same kind of 'escape,' at bottom, as the narrator in "A Smile of Fortune." Jim overreacts to his shame and especially to its outer expression of formal disgrace, highlighted in the official enquiry into the conduct of the ship's officers. Learning in Bangkok that his secret has become

common property, he can no longer feel secure in moving from one employment to another throughout South-east Asia, and it is the well-meaning Marlow who helps to remove him altogether from 'civilization' in the remote Patusan, thus staving off reality and restoring romantic illusion.

In an alien culture Jim is able to believe in his heroism and to hide from himself. Marlow describes Jim's friendship with Dain Waris, son of the Bugis chief, as "one of those strange, profound, rare friendships between brown and white in which the very difference of race seems to draw two human beings closer by some mystic element of sympathy" (LJ 236). Marlow himself sees in Dain a "courteous deliberation of manner" that "seemed to hint at great reserves of intelligence and power. Such beings open to the Western eye, so often concerned with surfaces, the hidden possibilities of races and lands over which hangs the mystery of unrecorded ages. He not only trusted Jim, he understood him . . ." (LJ 236). But the adulation of the Malays and even the sincere friendship of Dain all prove to be so many mirrors in which Jim may build up his fundamentally narcissistic image of an ideal, heroic self.<sup>34</sup> Jim's relationship with the half-caste, Jewel, ultimately reveals the same underlying motivation, since he is prepared to sacrifice her and all the Bugis nation if need be, along with his own life, to the perpetuation of his noble self-image through the final gesture of a supposed heroism. Here again he rejects 'union' with another for an isolated death.

Jim's contradictory self perception as hero and outcast, in a constant state of tension throughout the novel, arrives at a paralysing deadlock under the influence of the white pirate and intruder, 'Gentleman' Brown. By his death Jim forces the heroic image to displace that of betrayal and outcast, at least in his own mind. His escape to a foreign community, while encouraging him to regain his honour, really

prevents him from doing so because, for Jim, it is only another escape into illusion and impedes the self recognition necessary to his goal. In the end Jim resembles so many other Conrad characters in caring for expression over essence. His public disgrace had disturbed him more than his shame over the *Patna* incident, and even in death his self-image matters more than inner strength of character. In spite of the example of Dain Waris, Jim continues to see himself and the world with 'Western eyes,' so often concerned with 'mere surfaces.'

#### "Freya of the Seven Isles"

The white outcasts of those works set in the islands of Malaysia and the Indian Ocean are in the peculiar position of being doubly removed from the centre of their culture and civilization. They belong to the already 'castaway' island communities descended from the "far flung" colonies of Europe and are cut off from European society. When these individuals are again isolated from their own relatively small communities, the sense of exile and of social and cultural loss are suffered more intensely. They attempt to compensate in different ways. Jim attaches himself to a native Malay community, Falk does not feel complete without his boat, Alfred Jacobus pours most of his energies into doing business with foreign visitors. There are characters, however, who suffer from isolation in these parts of the world without necessarily being outcasts from their communities. Almayer feels the loneliness of his position in the isolated trading post of Sambir, especially since he cannot even share a cultural understanding with his wife, and has only his daughter to fall back upon. Hence the catastrophe for him is Nina's elopement with a Malay. This kind of father/daughter interdependence occurs again in "Freya of the Seven Isles."

The story uses the Malay archipelago setting to advantage, for the background conflicts of that region serve to highlight and to feed the growing tensions between the individual characters. Of particular interest in this story is the type of broad conflict involved: not white European pitted against native Malay, but displaced Europeans carving out their nations' spheres of power and influence in the region through a drama of political and economic rivalry that sometimes leads to open hostility and incidents of violence. Their disreputable commercial interests "spoil the finest life under the sun" (TLS 11). Schultz, Jasper's mate, has "an awkward habit of stealing the stores of every ship he has ever been in" (TLS 145), but the "*Bonito* isn't trading to any ports of civilization. That'll make it easier for him to keep straight" (TLS 146). "That was true," the brig's "business was on uncivilized coasts, with obscure rajahs dwelling in nearly unknown bays; with native settlements up mysterious rivers opening their sombre, forest-lined estuaries among a welter of pale green reefs and dazzling sandbanks, in lonely straits of calm blue water all aglitter with sunshine" (TLS 146). At the same time the *Bonito* is sometimes seen from the rare mail tracks, "where civilization brushes against wild mystery" (TLS 146).

To the great distance of these communities from Europe is added the further isolation of two central characters, the Danish Nielsen and his daughter, Freya, since Nielsen has retired to an out-of-the-way group of islands belonging to a local sultan. This isolation contributes as much as any other factor to the development of events and the extreme character of their outcome. Nielsen cares for nothing in the world except his daughter since the death of his wife, after which event Freya, who has been staying in Singapore for her schooling, comes to live with her father. That their isolation from the European community is emphatically cultural as well as geographical is reflected in the arduousness of shipping an "upright grand" from Europe in preparation for Freya's arrival. The piano is a cultural symbol as well as "the heaviest movable object on that islet since the creation of the world" (TLS 130).

The narrator and his crew deliver it to Nielson's bungalow "toiling in the sun like ancient Egyptians at the building of a pyramid" (TLS 130). They are enslaved by their Western cultural trappings represented in the "Piano," which is 'immovable' from the Western life, and their "toiling" in the sun is not different from the ancient Egyptian slaves building the pyramids.

Isolation is aggravated by yet another complication. The Seven Isles group where the Niensens live falls under the administrative authority of the Dutch. Although Nielsen is a Dane, he has been travelling and trading among the islands for years and has always been on good enough terms with the English there "because he had to dispose of his produce somehow" (TLS 154). He is generally known by the English version of his name, Nelson. In fact the narrator makes a point of calling him by both names several times -- "Nelson (or Nielsen)" -- as if to draw attention to an ambiguous identity of mixed national origins and allegiances. But there is no ambiguity about Nielsen's antipathies. He refuses in all his wanderings to approach the Philippines "from a strange dread of Spaniards, or, to be exact, of the Spanish authorities" (TLS 127), and although he is less "horrified at the Dutch" he is "even more mistrustful of them" (TLS 128). As an "unassuming Dane" on his small island plot, Nielsen is tolerated by the Dutch, who would assuredly have devised some excuse for expelling him "had he been an Englishman" (TLS 128), for the rivalry between the two nations is at its peak at this time and in this part of the world. The conflict of national interests against which the love story unfolds lends the only note of realistic conviction to an otherwise extravagantly romantic tale. Jasper Allen, the English owner and skipper of a beautifully ornamented and highly sea-worthy brig, the *Bonito*, falls in love with Freya. They plan to marry and live aboard the brig, but Freya postpones the wedding until after her twenty-first birthday "so that there shall be no mistake in people's minds as to me being old enough to know what I am doing" (TLS 143). She also postpones telling her father who would not want to let her go; she believes that he would accept her elopement

after the fact and would thus be spared the "real agonies of indecision, the anguish of conflicting feelings" (TLS 143).

Jasper's illusive belief that his brig is indestructible and that romantic love can transform his life:

Nothing, nothing could happen to the brig, he cried, as if the flame of his heart could light up the dark nights of uncharted seas, and the image of Freya serve for an unerring beacon amongst hidden shoals; as if the winds had to wait on his future, the stars fight for it in their courses; as if the magic of his passion had the power to float a ship on a drop of dew or sail her through the eye of a needle. (TLS 144)

This narcissism indicates Jasper's immaturity and his tendency to live in his imaginative world which collapses when he loses the *Borito*. Like Jim, Jasper is an imaginative hero whose fantasy interferes with his ability to cope with events, and the "inevitable consequence" of Jasper's "confrontation of romance and reality was tragedy."<sup>35</sup>

Jasper's trading activities in these waters are regarded with suspicion and envy by the Dutch, who would jump at any opportunity to remove the brig from the area. From the time of Freya's arrival, another frequent visitor to Nielsen's bungalow is Heemskirk, Dutch naval officer and commander of the gunboat patrolling the Archipelago. An ugly and unpleasant character with an "evil guffaw" (TLS 137), Heemskirk regards Nielsen and Freya as his inferiors, "quite beneath him in every way" (TLS 139), and treats them with insolence. Although Nielsen likes Jasper, he refuses to admit that either Jasper Allen or Heemskirk is interested in his daughter, and he suffers Heemskirk's "overbearing" manner because he wants "to live in peace and quietness with the Dutch authorities" (TLS 138), which he believes capable of "playing any ugly trick on a man" (TLS 128). This is precisely

what happens towards the end of the story when Heemskirk, increasingly jealous of Jasper and humiliated by Freya, intercepts the *Bonito* at sea. By a twist of ill fate, Jasper had recently taken on Schultz, an eccentric kleptomaniac, as his first mate, who steals and sells the *Bonito's* guns the night before Heemskirk turns up. Elated that he has an excuse for confiscating the brig, Heemskirk insists that Jasper board his gunboat, then makes as if to tow it to the port of Macassar, but keen to make a thorough job of destroying the hated Englishman, he instructs his officer to tow the brig onto a reef at the entrance to the port. The *Bonito* is totally destroyed. With nothing to offer his fiancée, neither home nor source of livelihood, Jasper, who was as attached to the *Bonito* as he was to Freya, spends the rest of his days wandering about the port in a drunken stupor. He becomes one of the many 'disinherited' of the colonial world, part of its underside of drifters and "brotherhood of outcasts" to which so many Conrad characters in works set in these locations belong. Years later, Old Nielsen, living in London, tells the narrator how Freya sickened and died of pneumonia in Hong Kong. He refuses to believe that she had been in love with Jasper: "there could never have been a question of love for my Freya -- such a sensible girl" (TLS 202).

"Freya of the Seven Isles" is the only story that presents a lively woman who appears to have character, personality and a degree of control over her own actions. She is not the almost lifeless, statuesque figure that we find in Hermann's niece or the picture of limp and brooding passivity that is Alice, and yet she is finally destroyed by the jealousy and possessiveness of the male characters who, alongside Freya, appear in a negative light. Even Jasper's hyperactive and romantic nature can only be soothed and calmed by Freya's steadiness. In spite of her strength of character, the narrator describes her at the end of the tale as "coming at last to doubt her own self" because she was "vanquished in her struggle with three men's absurdities" (TLS 202).

In "Freya" culture as ethnicity or nationality joins thematically with culture as 'civilization' and refinement. The difference in nationality of the three men fuels their mutual distrust and hostility, but they have in common a coarse simplicity and stubbornness that reveals itself at different times and seems to derive from the influence of their 'outpost' kind of environment. In Freya are combined the feminine presence and the 'civilizing,' cultural element. At one point or another she must calm, soothe or tame the other three characters. Her piano is more than a musical instrument: it is physically and culturally a piece of Europe removed to a scattered group of islands in the Indian Ocean. The wooden bungalow acts as a sounding board, sending the notes "right over the sea" (TLS 130). The piano is to her what the brig is to Jasper. In her playing, the sensible and even-tempered Freya expresses emotions and the release of tensions that she dare not express otherwise, since she must apply her "competent serenity" to humouring her father's visitors, even and especially the unwelcome Heemskirk: "old Nielsen looked at his daughter approvingly, for he liked the lieutenant to be kept in good humour" (TLS 163 - 4), "the lieutenant must not be left alone. Take offence, perhaps" (TLS 164). But it is in playing the piano that Freya keeps resisting Heemskirk's attentions and brutish advances, and she triumphs over him by playing aloud as he departs early in the morning. This manner of informing him that she knows he saw her blow kisses to Jasper is also a triumph of feminine subtlety (through an indirect, non-verbal, but nonetheless expressive cultural instrument) over the direct, physical reactions associated with the primitive, masculine boorishness that Heemskirk epitomizes. Freya's small triumph on that occasion turns out to be only one battle in a war, for Heemskirk takes his wounded pride and his savage brutality to the other front -- to Jasper and the *Borito*. Jasper gives the sanction of the victim. He allows himself to be destroyed with the brig, and his former romantically simple optimism which could conceive of no obstacles to future happiness, converts into a weak and selfish gloom and despair for which Freya cannot forgive him. Jasper's withdrawal into himself resembles that of Jim after Dain is killed.

Like many of Conrad's women characters, Freya is compared to a statue, not for coldness, however, immobility or purely physical build, but for a combination of feminine beauty, stability and strength of character: "On the biggest boulder there stood Freya, all in white and, in her helmet, like a feminine and martial statue with a rosy face" (TLS 141). Heemskirk represents the exact reverse of Freya's qualities, and this is reflected in his bestial appearance. On the last occasion that the narrator sees all four characters together, he is struck by the contrast between the Dutchman and the other three:

. . . I saw all these people assembled together; the charming fresh and resolute Freya, the innocently round-eyed Nelson. Jasper, keen, long limbed, lean faced, admirably self-contained in his manner, because inconceivably happy under the eyes of his Freya; all three tall, fair, and blue-eyed in varied shades, and among them the swarthy, arrogant, black-haired Dutchman, shorter nearly by a head, and so much thicker than any of them that he seemed to be a creature capable of inflating itself, a grotesque specimen of mankind from some other planet.

The contrasts struck me all at once as we stood in the lighted verandah, after rising from the dinner-table. I was fascinated by it for the rest of the evening, and I remember the impression of something funny and ill-omened at the same time in it to this day. (TLS 141)

The ultimate triumph goes to this "grotesque" Dutchman, so uncultivated socially and morally as to resemble a lower order of life. His peculiar animal physique accords uncannily with his brutish nature. All in all he gives the impression of a primordial or extra-terrestrial creature. The contrast with the other three characters reflects prevailing contemporary attitudes to race and colour, and carries 'Darwinian' evolutionary overtones. Many Dutch people are fair, but the short, dark, and "black-haired" Heemskirk must be made to resemble Stone Age man alongside the tall, fair, blue-eyed English and Scandinavian characters who take on the aspect

of gods. The racism inherent in the narrator's view of this scene is unmitigated -- without reservations, questioning or ironic commentary. It results inevitably from narrative flaws that do not allow the story to develop beyond the confines or 'givens' of its plot and characters. We must accept the out-and-out villainy of Heemskirk, who lacks the psychological complexity we find in others of Conrad's 'evil' characters (e.g. 'Gentleman' Brown in *Lord Jim* and Mr Jones in *Victory*). In its oversimplified, stereotypical characterization the melodramatic and plot-dominated "Freya of the Seven Isles" is uncharacteristic of Conrad's best work.

The above description of Heemskirk in "Freya" as a throwback to an earlier evolutionary version of man mildly prefigures Pedro, the 'caliban' of *Victory*, a "hairy creature" with "wildly hirsute cheeks," "a fat nose with wide, baboon-like nostrils," and "a pair of remarkably long arms, terminating in thick, brown hairy paws of simian aspect."<sup>36</sup> Where other Conrad works frequently represent contrasting levels in professional hierarchies or in the general spectrum of social status, *Victory* attempts more ambitiously to set forth a human 'chain of being' along the lines of Creation, with the aloof Heyst, (tortured by consciousness) at the top of the chain, and, at the bottom, the unconsciously "Simian" (V 234) and obviously retarded Pedro.<sup>37</sup>

Axel Heyst shuns the society of men. More culturally symbolic than Almayer's furniture or even Freya's piano are the books, tables, chairs and portrait of his father that Heyst has shipped to his remote island dwelling of Samburan. These stand for his cultural heritage, for the sceptical intellectualism acquired from his philosopher father who appears to have been something of a nihilist. "An island," reads the first page of *Victory*, "is but the top of a mountain," upon which Axel Heyst is "perched . . . immovably" (V 19), and from which, in his pride and aloofness, he appears to re-enact the fall. For Heyst is no Prospero. Half way through the novel he comes to realize that "there must be a lot of the original Adam in me, after all,"

and he reflects, "with the sense of making a discovery, that his primeval ancestor is not easily suppressed" (V 149). He makes the discovery intellectually as Kurtz had made it through experience. Heyst has learned from his father to regard action as a "barbed hook, baited with the illusion of progress," but his mind is imperfectly instilled with his father's "contemptuous, inflexible negation of all effort," and he finds himself increasingly involved in life. He surrenders first to the claims made upon him by a business acquaintance (Morrison), then to a relationship with a woman (Lena), so that he begins to feel "hurt by the sight of his own life, which ought to have been a masterpiece of aloofness" (V 149), just as he should have been "a spirit . . . sustaining itself proudly on its own contempt of the usual coarse aliments which life offers to the common appetites of men" (V 152). His self imposed isolation and limited experience in dealing with others leave him no defense against the intrusion, corruption and casuistry of "plain Mr Jones." Jones belongs to the same social class as Heyst; he is supposed to be "a gentleman," but has not been inculcated with a level of moral values or philosophical outlook to match. It is with "languid irony" that he tells Heyst "we belong to the same -- social sphere" (V 303).

*Victory* is one of those works in which social class and background can be seen as part of the cultural element that influences the themes, events, and final outcome. Heyst is thought to be a Swedish baron, but the truth behind his supposed aristocracy is less significant than the fact that others regard him in this light because of his aloofness, for he consciously develops the detached way of life and thought initially imparted to him by his father. It is both inherited and cultivated. Ricardo, Jones' secretary, is at the other end of the social scale. A clever but vulgar swindler from the underprivileged classes, he is too coarse to see through Lena's deceit of love or to understand what motivates Heyst, or even Jones, though he accompanies Jones on all his villainous exploits. Jones himself is in some ways a grotesque double of Heyst. A moral outcast by choice, not want or underprivileged background, he quickly perceives that Heyst, too, is an outcast by choice through a

philosophical detachment dangerously close to disdain. Like 'Gentleman' Brown in his parley with Jim, Jones intuitively picks out Heyst's weakness and plays upon it. If Heyst insisted on removing himself from the world, the world would come to him, bringing its nemesis. When Heyst asks Jones to define himself, he answers:

. . . I am the world itself, come to pay you a visit. In another sense I am an outcast -- almost an outlaw. If you prefer a less materialistic view, I am a sort of fate -- the retribution that waits its time. (V 303)

These words echo the passage in "Youth" on the nemesis of the East lying in wait to bring down the pride of Western man's civilization. But in Axel Heyst, pride holds itself intellectually aloof from the world and refines itself almost out of existence.<sup>38</sup> Heyst's island is invaded by the lowest figures of human existence (Pedro, Ricardo, Jones). His faith is diminished in his capacity to stand alone against the world.

#### "The Planter of Malata"

Conrad's fictional works contain as many loners by choice, like Falk or Axel Heyst, as those sent away to jungle outposts or socially cast out by their own communities. The islands of the Pacific and Indian Oceans draw such characters to them, providing a congenial environment for anyone seeking isolation, whatever their reasons. Geoffrey Renouard, the central character of "The Planter of Malata," also withdraws from society to an uninhabited island where he develops an experimental plantation for the production of silk. Like Nielsen in "Freya of the Seven Isles," he initially spends some years as an explorer and adventurer before settling on this island leased to him by a colonial government. His isolation is

induced by a moral and intellectual aloofness and sensitivity akin to Heyst's. And, as with Heyst, solitude gives rise to vulnerability on the few occasions when he relates to other people. An acquaintance, the editor of a newspaper in a Pacific colonial city, argues with Renouard about "the unwholesome effect of solitude."<sup>39</sup> When Renouard tells him "Everybody knows I am not a society man," the truth of this assertion goes beyond its surface meaning, since Renouard is morosely solitary, and, as Frederick Karl has put it, he "deliberately cultivates his apartness."<sup>40</sup>

Only one commentator on this story recognizes that what Geoffrey Renouard feels for Felicia Moorsom is not love, but infatuation. He repeats, in a more complex way, the mistake of Karain in becoming obsessed with an image of a woman that develops in his own mind. According to Juliet McLauchlan the theme of "The Planter of Malata" is "the dangerous, ultimately destructive, power of illusion," since Felicia Moorsom cannot be for Renouard "more than an obsessive image of Renouard's own creation."<sup>41</sup> The highly artificial and contrived classical and mythological images and allusions used to describe Felicia ring with the hollowness of her own social pretension and transmit the essential falseness of what Renouard believes to be his passion for her.

The self-centredness that impedes Heyst's love for Lena in *Victory*, a woman from a lower social class than himself, does not destroy our conviction of its reality; in "The Planter" love is not even born between this solitary man to whom his editor friend explains that "solitude works like a sort of poison" (WT 5) and the wealthy society woman who has come from England accompanied by her father and aunt to search for her former fiancé. She is motivated, it seems, by a patronizing pride and false sense of honour. Her fiancé had been suspected of embezzlement and had fled to the colonial city near Renouard's island, but since he has been proven innocent Felicia wishes to make restitution for her earlier lack of faith by marrying him. Completely captivated by her goddess-like appearance, Geoffrey Renouard

feels constrained and frustrated by the family's adherence to social forms, which act as a barrier between him and Felicia. But it is not the only barrier. She also remains a vision for him, a creation of his own mind, not a real person. Renouard is so enthralled by the illusion of love that he withholds the information that Felicia's fiance, who turns out to be the recently hired assistant on his plantation, has died there. To impart this knowledge is to lose the object of his desire, and so Renouard invites Felicia, together with her father and aunt, to visit Malata to find her fiance. After they have spent some days on the island he reveals the truth to her, confessing in one breath the death of the other man and his own love for her. She is duly horrified at the news and revolted by "the truth vibrating in his voice" (WT 105), she who had just told him "here I stand for truth itself" (WT 105). She and her family depart, and Renouard, dismissing his servant and plantation employees, sets out "calmly to swim beyond the confines of life -- with a steady stroke -- his eyes fixed on a star!" (WT 115)

In *Victory* Mr Jones adds class background to several other arguments whereby he identifies himself with Heyst to bring Heyst down from his lofty 'perch.' In "The Planter of Malata" social class again plays a significant role, this time to underscore the cultural gap that makes real communication between Geoffrey Renouard and Felicia Moorsom impossible. Both Renouard and Felicia, in different ways and for different reasons, have been culturally 'taught' not to recognize truth, to mistake for truth the complex overlay of civilized custom, taste, convention. Felicia's case is more obvious. Her upper class social background, her unconscious bondage to conventions, make of her a superficial being of little substance. Renouard recognizes this.

"Your father was right. You are one of these aristocrats." "Oh! I don't mean that you are like the men and women of the time of armours, castles, and great deeds. Oh, no! . . . they would have been too plebeian for you since they had to lead, to suffer with, to understand the

commonest humanity. No, you are merely of the topmost layer, disdainful and superior, the mere pure froth and bubble on the inscrutable depths which some day will toss you out of existence. (WT 103)

But knowing all this, Renouard still refuses to discard the illusion, and continues in the same breath with "you are the eternal love itself." He is obsessed, as Karain was obsessed by the vision of Matara's sister.

Felicia sees herself as standing for truth in comparison to Renouard's falseness in decoying her to Malata by not revealing her fiance's death. The "truth" in his voice that disgusts her is the accent of sincerity, the kind of sincerity that someone of her milieu can only regard as embarrassingly self-revelatory and lacking in decorum. To Felicia, this is as great a sin against the proprieties as the sincerity of Falk's confession seemed to Hermann. Geoffrey Renouard thinks of this love as "true" (WT 105), but his self deception and enthrallment before an illusion are the products of those same romantic sensibilities that led him first to seek adventure in exploration (like Stein in *Lord Jim*), then to seek lofty solitude -- a life removed from the common run of men -- and finally to give in to despair when the waking from the illusion is unbearable. Thus his suicide is inevitable.

Stein's entire collection of butterflies is a celebration of immobility and death; his house is a huge catacomb, "a scrubbed cave underground," its waxed floor "a sheet of frozen water," its chandelier a mass of "glittering icicles" (LJ 299), and a house of "crystalline void" (LJ 201). Stein is shut up in the solitude and despair of his cold house; he has dropped out of the comprehensive unity of mankind. His inadequacy as a physician for Jim, and as a commentator on life and truth, is apparent through the environment in which he lives: "His collection of *Buprestidae* and *Longicorns* -- beetles all -- horrible miniature monsters, looking malevolent in death and immobility, and his cabinet of butterflies, beautiful and hovering under the glass of cases on lifeless wings, had spread his fame far over the

earth" (LJ 192). He glows when he proudly recounts the story of catching the prize butterfly: "when I opened these beautiful wings and made sure what a rare and so extraordinary perfect specimen I had, my head went round and my legs became so weak with emotion that I had to sit on the ground" (LJ 197). Also the romantic expert collector and trader talks in a rather exciting manner about the prize he has won years ago in Celebes: "Look! The beauty -- but that is nothing -- look at the accuracy, the harmony. And so fragile! And so strong! And so exact! This is Nature -- the balance of colossal forces. This wonder; this masterpiece of Nature -- the great artist" (LJ 195). It is true, nevertheless, that in death the butterfly retains its beauty, and Stein in this matter 'resembles' a dead magnificent butterfly that "finds a little heap of dirt and sits still on it; but man he will never on his heap of mud keep still. He want [sic] to be so, and again he want [sic] to be so. . . . He wants to be a saint, and he wants to be a devil -- and every time he shuts his eyes he sees himself as a very fine fellow -- so fine as he can never be. . . . In a dream" (LJ 199). Here Stein depreciates man and applauds the butterfly and underlines the sympathy which he is beginning to feel for Jim.

Critics speculate on ways in which Stein's butterflies illuminate Jim's career. Tony Tanner has pointed out how the butterflies act as an effective metaphor for Jim's ideal notion of the self; "a creature of beauty, a creature with wings which can carry it above the mere dead level of an earth which beetles crudely hug."<sup>42</sup> Richard C. Stevenson has argued that Jim and the butterfly "represent a defiance of earth-bound mutability -- but at a cost."<sup>43</sup> Marlow's ruminates about the butterfly's "delicate and lifeless tissues displaying a splendour unmarred by death" and this image of beauty defies "destruction" (LJ 195). Jim's moment of beauty is preserved, but he himself must be physically sacrificed in the process. His "romantic" quest for release from human limitations becomes, like Geoffrey Renouard, a quest for death.

Conrad, in "The Planter," is attempting something next to impossible, and largely achieves it. What might possibly develop into an intense romantic relationship between two individuals is not permitted to attain even a primary level of real communication because it in fact never leaves the mind and inner life of Geoffrey Renouard. The entire story revolves around something that does not exist, and purposefully demonstrates how and why it cannot be. The fault lies only partly with Felicia; it has its roots in Renouard's egoism.

Renouard convinces himself (temporarily) of the reality of his illusion, but the constant references to statues, marble, copper and ivory are a measure of his mental effort to give substance and durability to this "shimmering" form of woman. Conventionally, these representations idolize her. They also stand for her own coldness, artificiality and insensitivity. But the profusion and persistence of these literary symbols, together with the abundant classical allusions (e.g. to Minerva), draw attention to their unoriginality. They are, after all, cultural trappings that completely usurp the reality of whatever they are supposed to represent. By overcharging the tale with these literary conventions, all produced in Renouard's mind, Conrad emphasizes the loss of real thoughts, feelings, sensations, in fact of Renouard's entire personality, even to himself. If Felicia has never known sincerity, Renouard is more pathetic for believing that his feelings for her are real when they are hardly more than "agitation in empty space," the phrase Professor Moorsom uses to describe the "thoughts, sentiments, opinions, feelings, actions" (WT 54) of those who make up his daughter's world. Conrad himself expressed the fear that, in the crucial moment of the story (the scene between Felicia and Renouard near the rock on Malata) he had "made those people a little too explicit in their emotion" and "destroyed to a certain extent the characteristic illusory glamour of their personalities" (JCF 212). They were both slaves of convention in different ways, victims of illusion and themselves "illusory."

" The Planter of Malata" is the last of Conrad's stories set in islands and colonial outposts to be discussed in this chapter. A romantic scientist-trader like Stein in *Lord Jim*, Geoffrey Renouard lacks Stein's insight into his own nature and the stamina to confront himself or accept his real situation, so sharply in contrast to his romantic and idealistic expectations. In this respect Renouard joins the crowd of disillusioned "outcasts" created largely by the imperialist system in its far-flung colonies. Many of these outcasts resemble some of R.L. Stevenson's characters in similar settings and contexts: traders and adventurers like Wiltshire in *The Beach of Falesa* with his contradictory values -- a representative of the colonialist system in the South Sea islands (dispensing rubbish to the natives, exploiting their copra and trafficking in their women) and a rebel against it (marrying a native woman and upholding an elemental standard of decency and honour); or drifters like the wretched trio at the centre of *The Ebb-Tide*. These characters and Conrad's lost and wandering escapists differ markedly from the white colonialist characters in Kipling's fiction, for the most part set in the established administrative world of land-mass India where it was easier to introduce and maintain a definite system over a concentrated area. Thus it was also easier to believe in its validity and to offer justifications for its imperial servants. A pretence of benign paternalism was the imperialist's answer to nagging questions of an ethical nature. Conrad does not share in the idealistic or benign motives of some of his characters like Kurtz (at first) or Jim or Lingard. Like the white traders in "Karain" they believe that their influence on the native peoples is purely beneficial, but their actions are economically exploitative and culturally destructive, ultimately of themselves as well as the people amongst whom they live.<sup>44</sup>

"The Duel" and "Il Conde"

Two works of an earlier period take up two aspects of culture that are not treated or are only touched upon elsewhere. They are "The Duel" and "Il Conde," to my mind the two best stories in the collection entitled *A Set of Six*. From a cultural point of view, these two stories, have come into their time in giving the same significance to the cultural difference of North and South that other Conrad works give to that of East and West, but what had been taken largely for a diversity in customs and ways of life based on a contrast of temperament, is related more closely in Conrad's stories to a notion of 'privileged,' and 'less privileged,' (especially in "Il Conde"), and to the rapid changes of the modern world. This brings us to the second aspect of these stories. In both we find the recognition that culture varies in time as well as in space; cultural values change not only from one race, nationality, community or class to another, but also from one period to another within the same geographical or social group. That change may be slow or rapid; when rapid it takes place in a revolutionary spirit that topples the old values with cruel unconcern.

"Il Conde," the shorter of the two, was written first. We are told nothing about the anonymous narrator -- not his profession, habits, where he is from or even why he is in Naples, though he appears to be a tourist. He embarks immediately upon his story without a frame or even an introduction. He tells how he became acquainted with an elderly, cultured, European gentleman known as *Il Conde* among the locals. This 'Count' had come to Naples three years earlier from somewhere in Bohemia for reasons of health. Whether he is really a Count is of little importance in the story. As with Axel Heyst in *Victory*, what matters is the impression made by his extremely well-bred and refined manner and his aristocratic bearing. When the narrator returns from a short trip to visit a sick friend, he finds the 'Count' in the hotel dining-room as usual, but completely dejected and

distracted, and learns of an "abominable adventure" that has completely upset the Count's life.<sup>45</sup>

Attending an open air concert one evening in the gardens of the *Villa Nazionale*, the Count was withdrawing for a few moments from the noisy crowd and strolling through a quieter part of the garden when he was accosted by a young man of a sombre and brooding appearance. He had sat beside the man for a short time earlier and had again noticed him once or twice walking among the people. But this time the young man pressed a knife against the pit of his stomach. The Count did not call out. In fact he did nothing to obtain help, during or after the assault. Having left most of his money in the safekeeping of the hotel staff and his watch at a watchmaker's for cleaning, he could give very little to the young man who then demanded his rings. The Count absolutely refused and expected to be killed, but when he no longer felt the pressure of the knife, and opened his eyes, the man had gone. Weak and shaken he remained sitting in the gardens in a state of shock until some time after the concert ended. Then, beginning to feel very hungry he suddenly remembered a twenty-franc gold piece he had always carried with him in case of emergency and bought something to eat in a cafe. But after paying the waiter he recognized at a table nearby the same young man who now came up to him snarling: "You had some gold on you -- you old liar . . . but you are not done with me yet" (SS 251). This proves to be the final crushing blow for the Count whose "delicate conception of his dignity was defiled by a degrading experience" (SS 252). The Count's sense of honour would not allow him to stay on in southern Italy, although he believed his health depended on it. To return to the North "really amounted to suicide for the poor Count" (SS 252), but he leaves all the same.

The story focuses on a particular trait in each of its two central characters: the natural kindness and "exaggerated delicacy of sentiment" of the old man and the moodiness, the "marked, peevish discontent" of "the South Italian type of young

man, with a colourless, clear complexion, red lips, jet-black little moustache and liquid black eyes so wonderfully effective in leering or scowling" (SS 243). The description seems guaranteed to orient the reader's sympathies in the expected direction, fully towards the Count and against the young Italian. J.H. Stape sees the young man's triumph as "representing the victory of the outsider as he forcibly makes the "Conde" an equal -- an outcast from 'normal' society," adding that he "claims the representative of normative society for his own."<sup>46</sup> To this must be added the complexity of the young man's native origin, for although his criminal act makes of him an outlaw, he is a Neapolitan, and the Count is the real outsider, a foreigner in southern Italy. Yet another complication is class background. The Southerner, especially the Neapolitan robber, is usually associated with poverty and want as well as ignorance, coarseness, and a lack of formal culture. But this young man is a student, and a "*Cavaliere* of a very good family from Bari" (SS 250). Another of Conrad's 'gentleman crooks,' he is no ordinary robber, but a leader of a *camorra* or secret Neapolitan society whose assaults were as much a political statement as they were criminal acts. The dark, southern native savagely 'punishes' the fair northern 'invader' importing his 'civilization' -- not the brutal 'civilization' of "Heart of Darkness" with its slavery and weaponry, but the more subtly intrusive, less easily condemned civilization of refined sensibilities, delicate feelings and social decorum. No less a cultural invasion, whatever its values.

The narrator is at first attracted to the Count's aesthetic sensibilities and draws the reader in too. "His taste was natural rather than cultivated . . . he had no jargon of a dilettante or the connoisseur. A hateful tribe." The Count was "a perfectly unaffected gentleman" (SS 235). Only after several more passages designed to endear us to the kindly old aristocrat does the narrator tell of his departure and return to Naples to find the Count horribly changed. On learning what has happened, the narrator sympathizes with the Count but from beneath the sincere commiseration emerges a critical note that builds up slowly in the course of the

story. The sensibility that gave the old gentleman a natural taste and eye for the aesthetic has now shown signs of decadence. Applied to his own life and personal feelings, it has ironically passed the limits of moderation that was the hallmark of the Count's way of life and sense of decorum. He "shrank from every excessive sentiment" (SS 252), yet he overreacted to this incident; for he was "shocked at being the selected victim, not of robbery so much as of contempt. His tranquillity had been wantonly desecrated. His life long, kindly nicety of outlook had been defaced" (SS 248). The Count's delicacy turns "sour and self-destructive. . . . he becomes the image of defenceless decency."<sup>47</sup> In this way the Count may be regarded as culpable on two fronts, at first sight contradictory: as a cultural 'invader' (from the young Neapolitan's point of view) and as an accomplice in his own ultimate destruction. When the Count leaves Naples the narrator is reminded of the saying *vedi napoli e poi mori!* He perceives a vanity in the Count's decision to leave that matches the "excessive vanity" of the saying; "I thought he was behaving with singular fidelity to its conceited spirit," even though "everything excessive was abhorrent to the nice moderation of the poor Count" (SS 252). To the Count can be applied some of the same epithets that the narrator uses in "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" to describe the demoralizing effect of the men's sensitive reactions to the dying James Wait: "highly humanized, tender, complex, excessively decadent . . . over-civilised " (NN 85).

Since the departure for the Count is equivalent to suicide, it indicates how extreme is the Count's sense of lost honour and dignity which can only be compared to that of someone from an extremely old, traditional civilization, a more static, oriental culture: "no Japanese gentleman, outraged in his exaggerated sense of honour, could have gone about his preparations for Hara-Kiri with greater resolution" (SS 252). We usually equate cultural invasion or intrusion with that of new or modern upon old and (in recent history) with West upon East, North upon

South. In this respect "Il Conde" presents a highly ambivalent view. Geographically, the Count is the foreigner and intruder, the Northerner in a Southern country, while temporally, he sees his unchanging, old-world values intruded upon and supplanted by the 'barbarity' of modern, angry youth. Hence the effectiveness of the Oriental (geographical) image that emphasizes the irony of this reversal. The young man, too, seen as a common robber, does more than intrude; he assaults, and he performs a criminal act. In this sense he is an outlaw as well as a temperamental, Southern 'outsider.' Seen as a Neopolitan asserting his claim to his own birthplace, he represents native rights, culture, and "democratic" values over an external, intrusive culture and "aristocratic" values.<sup>48</sup> The obvious 'right or wrong' of the incident in the garden gradually fades into the ambiguity and confusion of the broader picture that appears in the rest of the story, even moving beyond the matter of the Count's complicity. Depending on point of view, the two characters may each be termed an 'insider' or an 'outsider,' justified or blameworthy.

"The Duel" treats much the same themes as "Il Conde" although it does not strike quite so modern a note because it is a historical set-piece. The period is that of the Napoleonic Wars and soon afterwards. Two lieutenants in the emperor's hussars engage in a fencing duel that develops out of what may ultimately be termed a 'cultural misunderstanding.' The tall, fair Lieutenant D'Hubert is from Picardy, a region in northern France whose people are reputed for their placidity and phlegmatism. Attached to the general's staff in Strasbourg he is ordered to find and arrest a certain Lieutenant Feraud whose earlier participation in a duel has caused the general much displeasure. Feraud is a short, swarthy Gascon full of exuberance but with an irascible temper and an old-world conception of honour. Feraud's annoyance at the interruption of his visit to Madame Lionne's salon and his genuine perplexity as to why he is arrested turn to outrage when he learns the reason. In his mind he had a perfect right to duel with a civilian who had insulted him, and now, it seemed, he was insulted by the general. Unable to "call the general to account for

his behaviour," he tells D'Hubert "you are going to answer me for yours" (SS 154). All D'Hubert's attempts to argue his way out of Feraud's challenge to a duel only increase the anger of "this mad southerner" (SS 155) who interprets the other's quiet, calm approach as cold arrogance, and insolence. Feraud is only lightly wounded by D'Hubert, but in falling is knocked unconscious, and the outcome of the duel remains undecided. But Feraud is not deterred and delivers another challenge.

Both military men feel honour-bound to see their feud through to the end. They engage in several duels over a period of sixteen years, moving up in rank until they are both generals. As the tide of Napoleon's fortunes turn they help each other through the retreat from Moscow only to resume their duelling at the first opportunity. Wounded in battle some time before Napoleon's final defeat, D'Hubert must convalesce at the home of his married sister where he meets his fiancée and is fortunately removed from the public disgrace that attends most Bonapartist military leaders. Although Feraud escapes such disgrace thanks to D'Hubert's undisclosed steps to have Feraud's name removed from the list of generals to be tried, Feraud finds himself retired to a small village -- alone and forgotten except by a small band of loyal old Bonapartist soldiers. Hearing of D'Hubert's continued success of the kind that " 'intriguing fellows,' pick up in the ante-rooms of marshals" (SS 184), Feraud challenges him to yet another duel, during which D'Hubert manages to outwit Feraud who promises, in return for his life, to leave D'Hubert in peace. This last duel proves fortunate for D'Hubert in another way. His fiancée, upon learning the reason for his early morning departure, breaks the unwritten law of conduct for her sex by running in a state of terror, and with her hair down, all the way to his house (two miles), a reaction which resolves for him a question he might have taken years to answer -- that of the love she bears him. Partly out of gratitude, D'Hubert settles a regular sum of money upon Feraud under the guise of a government

pension, remarking how extraordinary is the extent to which "in one way or another this man has managed to fasten himself on my deeper feelings" (SS 233).

On the surface, "The Duel" is a long narrative packed with incidents, events and repeated episodes that appear to crowd out thematic development or any interest beyond those of the story itself. And yet Conrad had "no qualms of conscience about this piece of work" (JCF 201) and took the *Pall Mall Magazine's* acceptance of the story (after other rejections) as evidence of "some insight."<sup>49</sup> He calls it "nothing but a serious and even earnest attempt at a bit of historical fiction" (JCF 201), and elsewhere refers to *A Set of Six* as "stories in which I've tried my best to be simply entertaining."<sup>50</sup> Although *A Set of Six* is among Conrad's least successful collections of short stories, Bernard Meyer has noted Conrad's tendency either to miss or to play down "the remarkable insights residing in his fiction. He was to sum up the theme of *Lord Jim* as 'acute consciousness over lost honour,' and one suspects that had he written *Macbeth* he would have insisted that it was nothing but a ghost story."<sup>51</sup>

In his article on "The Duel," J.H. Stape notes that "as the story moves towards its conclusion, the duel itself dwindles in importance, and psychological interests increasingly emerge as the focus of Conrad's attention." He adds that if, in the beginning, "Feraud [sic] and D'Hubert simply signify types of the Northern and Southern temperament," by the end of the story, only Feraud "remains a victim of his *idée fixe* and a familiar Conradian grotesque," but D'Hubert "becomes fully human, coming to live an examined and emotionally committed life, ironically enough, through his blood conflict" with Feraud.<sup>52</sup> These two aspects (plot and psychological interest) seem at first disconnected because they are not interwoven in the narrative but appear in linear sequence, the one gradually giving way to the other as the story progresses. Their relationship is not meant to stand out

obviously, but to work upon the reader's mind through the tone and atmosphere of the story.

The Northern/Southern contrast lies not only in a difference of temperament that provokes the absurd conflict at the origin of the duel, but also in a broader conflict of cultural values related to D'Hubert's and Feraud's profession, aspirations, the times in which they live and the question of historical change. By the early Nineteenth Century, the code of honour to which both men feel bound in their recurrent duelling continued to hold sway in military circles while it was already being phased out of civilian life. Always and necessarily a conservative institution, the army silently approved practices that it formally denounced -- practices and a code of honour that had their origin, after all, in military life, but that also saw their peak in bygone times, especially the Middle Ages. In fact the relationship between these two men from first to last gives the tale a strongly medieval flavour, particularly in the final scene in which they are seen together as in the knightly combats of Arthurian literature, where a vanquished knight, instead of being killed, became the vassal of his victor. Feraud must obey D'Hubert's command not to bring up the feud again. Thus the code of honour is put to the service of its own extinction. D'Hubert outwits Feraud not only by lying on the ground and remaining out of Feraud's sight until they are quite close to each other, but also in his manner of resolving the conflict, which testifies to his heightened understanding of the other's way of thought.

If their profession has encouraged these men to live and act by an old-world code of honour, Feraud's Southern culture has contributed more than its share both to the outbreak and to the continuation of their feud. Conrad, upon hearing from a friend that a lady in Italy did not like *Lord Jim* because she found it morbid, remarked that "the lady could not have been an Italian. I wonder whether she was European at all? In any case, no Latin temperament would have perceived anything

morbid in the acute consciousness of lost honour" (JCF 166). Although today we would be wary of making such a generalization, even in jest, Conrad clearly associated the strongest concept and tradition of honour not only with past ages and societies having a dominant aristocratic and/or military structure, but also with Southern (Mediterranean) culture and a (putatively) Southern or Latin conception of manliness and manly qualities. It is of little concern to Feraud that D'Hubert is merely the instrument of his General; he understands only that he cannot accept to be arrested without losing his honour: "do you imagine I am a man to submit tamely to injustice?" (SS 154) Since their conflict arises out of cultural misunderstanding, there is a ring of truth in the theory put forward by one of the officers -- a believer in the transmigration of souls -- that the feud grew out of "the forgotten past," possibly in "some previous existence." Behind this view the reader senses the North/South cultural clash handed down from generation to generation as the underlying reason why this officer could say that "their souls remembered the animosity, and manifested an instinctive antagonism." Hence "this weird explanation seemed rather more reasonable than any other"(SS 167).

Although Feraud is the more aggressive character and the omniscient author draws us into the mind of D'Hubert while Feraud remains a stereotype, a certain insight and pathos touched with nostalgia attends the Gascon. Stereotypical descriptions and generalizations bordering on racism such as "Southern natures often hide, under the outward impulsiveness of action and speech, a certain amount of astuteness" (SS 171) are offset by or mingled with more sympathetic and understanding evaluations: Feraud's friends "would not have failed him, because he too was liked for the exuberance of his southern nature and the simplicity of his character" (SS 169). Class differences and pure luck also enter into the make-up and development of the men's characters. D'Hubert is from an "honourable family" while Feraud, the son of an illiterate blacksmith (unlike the Neapolitan in "Il Conde"), has "no connections, no family to speak of" (SS 160).

During the Napoleonic campaigns, both men suffer the hardships of the Moscow retreat, but to this has been added for Feraud a long and dreary service in Spain: "the strain of unhappiness caused by military reverses had spoiled Colonel Feraud's character. Like many other men, he was rendered wicked by misfortune" (SS 191). His southern nature is generally given to be the environmental cause and background of his love of the warrior's life and of his simply conceived loyalty to the emperor which contains an element of stubbornness and inflexibility. It is also one of the reasons why he does not climb the military hierarchy as quickly as D'Hubert. Always aware of D'Hubert's success he begins to feel bitter and resentful towards "that dandified staff officer" (SS 168) whom he regards as one of these "generals' pets" (SS 169) and "clever fellows who stick at nothing to get on" (SS 179). While such remarks may recall Donkin's whining enumeration of grievances in "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*," Conrad shows more understanding of Feraud's attitude, whose dogged Bonapartist loyalty arises partly from envy of the Northerner's greater *savoir-faire* in fulfilling his ambitions, for when Napoleon's fortunes turn, Feraud can only regard D'Hubert's continued success as a kind of betrayal. Both as a Southerner, then, and as a loyal Bonapartist, Feraud represents a defeated system of values. Geographically and temporally he is the outsider. If the Chevalier *de Valmassigne*, the uncle of D'Hubert's fiancée, stands for the old aristocratic order, overthrown by the Revolution, Feraud represents even more than D'Hubert the Napoleonic era with its opportunities for one and all to distinguish themselves and its simple, "naively heroic . . . faith" (JCF 202). This epic must in turn give way to a new age -- the cultivation of civilian life in peace time, as signified by D'Hubert's betrothal and the triumph of love. Such joys are denied to the naturally "pugnacious . . . fighter by vocation" (SS 178), Feraud, who cannot adapt to the new way of life.

That this adaptation is exceedingly difficult is born out by D'Hubert's own nostalgia and sense of loss rather than triumph.

He had conquered, yet it did not seem to him that he had gained very much by his conquest. The night before he had grudged the risk of his life which appeared to him magnificent, worthy of preservation as an opportunity to win a girl's love. . . . Now that his life was safe it had suddenly lost its special magnificence. It had acquired instead a specially alarming aspect as a snare for the exposure of unworthiness. As to the marvellous illusion of conquered love . . . he comprehended now its true nature. It had been merely a paroxysm of delirious conceit. Thus to this man, sobered by the victorious issue of a duel, life appeared robbed of its charm, simply because it was no longer menaced. (SS 227)

D'Hubert experiences a sense of loss not only for the preciousness of his own life when it was constantly in danger, but also for the kind of heroism, even reckless courage, that belonged to the Napoleonic era. This is not the anonymous heroism of solidarity found among Conrad's sea men, but is distinctly related to military glory. It is as a civilian that D'Hubert must settle down to a life of more anonymous courage, even one in which unworthiness might be exposed. The new kind of courage only comes with the discovery of his fiancée's love, a discovery brought about, ironically, by the final duel with Feraud who is incapable of viewing honour or courage in other than a military or a personal light.

Both "The Duel" and "Il Conde" deal with rapid changes in society and a sudden reversal of values. In "The Duel" the Napoleonic era appeared for a short time as a 'new' and youthful age that grew out of the Revolution only to become the 'old' way, in turn overthrown by another newer order that ironically reinstates much of the conservatism of pre-revolutionary society if not all of its institutions and traditions. The old Chevalier *de Valmassigne* is confused and bewildered by the many political and cultural mutations he has had to endure in a lifetime. He can barely assimilate the fact that D'Hubert, for whom he has a great affection, was a lieutenant of the hussars in Napoleon's army, that order which protected and

encouraged the "canaille" (SS 213), as he calls Feraud upon learning that he was the son of a blacksmith. And he cannot understand why D'Hubert must persist in this duel, why he will not "make [his] excuses" to Feraud or "simply refuse to meet him," to which D'Hubert responds "Monsieur le Chevalier! To what do you think you have returned from your emigration?" (SS 214) If the old Chevalier does not understand the modern ways, he has nonetheless returned to France and the new order has made its peace with him, asserting itself as a stabilizing force. Also this new society does not make such sharp distinctions between North and South, if only because the South continues to be encroached upon, now increasingly rapidly, by the North. D'Hubert does not return to the North at the end of the wars; it is in the South that he settles -- not in Gascony, but Provence. But the old Bonapartist soldiers like Feraud will be seen for many years wandering in rags about the country's towns and villages, outcasts of their own society. At the same time Southern people of Latin temperament, again like Feraud, continue to find themselves in a position of ethnic/cultural disadvantage and impotence. Thus Feraud loses on all fronts.

By contrast, in "Il Conde" the Latin temperament is culturally intruded upon in its own territory, and lashes back viciously. However, its terrorism is linked with the destabilizing anarchism of idle youth, a kind of modern barbarism, triumphing over an old, established social order and culture of refinement as represented by the Count. In "Il Conde" the *camorra* seeks to realize its aims by terrorizing the non-Neapolitans, and engages in no other, more legitimate means of resistance. The young man's moodiness, the description of his upper class family background and the little we glean about his habits and life style (e.g. the lack of an occupation) detract from the possible value of the *camorra's* objectives. His actions, "like those of Conrad's revolutionaries and anarchists," says Frederick Karl, "stem from boredom, not belief; from ennui, not ideology or a sense of honour."<sup>53</sup> For Conrad, this kind of anarchy, which reappears in some of the longer works (especially *The Secret Agent*), poses from within the same kind of threat to the structure of a

civilized community that nature and the wild seem to pose from without. It disrupts organized life and shakes moral order, or what Anthony Winner calls "moral culture" in his recent study on culture and irony in four of Conrad's novels.<sup>54</sup>

#### "An Anarchist" and "The Informer"

Anarchy for Conrad is the exact opposite of solidarity. It is the social and political equivalent of narcissism in the individual, and its purpose of overthrowing established systems of social order proves self contradictory in that it must systematically cultivate the views whereby it attempts to achieve those aims. Conrad's attitude to anarchists and revolutionaries ranges from ambiguous to scornful. He is most scathing in his two novels *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*. The ambiguity appears in "An Anarchist," a story generally regarded as undeveloped.

Paul, a young French mechanic, celebrates his approaching marriage in a Parisian cafe. Two strangers at a nearby table manage to turn his elation into guilt and gloom over the cruel lot of mankind. With their encouragement he becomes drunk and shouts anarchist statements. When a fight ensues the police are called in and he is arrested. Defended at his trial by a socialist lawyer who makes of him a martyr to the cause, he is convicted of anarchy and imprisoned, with "the maximum penalty applicable to a first offence" (SS 132). Years later he tries to return to his old workshop, but his former employer rejects him. As a result he falls in with 'real' anarchists who turn out to be "neither more nor less than housebreakers" (SS 133). Forced to take part in a bank robbery he is convicted again and transported to the island convict colony of Cayenne, from which he escapes in a boat with the two hated men who had been convicted with him and whom he blames for his

involvement in the bank robbery. When a ship is sighted he kills them both, flings them overboard and, picked up by the ship, persuades its captain to take him to another island at the mouth of a South American river. This turns out to be a huge cattle station owned by "a famous meat-extract manufacturing company" (SS 121). The manager, recognizing that he is an escaped convict, puts him to work as the mechanic of the estate steam launch without paying him any wages, and gives him a hovel to live in and barely enough food. It is on this island that the narrator, who has come there to study and collect some of its rare butterflies, (like Stein), first meets Paul who tells him his story. Noticing the anarchist grow frail and thin the narrator tries to persuade him to return with him to Europe, but Paul refuses, saying "I shall die here . . . away from them" (SS 144).

Graver justifiably finds that the story lacks the "magnified . . . absurdity of the victim's position" such as that of Yanko Gooral in "Amy Foster," and "fails to achieve any cumulative power."<sup>55</sup> All the same, his comment that Conrad "makes the anarchist's plight merely pathetic" misses the mark, for the shame of such pathos is the moral message at the centre of the story. To Paul's pathetic anarchism, into which he blundered more or less unconsciously, is opposed the brutal but contemptible capitalism of Harry Gee, the estate manager. Both Paul and Harry Gee have inherited their political views from the social order and cultural environment that formed them. An alignment of fortune and circumstances with class has made them what they are. While the manager recognizes Paul's working class background as a major cause of his anarchism, he is blind to the role of his own background, and his manner of interpreting and reacting to that fact about Paul is rendered as pure parody.

"What were you before you became a convict?"  
 "Ouvrier," he says. "And a good workman too."  
 At that I began to think he must be an  
 anarchist, after all. That's the class they come  
 mostly from, isn't it? I hate the cowardly bomb-  
 throwing brutes. (SS 127)

The connection between political stance and social class is over-simplified, overstated, and made to serve his gratuitous invective. When the narrator asks Gee what wages he pays Paul, the manager answers:

Wages! What does he want with money here?  
 . . . you don't think I'd employ a convict and  
 give him the same money I would give an  
 honest man? . . . that subversive sanguinary  
 rot of doing away with all law and order in the  
 world makes my blood boil. It's simply cutting  
 the ground from under the feet of every decent,  
 respectable, hard-working person. I tell you  
 that the consciences of people who have them,  
 like you or I, must be protected in some way; or  
 else the first low scoundrel that came along  
 would in every respect be just as good as  
 myself. Wouldn't he now? And that is absurd!  
 (SS 128 - 29)

The narrator also wishes to make it clear through this satire that he does not align himself with the conservative position or hold the conventional attitudes to anarchism. In spite of the opening paragraphs' "amateurish . . . struggles to achieve narrative definition"<sup>56</sup> as Frederick Karl has it, and in spite of the "crude caricature of the estate manager"<sup>57</sup> to use Graver's words, the comic elements and the satire are more to the point than they at first appear. Gee is no less brutal and exploitative than the company managers in the Congo, and appears completely blind to the monstrous contradictions in his beliefs. He may consciously hold them, but seems never to have consciously or logically thought them through. He slaps the narrator's back, guffaws loudly and jokes about 'butterfly slaying' to dramatize his total disdain for anything approaching discernment, sensibility, delicacy. His remarks about Paul contain just enough truth to underscore the crudeness of his interpretation of anarchism. His coarseness, however, is not only natural; he cultivates it, exploits it and revels in it. The caricature is his own created role.

It is Paul who allows himself to be exploited, first by anarchists when he is a young worker with middle class aspirations, and later by the capitalist manager when he has been dubbed an anarchist. The irony of this reversed situation highlights the human weakness to which he is subject and which turns out to be the underlying theme of the story: gullibility. Paul is so impressionable that he falls prey to whatever influences he encounters. And this is what makes him so pathetic. His susceptibilities and lack of self association transform all internal conflicts and struggles against the influence of his environment to inner chaos and confusion. This is the reason why the narrator can say of him:

On the whole, my idea is that he was much more of an anarchist than he confessed to me or to himself; and that, the special features of his case apart, he was very much like many other anarchists. Warm heart and weak head -- that is the word of the riddle; and it is a fact that the bitterest contradictions and the deadliest conflicts of the world are carried on in every individual breast capable of feeling and passion. (SS 143)

In the narrator's view most anarchists, then, are weak-minded, weak-willed sentimentalists, unable to stand up to the havoc of internal contradictions and conflicts. In this sense first, before any political sense, the narrator calls Paul "more of an anarchist than he confessed," and it is from such as these that most political anarchists are formed. In drunkenness and a rush of sentimental pity one evening in a cafe did Paul join the 'cult' of anarchism, and in his impressionability, he reminds us of the simple and gullible crewmen of the *Narcissus*, so susceptible to Donkin's pitiful persuasions that they arrive at near mutiny.

Anarchism begins, for Conrad, in the chaos of the undisciplined minds of individuals, ripe for whatever influences are stirring abroad. It may be equated with the state of Rousseau's natural man prior to the social contract -- a primitive being without sense of order, custom or tradition -- a being without a culture. In *The*

*Secret Agent*, the Assistant Commissioner of Police had been posted in the early years of his career to a tropical colony whose peoples he considered primitive, and he regards anarchists as not very different from the 'unruly natives' whose secret societies he had been "very successful in tracking and breaking up."<sup>58</sup> Similarly, his subordinate Chief Inspector Heat, can relate to the criminal underworld as a part of the system, the 'nay' that affirms the 'yea' of the social order. Anarchists he views as "lunatic," like the Professor, or foolish and "disorderly." He either holds them in contempt or is perplexed by their unpredictability and refusal to play according to "perfectly comprehensible rules," and he feels that "as criminals, anarchists were distinctly no class -- no class at all" (SA 114). But Chief Inspector Heat maintains regular contact with several anarchists, and lives in two worlds, so that for the Assistant Commissioner, Heat himself calls to mind one of those natives in the tropical colony who played the role of "firm friend and supporter of the order and legality established by white men; whereas, when examined sceptically, he was found out to be principally his own good friend, and nobody else's" (SA 129). This comparison substantiates an argument of Jacques Darras on *The Secret Agent*: "In 'Heart of Darkness' the sun was beginning to set on the Empire. In *The Secret Agent* its final hour has come. The colonial dream has retreated to the metropolis."<sup>59</sup> By the same token the dark forces of "unmitigated primitive nature," thought to be encroaching from without, have been lurking beneath the polished surface of urban society.

As Conrad sees them anarchists, responding to the same impulses as everyone, 'flock together,' and must ultimately organize themselves into a 'culture' of 'anti-culture.' Setting themselves apart from -- and against -- the entire complex of established systems and conventions, they still seek their identity in something larger than themselves. To them may be applied one of the descriptions of Chief Inspector Heat, the representative of law and order: that "a man must identify himself with something more tangible than his own personality, and establish his

pride somewhere, either in his social position, or in the quality of the work he is obliged to do, or simply in the superiority of the idleness he may be fortunate enough to enjoy" (SA 128), or, it might be added, in the stand he takes against the social order.

The 'cult' of anarchy is spread, fostered, publicized as feverishly as any commercial company advertises its products. Hence the references, in the early passages of "An Anarchist," to the meat company's advertisements. The apparent humour is not meant to run deep but to camouflage -- temporarily -- the narrator's real point. He has had to swallow the company's product, but he has "never swallowed its advertisements. Whatever form of mental degradation I may (being but human) be suffering from," he says "it is not the popular form. I am not gullible" (SS 122). The narrator suggests the connection with the central story by immediately adding "I have been at some pains to bring out distinctly this statement about myself in view of the story which follows." Although he explains that he has not accepted Paul's story at face value but has checked out the facts so that the reader may safely believe them and may have no suspicions as to the narrator's gullibility, the further implication, in the light of later events, is that Paul himself suffers from that "popular form" of "mental degradation." Gullibility is the outstanding characteristic of most anarchists, with the exception of a few leaders and instigators. These are "shams," or full of "baseness," according to Conrad's own comments on *The Secret Agent* where these traits are more fully explored and developed in Verloc, his anarchist friends, and Mr Vladimir, the Russian ambassador.<sup>60</sup>

The best illustration of the anarchist as a "sham" is in "The Informer," which also demonstrates how anarchism related to class and culture. "The Informer" has a double narrative frame like "Amy Foster." The inner story, with its wooden, unconvincing characters, and incomplete development lacks even the interest of "An

Anarchist," but the outer narrator meets a certain Mr X, narrator of the inner story. A collector of porcelain and an anarchist, Mr X proves by the contradictions of his personality to be a more fascinating character than any of those whose story he tells. In Mr X, aspects of the Count and the anarchist of "Il Conde" are peculiarly combined. He speaks bitterly of the "idle and selfish class" whose life is "all a matter of pose and gesture" and who cannot understand "the power and the danger of a real movement and of words that have no sham meaning" (SS 75). Thus he proclaims his own sincerity and authenticity, while the contradictions of his life make of him a greater "sham" than the classes he criticizes. The finest aspect of this story is the irony of Mr X's being "an anarchist spoiled by success."<sup>61</sup> For the outer narrator this "fire-brand" and "great agitator" who "exhibited the least possible amount of warmth and animation" is "a kind of rare monster" (SS 73 - 74). The combination of his aristocratic, exquisite dress, taste and manner and his "underground life" leads the narrator to compare him to the "monstrously precious" Chinese bronzes that he collects. But the narrator concludes the comparison as follows:

It is true that this monster was polished . . .  
 But then he was not of bronze. He was not  
 even Chinese, which would have enabled one to  
 contemplate him calmly across the gulf of racial  
 difference. He was alive and European; he had  
 the manner of good society, wore a coat and hat  
 like mine, and had pretty near the same taste  
 in cooking. It was too frightful to think of.  
 (SS 74)

The contradictions in Mr X are so incomprehensible that he seems to be composed of some inhuman matter, cold, polished and metallic, or at least to be of an alien culture. Indeed anarchism strikes the narrator as another culture, especially in Mr X, who 'cultivates' his anarchism no less than his speech, conduct and "unruffled manner" (SS 74). He seems to be all manner, all appearances, with no

essence beneath his "perfect impassiveness of expression" (SS 73). The artificiality of his entire personality is brought home by another effective use of displacement.

His meagre brown hands emerging from large wide cuffs came and went breaking bread, pouring wine, and so on, with quite mechanical precision. His head and body above the tablecloth had a rigid immobility. (SS 73)

Mr X might well be a stone bust standing upon the table totally dissociated from the mechanical hands appearing and disappearing across it, as if performing the daily rites of some religious order. He is the very kind of man who knows how to whip up the feelings of the people while remaining aloof. He in fact describes himself and the effect of his own writings when he says that "a demagogue has only to shout loud enough and long enough to find some backing in the very class he is shouting at." A demagogue "carries amateurs of emotion with him. Amateurism in this, that, and the other thing is a delightfully easy way of killing time, and of feeding one's own vanity -- the silly vanity of being abreast with the ideas of the day after tomorrow" (SS 76). Mr X, the sham leader, subverts the idle, wealthy classes, just as gullible in their vanity as the middle and working classes that produce the weak-willed Paul in "An Anarchist."

Equally ironic and contradictory, at least on the surface, is the political subversion of *The Secret Agent's* title character, Verloc, whose conservative life style in no way matches the popular image of a spy, still less of an anarchist, and makes a mockery of the very word "agent" -- 'one who acts.' Verloc's dominant characteristic is extreme indolence, possibly born of "a philosophical unbelief in the effectiveness of every human effort" (SA 52). In this he shares the attitudes Heyst inherits from his philosopher father in *Victory*. But Verloc does not arrive at this outlook through intellectual persuasion. His self pity and self absorption, increasingly conspicuous towards the end (before Winnie kills him), combine with

his general inertia to place him in the company of characters like James Wait and Donkin in "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*." Verloc is a double agent, informing the police -- the Establishment -- of his anarchist friends' activities. Beneath the surface contradictions, this role, which precludes any belief, effort or commitment, fits his character to perfection.

A character for whom the "sham" Mr X may well have been a preliminary sketch is Peter Ivanovitch in *Under Western Eyes* -- not an anarchist, but a revolutionary and feminist who exploits the very people he claims to serve by developing around him a group of blindly devoted followers and adulators willing to do his bidding. Even when they wake from the illusion of selflessly serving the cause, they find themselves trapped by their circumstances, as does the woman, Tekla, Ivanovitch's unpaid secretary who helps with the writing of his feminist works. Even the more respectable revolutionaries like Sophia Antonovna are duped by his style, and continue to insist that he is "an inspired man" (UWE 349), the last words of the novel. Sophia Antonovna, in exile from her own culture in the dreamlike world of supposed political neutrality that is Geneva, grasps at every sign of hope and all too readily embraces the illusion of a great man serving the cause.

One early story not discussed above but relevant in this connection is "The Return," in which the total inability of a husband and wife to communicate results not from cultural difference but from cultural sameness. The empty conventions of the bourgeois class to which they belong preclude all possibility of depth or meaning in their lives, which follow such an organized pattern as to seem pre-ordained. This couple had always "skimmed over the surface of life . . . like two skilful skaters cutting figures . . . for the admiration of the beholders, and disdainfully ignoring the hidden stream . . . of life, profound and unfrozen" (TU 115). The shock of his wife's desertion overwhelms Alvan Hervey, and leaves him without defences because "the sentiments which he knew . . . he ought to experience, were so mixed up with the

novelty of real feelings, of fundamental feelings that know nothing of creed, class, or education, that he was unable to distinguish clearly between what is and what ought to be; between the inexcusable truth and the valid pretences " (TU 122). Upon his wife's return, the situation demands an effort of communication from both of them that goes beyond their powers or experience. Alvan Hervey keeps insisting that "nothing that outrages the received beliefs can be right" (TU 145) and that "outspokenness in certain circumstances is nothing less than criminal" (TU 152), a reminder of the attitude of the Hermann family towards Falk's confession. At the end it is Alvan who leaves; separation is inevitable.

Conrad's late preface to *Victory* emphasizes two aspects of human nature that reappear in most of his works, bringing a greater continuity and coherence to the collections. These are endurance and detachment. We continue whatever we are doing in perfect detachment, even to the end of the word, because major catastrophes exceed our capacity to assimilate them and because we know no other course of action (JCF 215 - 216). Detachment in fact helps "the unchanging Man of history" to endure, except when he is tried by personal catastrophic experiences that rob him suddenly of all detachment. Different levels and kinds of detachment manifest themselves in different Conrad characters. Inner detachment, of the sort that Stein attains, is what Jim would do better to achieve instead of the escape and isolation he is seeking. On the other hand, Heyst's (or Renouard's) kind of detachment is too refined, and still too closely bound to physical isolation. What Conrad says of Heyst in this regard applies equally to his many other drifters, romantic adventurers and isolated characters -- Kayerts and Carlier, Almayer, Willems, Jim, Falk (in some respects), Decoud, Neilson, Jasper, Jacobus (in some respects), Renouard and Paul: they had all "lost the habit of asserting [themselves]," if indeed they had learned it at first.

I don't mean the courage of self-assertion,  
either moral or physical, but the mere way of it,

the trick of the thing, the readiness of mind and the turn of the hand that come without reflection and lead the man to excellence in life, in art, in crime, in virtue, and for the matter of that, even in love. Thinking is the great enemy of perfection. The habit of profound reflection, I am compelled to say, is the most pernicious of all the habits formed by the civilized man. (JCF 216)

As the intense and concentrated episode of Decoud on the *Isabels* demonstrates, isolation encourages too much reflection and opens onto a vista of nothingness, or of nihilism (Heyst, Verloc), recalling the white man's words in "The Lagoon": "There is nothing." However, action without reflection skims over the surface of life ("The Return") attaching itself to passing illusion or the selfishness and restlessness of material interests ("Karain," *Nostromo*). For Conrad, only solidarity in human fellowship can be claimed to offer a relatively safe passage between the dangers of these two extremes and to provide the right climate for any meaningful intercultural exchange.<sup>62</sup>

Most of the themes, characters, and situations in Conrad's shorter fiction which have been the focus of this chapter have their more fully developed counterparts in the novels. Some of these I have discussed briefly where relevant, or mentioned in passing, although it would be impossible to refer to all of them here. It is my hope that the temptation -- which I have resisted more often than not -- to speak of the novels frequently and at greater length will translate for those who read this study into enriching insights and comparisons of their own.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## The Lure of the Romantic

Conrad acknowledged his romanticism. He was also quick to modify that acknowledgement, pointing out that the romantic in him was tempered by an equal recognition of reality. His manner of disclosure, the very phrasing of his argument as it appears in the preface to *Within the Tides*, registers not the even balance and blending of opposites that this modified acknowledgement seems to be groping for, but a confusion of the two attitudes and uncertainty as to their relative value. There is not an equalizing tension, but a deep-seated conflict between inclination and imposition, the same sort of unresolved dilemma that emerges in several of his characters and narrators.

. . . the romantic feeling of reality was in me an inborn faculty. This in itself may be a curse but when disciplined by a sense of personal responsibility and a recognition of the hard facts of existence shared with the rest of mankind becomes but a point of view from which the very shadows of life appear endowed with an internal glow. And such romanticism is not a sin. It is none the worse for the knowledge of truth. It only tries to make the best of it, hard as it may be; and in this hardness discovers a certain aspect of beauty. (JCF 211)<sup>1</sup>

The language of justification in this much quoted passage, whose tone borders on the apologetic, in some respects conveys the reverse of what Conrad intends. It gives the impression that in his heart Conrad does indeed regard the romantic perception of life as something of a "curse" and even a "sin," or at least a flaw of character, bestowed by fate because it is "inborn" and not acquired, and yet "disciplined" as a wanton and capricious trait requiring chastisement (why not 'tempered,' 'mitigated,' or even 'controlled'?) This romanticism appears to be sadly

in need of defence and apology (it is "not a sin," it is "none the worse . . ." and it "tries hard to make the best of it"). At the same time this "romantic feeling" is not presented in opposition to reality; it is a feeling "of reality," an interpretation of what is, not a fanciful substitution of the impossible. Conrad saw little need for the fantastic or the supernatural in his works because he perceived existence itself as extraordinary, a dream in which the forms of life move about like "shadows" without essence. The "internal glow" of essence can only be granted to those forms temporarily, by "point of view," by the observer's "romantic feeling." It is definitely internal, but is awakened by the observer, just as reality can be romantic, but only when and because the observer feels it to be so, sometimes reprehensibly. "But then, you see, I have been called romantic. It is at least as gratifying to be certified sober as to be certified romantic" (PR 210).

In this respect Conrad's romanticism does not differ from that which dominated much of the Nineteenth Century. Romanticism lent a sense of wonder to ordinary phenomena, or an appearance of reality to the unreal or supernatural. Novalis, in 1798, says: "By giving what is commonplace an exalted meaning, what is ordinary a mysterious aspect, what is familiar the impressiveness of the unfamiliar, to the finite an appearance of infinity; thus I romanticise it."<sup>2</sup> Coleridge follows Novalis. In his *Biographia Literaria*, ch. IV, Coleridge says that his intention of the *Lyrical Ballads* is to produce "the strongest impressions of novelty"; "to carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood"; "to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances, which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar." The virtue assigned here is that imaginative interpretation of things never discloses the mysterious ground of their being; the marks of "the mind that feels the riddle of the world, and may help to unravel it" to bring us closer to the truth of things.<sup>3</sup> Conrad claims to do the opposite, "to make unfamiliar things credible" (JFC 211), but this is because he is "dealing with matters outside the general run of everyday experience" (JCF 211), people and places little known to

the reading public of his day. Wordsworth's work offers formulations of Conrad. In his preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth asserts that his choice of "incidents and situations from common life" is his main concern, and "to relate or describe them . . . in a language really used by men . . ."; whereby "ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way . . . in a state of excitement" (my ellipses).<sup>4</sup> Coleridge says that "Mr. Wordsworth, . . . was to propose to himself as his object to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand."<sup>5</sup> Even so, as Conrad's "Amy Foster" and "Heart of Darkness" testify, the process is dual. Conrad is no less keen to defamiliarise by conveying the sense of wonder and mystery of the ordinary world, the dream-like quality of life, as to seek conviction (again like Novalis) of the reality of the unusual or unfamiliar:

. . . all my moral and intellectual being is penetrated by an invincible conviction that whatever falls under the dominion of our senses must be in nature . . . however exceptional . . . The world of the living contains enough marvels and mysteries as it is; marvels and mysteries acting upon our emotions and intelligence in ways so inexplicable that it would almost justify the conception of life as an enchanted state. (JCF 222)

And in his preface to *The Mirror of the Sea* Conrad also says "our world, . . . seems to be mostly composed of riddles" (JCF 184).

To return to the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter the forces within reality that oppose its romantic colouring are "hard facts." "Hard" appears three times in this short passage, and in all it carries both the immediate

connotation of 'cold' and 'concrete' and the extended meaning of 'harsh,' 'difficult,' 'arduous.' The very effort of conciliation, romanticism's attempt to "make the best" of reality, though always "hard" and sometimes impossible, may itself be perceived romantically and transformed into aesthetic discovery. The reconciliation of contingency and necessity, of vitalism and symbolism, of reality and ideal, is the task of the artist alone. Conrad's characters are not so fortunate. With the possible exception of some of his narrators, they rarely understand how the real/romantic conflict is played out within themselves or in others. The only other explicit allusion to this conflict in Conrad's writings is made by one of his minor characters who has become legend among literary creations for his perspicacity and insight. Stein, in Chapter XX of *Lord Jim*, speaks for the majority of Conrad's heroes when he says of Jim "He is romantic" (LJ 199). The tension between romantic idealism which might or might not be interpreted as escapism and the confrontation of reality is central to most of Conrad's works, though it is expressed in different ways, and none so overtly as in *Lord Jim*.

According to Stein, Jim cannot reconcile his romantic-heroic self image to the "destructive element" of nature, the world, and everyday reality. Stein, however, presents the reality of life paradoxically as a dream. "A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea" he says (LJ 200), emphasizing -- as Marlow does in "Heart of Darkness" -- the extraordinariness and 'unreality' or incomprehensibility of existence. Jim cannot "submit" to that 'unreal' reality and make "the deep, deep sea keep [him] up" (LJ 200). Instead he panics at the loss of the romantic self image on which he depended entirely, and is 'drowned' by the reality to which he is innately hostile. Life itself is the "destructive element," and when Stein uses the expression "follow the dream" (LJ 201), he implies both the colloquial meaning of pursuing one's hopes and dreams in life and the meaning conferred by the context -- accepting life as it is, consenting to whatever it imposes, not balking or trying to stave off the inevitable.

The remark that his "romantic feeling" was an "inborn faculty" notwithstanding, Conrad often projects a sense of romanticism as a predominantly cultural phenomenon, much more closely related to the broad artistic and literary movements of the Nineteenth Century, generally labelled 'Romanticism,' than Conrad was prepared to admit when he stated, also in the preface to *Within the Tides*, "I am speaking here of romanticism in relation to life, not of romanticism in relation to imaginative literature . . ." (JCF 211), like Jim's early readings of "light holiday literature" (LJ 47), since the romantics lived in their literature while Conrad did not, and in this distinction he already moves away from the centre of romanticism. Romanticism in life and romanticism in literature, though certainly to some extent distinguishable, refer to the same conventions of taste and sensibilities that increasingly dominated the European cultural scene in the early and mid Nineteenth Century. Volumes have been written in attempts to define that movement, which grew partly out of a revolt against earlier, established cultural orders, such as Neo-classicism, only to become consecrated in turn, and in turn swept aside. It is generally accepted that Conrad stands at a point approximately midway between the romantic and the 'modern,' historically as well as in the content and the form of his works.<sup>6</sup> Conrad makes the distinction between life and literature to emphasize the depth and authenticity of his romantic feeling as opposed to a romanticism of pure imaginary literary convention, whose subjects were "medieval"(but not necessarily romantic) or "sought for in a remote past" (JCF 211) like Scott's *Ivanhoe* and other novels.<sup>7</sup> Thus Conrad chooses one of the most formal and conventional aspects of romanticism in literature to expose the difference between a genuine feeling for the romantic in life and the artifice of literary Romanticism. This is not to say that he saw himself as having been 'born romantic.' Conrad recognized that even as an "inborn faculty" romanticism is still culturally absorbed; but its influence begins from the earliest age and it is developed naturally, by a kind of osmosis, as distinct from a consciously adopted stance or pose. In

writing, Conrad had to take into account his romantic temperament and adopt a conscious attitude towards it. In practically every work that attitude proved to be one neither of acceptance nor of rejection, but of tension.

This tension Conrad passes on to his heroes in the form of conflict and dilemma, and to his narrators in the form of interpretive uncertainty and ambiguity. It is through the lure of romanticism that Conrad most often puts his characters to the test. In setting up the romantic trap for them (and sometimes for his narrators as well), Conrad also appears to be testing himself. Whichever it is, Conrad quickly draws the reader into the field of battle. The reader participates in the escapism of the characters, shares in their disillusionment, and also, sometimes uncomfortably, in the embarrassment of responsibility.

While it will be a major concern of this chapter to point out how and where Conrad allowed his underlying recognition of the cultural origins of romanticism to work its way to the surface of his narratives, another aspect of Conrad's romanticism that falls within the compass of this study is his exoticism. The exotic in Conrad's fiction is not only the attractive camouflage of the romantic lure; it also affects his characters' understanding of other cultures and so provides the strongest link between culture as the refinement of certain faculties and sensibilities and culture as the sociological classification of groups of people according to ethnic, religious, or other affiliations. Romanticism strongly affected the European and Western cultural outlook on the world and on other peoples and places, especially in its preoccupation with the ideal and the exotic.

The sea and lands beyond it were treated in two ways in Romantic literature. One was a continuation of an older tradition, the adventure story, the model of which in English we may take as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. This type of literature lent itself easily to the influences of Romanticism and became favourite form among

the English reading public with the works of Marryat, Stevenson, Kipling and the vast output of popular novelists like Rider Haggard. Several Conrad scholars have referred to his adoption and subversion of the romantic adventure story. Michael P. Jones, in the first chapter of his book, *Conrad's Heroism: A Paradise Lost*, draws attention to the basic pattern of such works that was to reappear in many of Conrad's own.<sup>8</sup> He traces the changes that these works undergo as the century develops. From Scott to Stevenson, Kipling, Dana and from Cooper to Crane, they gradually move away from an affirmation of the conservative social values which the hero at first leaves behind, and to which he is always finally reconciled, towards an increasingly critical evaluation whereby the hero cannot be fully re-integrated into society but remains isolated in his own consciousness, as in the case of Coleridge's returning and isolated traveller in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.<sup>9</sup>

Exoticism also appeared in literature of more serious and aesthetic intent, not merely as a backdrop or setting, and not as a means to challenge and form character, but as a subject in its own right, sometimes symbolic, more often in association with broader concepts or emotions and with the loftier aspirations of Romanticism as a general cultural and artistic movement. Conrad's own romanticism has been compared to Wordsworth's, which many regard as representing the heritage from which Conrad departs.<sup>10</sup> However, as Ian Watt argues, for Conrad the heritage is larger than Wordsworth, larger even than English Romanticism.<sup>11</sup> It is equally closely related to the Romanticism that runs from Byron to Eastlake and evinces the broader European influence, including the revised Russian form of exoticism (a reverse form exoticising the West). Conrad assimilated general modes of thought and feeling that passed through many filters from early Romanticism to most of the later movements that grew out of it. He underwent strong currents of continental influence, among them the idealism of German Romantic literature, the peculiar tension and fusion of real and ideal as an aesthetic concern in French Romantic, Art for Art, and symbolist movements, or the French

Decadents' presentation of world-weariness and distaste for action. These and other influences, by no means self-contained, intermingled in different ways, so that no one author or poet, and no one work, can be held up as a model that Conrad specifically followed or specifically broke with.

#### Reflection, the East and the Sea:

##### "Youth" and "The Shadow-Line"

Some trends of Romanticism, like nostalgia for an ideal past and yearning for the unattainable, were so widespread and so inherent as to be felt equally in all places that came under the Romantic influence and in all closely related movements. Others, like the 'noble savage' myth that originated in an earlier period, and that was given a special sanction and significance by Rousseau and Chateaubriand, recurred intermittently as characteristic 'leitmotifs' of Romanticism. I mention these two aspects in particular because they are among the many Romantic conventions that relate to exoticism and are subverted by Conrad. Still others are the 'sensual orient' myth and the exotic seen as representative of the ideal (that which remains at a distance, beyond the horizon), and as a mirror on the self (the mirror of 'the other'). Already French authors and poets were undermining these conventions in different ways, Flaubert in his irony on Emma Bovary's exotic desires, and more subtly in other works, and Baudelaire in perverting the conventional role of Romantic poetic imagery. Even Loti undermines to some extent the Romantic attraction of the seaman's life and of the Orient in novels like *Ramuntcho* and *Les Desenchantees*. Although Conrad's debt to French authors has been documented from the textual point of view of direct sources and borrowings, his relationship to French Romanticism in general, including later movements from the middle to the end of the century, has yet to be fully explored and acknowledged.

In a 1922 letter Conrad wrote " . . . if my mind took a tinge from anything it was from French romanticism perhaps."<sup>12</sup> It is not my intention here to demonstrate the French Romantic influence on Conrad, but references to French authors will be made more frequently as I indicate some of the ways in which Conrad handles certain aspects of exoticism and certain Romantic conventions.

"Youth" combines the ancient theme of the voyage with the Romantic emphasis on nostalgia and yearning, and this combination hints at another literary tradition adopted whole-heartedly by Romanticism, that of the quest. In "Youth" the quest theme is no more than an intimation, to be taken up and more fully developed in "Heart of Darkness." The young Marlow does not make his voyage with a specific purpose in mind; he is second mate on the *Judea* and travelling comes with his work, but he gives the impression of having gone to sea as a way of seeing the world, and feels that the exotic Orient is waiting for him at the end of this passage: " . . . the East was waiting for me " (YET 18).

In Romanticism, all of the above motifs -- nostalgia, the voyage, the quest, the exotic orient, are related to a preoccupation with the 'ideal,' which was always non-specific, not to be explained, but to be 'felt' as the ultimate goal of yearning and striving<sup>13</sup>. It was an emotional and spiritual end in sight, never in one's grasp, the unattainable destination or impossible feat, the perfect communication of thought and sentiment, whether through love or the creative imagination. All these vague notions included in the 'ideal' were often represented by symbols, of which the most celebrated was the blue flower of Novalis in his lyrical novel, *Heinrich Von Ofterdingen* (1799).<sup>14</sup> Among the early German Romantics like Novalis the 'Ideal' also tended to refer to a magical, even mystical, sense of communion with the universe which was also the 'infinite,' the 'unknown,' the 'incomprehensible.'<sup>15</sup>

The French Romantics, forty years later, continued to use the same kind of vague terminology, but increasingly emphasized mortality or the individual personality's finiteness in the infinity and incomprehensibility of the universe, in the unending creation and destruction of tireless but unconscious nature. The infinite and universal were not necessarily ideal, but were often rendered in such terms as 'gulf,' 'abyss,' and 'void,' and could be offset by religious faith as in the poetry of Hugo, or by the consolation of artistic effort and the value of the aesthetic as in that of Baudelaire.<sup>16</sup> It was with this aesthetic value that the Art for Art's sake, Decadent, and Symbolist heirs of French Romanticism associated the ideal, which continued to be designated symbolically as well as in the abstract. More often, however, a notion or feeling of the ideal was conveyed through groups of symbols or multiple associations that set a mood and built up emotive resonance. Thus in Baudelaire's poem "*L'Idéal*," there is no indication of exactly what that ideal is; instead there is a grouping of possibilities as to what might, and what might not, come close to representing it.<sup>17</sup> By the time of Mallarmé it was a mistake to pin a particular, limited meaning to any one symbol or image in his poetry; in fact the Symbolists, for the most part, consciously avoided specification. The "Ideal" ranges in meaning from a broad, vague, metaphysical sense of completeness and perfection to a more specified aesthetic perfection and complete communication, the ultimate goal of the creative act for the Romantics. Nevertheless, this aesthetic connotation of the "Ideal," though dominant, did not enclose the concept at the expense of its vaguer and more open possibilities.

The outstanding characteristic of the Romantic ideal that remains unchanged throughout the century is that it cannot be linked with anything, "sought for its literal value in the real world."<sup>18</sup> Most often it refers to an emotional yearning of the unfulfilled human spirit, is identified with the dream and contrasted with everyday reality. The real is an accomplice of the unthinking, unfeeling universe or nature. Conrad also views nature as an unconscious force mechanically

creating and producing. When he writes in a letter to Cunninghame Graham of the "Knitting machine," that "knits us in and knits us out,"<sup>19</sup> his words recall the mood and spirit of Baudelaire's poem "*Le Gouffre*," especially its last line: "Ah! Never to break out of Numbers and Beings!"<sup>20</sup> It also resembles the description of the "Universe" in Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* as "all void of Life, of purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility" and as "one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference to grind me limb from limb."<sup>21</sup> The inexplicable treadmill of being into which the individual consciousness is dropped is also the "dream" of which Stein speaks in *Lord Jim*, the dream-like disconnectedness of existence into which falls "a man that is born . . . like a man who falls into the sea." In spite of its nightmarish quality, the awareness of the strangeness of existence gives rise to a "romantic feeling of reality" by keeping the weariness and monotony of everyday life at bay. If growing familiarity with the real world gradually erodes that awareness, new experiences of unfamiliar people and places can help to keep it alive, especially if they can also cast a new light on the familiar. On the other hand, to live in an inner world of illusion and impossibly romantic dreams closed off from the outer dream that is reality is to "drown"; it means the inability to survive. This is what happens to Jim. His ideal of honour is both too romantic and too egocentric to blend with life or the world as it is.

Just as conscious being in the universe could be considered, in Romanticism, both as a nightmarish balancing on the edge of the 'void' and a striving towards the 'infinite ideal,' so the 'dream' in Conrad can refer both to the constant, senseless activity of nature in which the individual consciousness uncomprehendingly finds itself and to the romantic perception of the world that is strongest in the young -- the dream within a dream, or, as Marlow calls it in "Youth," the "heat of life in the handful of dust" (YET 35), a reminder not only of the biblical presentation of man's origins, but also of the events of the narrative -- the fire burning in the cargo of coal -- associated with the heat of romantic expectation that

culminates in a sudden flash or 'explosion' and is gone. Young Marlow's "glow in the heart" is the same "romantic feeling of reality" that, according to the preface to *Within the Tides*, "endows the very shadows of life with an internal glow." It is also, to return to "Youth," "the deceitful feeling that lures us on . . ." (YET 35).

" . . . lures us on . . ." In Romanticism and related movements, travel, especially to the East, came to be associated with the ideal, because it takes the traveller out of himself and beyond the confines of what is known and familiar.<sup>22</sup> Thus Baudelaire alludes to "oriental splendour" as a means of enticement to the voyage.<sup>23</sup> In "Youth" Marlow is remembering and recounting his first voyage to the East, and the exotic Orient appears to be the object, at first, of both the voyage and the story. The reader is led to expect a rich serving of dream-like orientalism, since the narrative is set up to whet the appetite for a climactic scene, an ultimate vision, perhaps of Bangkok where the *Judea* is headed. We expect to be regaled with a youth's first impressions of the Orient because Marlow constantly refers to his youthful dream and desire of seeing it. His opening words are: "Yes, I have seen a little of the Eastern seas; but what I remember best is my first voyage there" (YET 9). At this point we cannot know that the story will focus more on "seas" than on "Eastern," more on "voyage" than on "there."

The younger Marlow romanticises both the voyage and the East, the voyage while it is happening and the East as a future prospect, the object of yearning. The older Marlow romanticises the voyage and his first view -- only one view that he believes to be his first -- of the East, through both the nostalgia of reminiscence and the mystery of the unknown. One looks back, the other forward. The narrative revolves around a man who is two different characters in one, for the narrating Marlow is much more than a narrator, since he is constantly giving the real picture of the past that counterbalances his romantic younger self, and yet creating his own romantic perception of that youth's capacity to colour and mentally transform

prosaic reality. In the words of Torsten Pettersson, "what the mature Marlow misses and invokes is not the good old days as such, but the qualities of mind that endowed his dreary experiences with their glamour."<sup>24</sup>

Such qualities enable the young Marlow to turn a dilapidated old ship into a thing of beauty whose very age and fast-approaching unseaworthiness provide him, in the tradition of the adventure tale, with his first test of skill and courage, his first trial of character and seamanship. Age, the very trait of the *Judea* that makes the crew including captain Beard, who appears almost as old as the ship, worried and anxious, only increases the feeling of glamour and glory for young Marlow to whom the *Judea* was "the endeavour, the test, the trial of life" (YET 16) -- an echo of the name of the ship (*Endeavour*) in which Cook made his voyages of discovery and scientific exploration in the Pacific. In fact the *Judea*, as befits its biblical name, offers Marlow a veritable 'baptism' of fire and water, only in reverse order, when the ship leaks and must be pumped, and when her cargo of coal smoulders and explodes. These are separated by a trial of patience (recalling the Book of Job) when the *Judea* remains for several weeks in dry-dock at Falmouth, a long wait that is "morally . . . worse than pumping for life" (YET 18). Even this cannot dampen Marlow's imagination and enthusiasm since he has his "youth to make [him] patient" (YET 20). Indeed nothing can put out the "fire" of Marlow's youth "more dazzling than the flames of the burning ship" (YET 29). The sudden explosion of the *Judea's* cargo following the long stretches of toil and frustration -- and the paradoxical patience of youth -- mirrors the sudden flash of the romantic dream "that while it is expected is already gone" (YET 39).

"Youth" contains and explains the paradox of "the romantic feeling of reality" as both "good" and "bad," to echo Stein's words ("very bad -- very bad. . . . Very good, too," LJ 202), as a "curse" and an "internal glow," as the "dream" of being and reality in all its strangeness and the "dream" of romantic illusions that can both give

strength and sap it. Exoticism in "Youth" represents the most illusive and deceptive of these illusions. In pure anticipation the future-focused yearning of the inexperienced Marlow confuses the East with the whole life that lies ahead of him, and the most exotic description of the East significantly precedes his actual experience of it (although it is equally significant that the description postdates that experience for Marlow the "narrator").

There was all the East before me, and all life, and the thought that I had been tried in that ship and had come out pretty well. And I thought of men of old who, centuries ago, went that road in ships that sailed no better, to the land of palms, and spices, and yellow sands, and of brown nations ruled by kings more cruel than Nero the Roman, and more splendid than Solomon the Jew. The old bark lumbered on, heavy with her age and the burden of her cargo, while I lived the life of youth in ignorance and hope. (YET 20)

The young Marlow does not have the total innocence of Yanko Gooral in "Amy Foster," but he does have the typical inexperience of youth and its accompanying "ignorance and hope," and only in such a state of mind can romantic illusion proliferate and attain the extremes which threaten to make of it a "curse." The stereotypical exaggerations of the above passage ending with this allusion to ignorance presage the modern, more critical attitude to orientalism (as represented by Edward Said), in its hint of self-critical recollection, with the difference that it remains indulgent.<sup>25</sup> Beneath this indulgence, however, lie more hidden ironies.

Young Marlow sees the East -- like his life -- as "before" him in the future, but its exotic splendour he associates with the past as much as with foreignness. The East appeals to him, not only because it is a land of palms, spices, yellow sands, brown nations and cruel or splendid Kings, but also because that cruelty and splendour are lodged in his own mind and imagination, where they are inextricably bound to the salient figures and episodes of a classical, biblical and mythological

past (like Novalis in his "Christendom or Europe").<sup>26</sup> His ship, his captain and the first mate endear Marlow to them partly because of their age, and because Marlow falsely perceives them as venerable and much closer to that lost romantic past. In spite of the ignorance that comes with his inexperience, the young Marlow has still culturally inherited a selective storehouse of 'knowledge' or traditional attitudes concerning the past of other peoples and places that were 'discovered' or 'conquered' by "men of old . . . centuries ago." It seems, in fact, that Marlow is expecting to find that exotic past romanticized by others before him -- and to which he is adding his own romantic touch -- in the East of the present, of his own personal future, the East towards which he is travelling. He is romanticizing a collectively appropriated past of the Orient just as in later years he will romanticize the youthful imagination of his own past.

The difference is that the older Marlow partly mocks his younger self. He develops an ambiguity of attitude which, in its tension between idealism and critical reappraisal, might be termed ironic if it were not for the atmosphere of genuine embarrassment, weariness, and regret that pervades the narrative: "wasn't that the best time . . . when we were young at sea . . . that only -- what you all regret?" (YET 39) But the tension of the two viewpoints of the older and younger Marlow remains, together with the paradox of the real and romantic dream. Youth, for the older Marlow, burns like a fire, "throwing a magic light on the wide earth" (YET 29). Marlow is hardly aware that he is throwing the same kind of "magic light" on his youth. Thus he has not lost all of that fire and imagination, and especially not the tendency to romanticize; only he sees now what he did not recognize in that most hopeful and energetic period: that his life is bordered on all sides by the unknown or incomprehensible, by the void. The fire of youth was "presently to be quenched by time . . . and like the flames of the burning ship surrounded by an impenetrable night" (YET 29 - 30). In this sense, reality itself resembles a mad dream, especially in its most intense and dramatic moments such as the aftershock of the explosion

when Captain Beard goes about enquiring what happened to the cabin-table: "it was like an absurd dream" (YET 25).

This "absurd dream" of reality is interwoven with the romantic dream. When Marlow arrives in the East he sees it in terms of a dream or vision. The sea itself is "blue like the sea of a dream" and for the rest of his life all the East is "contained in that vision of my youth" (YET 38). However, aside from this description, the only other thoroughly exotic passage in the entire narrative also occurs just before the long boats reach the wharf at dawn, i.e. during a period of anticipation.

We drag at the oars with aching arms, and suddenly a puff of wind, a puff faint and tepid and laden with strange odours of blossoms, of aromatic wood, comes out of the still night -- the first sigh of the East on my face. That I can never forget. It was impalpable and enslaving, like a charm, like a whispered promise of mysterious delight. (YET 35)

Marlow's later experience of the East can only offer something of an anticlimax. As touch is the most intimate of the senses, smell comes closer than sight or sound to physical contact and induces an immediate response, though it is less conceptualized and perhaps for this reason the most potent of the senses as a direct trigger of memories. But even this sense is placed at a distance because the "strange odours" are preceded by "faint and tepid." The faint warning signals of future disillusionment that already appear in these words are further developed in the paragraph immediately following the above quoted passage.

A current rippled softly. The scented obscurity of the shore was grouped into vast masses, a density of colossal clumps of vegetation, probably -- mute and fantastic shapes. And at their foot the semicircle of a beach gleamed faintly, like an illusion. There was not a light,

not a stir, not a sound. The mysterious East  
faced me, perfumed like a flower, silent like  
death, dark like a grave. (YET 35)

The gleam of the beach is referred to as an illusion alongside "obscurity," muteness and a string of negatives ("not a light, not a stir, not a sound"), all pointing to death.

The gradual transformation from the charm of mystery to the silence of death echoes a similar development, observed by Ian Watt, in Conrad's first novel *Almayer's Folly*. Reproducing the much quoted exotic scene of the lovers' parting, Watt points out how "the passage begins like an Oriental travelogue, but soon modulates into something quite different."<sup>27</sup> He is referring especially to the description of "luxuriant vegetation bathed in the warm air charged with strong and harsh perfumes," which is rapidly transformed into "plants . . . interlaced in inextricable confusion, climbing madly and brutally over each other in the terrible silence of a desperate struggle towards the life-giving sunshine above -- as if struck with sudden horror at the seething mass of corruption below, at the death and decay from which they sprang" (AF 60 - 1). This double face does not apply only to nature. The absurd dream of life and reality can be recreated in the mind, perceived anew as romantic enchantment. At the same time, the romantic-exotic dream, like the scenes it romanticizes, carries the seeds of its own destruction. So extravagant is the dream, so great the romantic illusion, that it cannot be sustained, and the "heat of life" that produced the fire of youth and "glow in the heart" now causes it to diminish, so that "with every year [it] grows dim, grows cold, grows small, and expires -- and expires, too soon, too soon -- before life itself" (YET 35). The fire is destroyed by the matter that initially fed it. This movement of thought resembles that of the third quatrain of Shakespeare's sonnet 73 ("That time of year"):

In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the deathbed where on it must expire,  
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.<sup>28</sup>

As the young Marlow draws nearer to the East, the narrative increasingly undermines his idealized picture of it and turns more frequently to a vocabulary of corruption, death and decay, and general disillusionment, though the process is never completed. The first of the above quoted highly colourful and exotic passages on the East as the land of palms and spices is a thought projection into the future based on accumulated impressions culturally received from the past but having no foundation in personal experience. The second, describing the aroma of the East, is Marlow's first encounter with the Orient, but the sense of smell is the least developed and least definable human sense perception. The same aromas also waft in hints of subverting the myth of the exotic Orient, which is "enslaving" and "dark like a grave." They are also "impalpable," still only "a promise" of things to come. But already at this point Marlow has appropriated the East in his mind and considers it from a characteristically Western imperial point of view: "and I sat weary beyond expression, exulting like a conqueror . . ." (YET 35).

The promise of the East appears to approach fulfilment when Marlow is carried from the olfactory to the auditory, "And then, before I could open my lips, the East spoke to me . . ." This time there is no subtle subversion, the volte-face is immediate: "but it was in a Western voice" (YET 36), and the voice pours out a "volley of abuse," and anger in English confused with well nigh incomprehensible curses that might as well be in another language. Other Westerners have 'discovered' and 'conquered' the East, have already transformed and corrupted it. The physical conquest that went before, and that has now joined with the mental appropriation of the East through exoticism on the part of Marlow, proves itself to be a linguistic appropriation as well. The captain of the *Celestial* from Singapore -- not a sailing ship but a steamship -- believing Marlow to be one of the keepers of the red shore light that has gone out, ironically hurls into the darkness a torrent of

words "in a Western voice" that are far from paradisiacal and belong instead to the language of damnation.

Marlow finally moves along the scale of sense perception to focus on the visual. He sees the East in a vision, a fleeting moment in which the ideal and the real seem to come together. Marlow stops at this visual encounter, and does not permit physical contact with the East to take place within his narrative, since it would lead into the period of disillusionment that succeeds youth. The sense of touch is not gratified. Indeed Marlow does not even leave his boat to step upon the Javan shore. And the sight of the colourful crowd on the jetty with its backdrop of beach, mountains and thick vegetation, emerges as the only ideal picture, fixed and unchanging, like Stein's butterflies in *Lord Jim*, frozen in Marlow's mind, but in reality occurring in a flash: "only a moment, a moment of strength, of romance, of glamour -- of youth! . . . A flick of sunshine upon a strange shore, the time to remember, the time for a sigh, and -- goodbye! -- Night -- Goodbye . . .!" (YET 39)

If in "Youth" the encounter with the East does not go beyond the visual, in reminiscence Marlow still offers something of its aftertaste. The constant reference to water, thirst and drinking is closely associated with the almost bitter sense of never having possessed, and never having tasted, the spiced charms and delights that he had envisioned, and perhaps also of having been duped by his own culture's idealizing, exotic perception of the Orient. This is not the case, as in Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn," of the lover that can never kiss "Though winning near the goal."<sup>29</sup> If the vision is fixed in Marlow's mind, Marlow himself must succumb to time and death. And if it is fixed in the tale it is also subverted there.

Towards the end Marlow indicates clearly that he has known or narrowly escaped the other side of the coin, the "stealthy Nemesis" of the East that "lies in wait" and "overtakes so many of the conquering race" (YET 38). Later works identify

some of the snares of that Nemesis, but "Youth" concentrates on the lure of youthful romantic illusion that glows like the red light on the Javan shore towards which Marlow directs his longboat. This romantic glow, like the fire of youth, will not be extinguished, not by a whole sea that pours into a leaking ship, and not by drinking. It will only be "quenched by time." Even after the passing of time, in his later years, Marlow the narrator poignantly clings to the memory of that illusion, creating from it another, more subtle romantic perception of the imaginative powers of his youth. His continued thirst, appearing seven times in the story (e.g. "pass the bottle" YET 14, 16, 18, 23, 25), and the last words of the tale emphasize the lack of fulfilment that comes with such idealistic yearning, even though he now knows it to be an illusion. Nor is he the only one, since his listeners all nod their agreement, and their faces all show signs, despite life's disappointments and growing weariness, of "looking still, looking always, looking anxiously for something out of life, that while it is expected is already gone -- has passed unseen, in a sigh, in a flash -- together with the youth, with the strength, with the romance of illusions" (YET 39). And looking still, their "weary eyes" and "faces marked by toil" are reflected in the *mahogany* table at which they sit, whose "polished surface" resembles a "sheet of brown water" and also reflects the bottle and glasses from which they are drinking. The thematic image of water and thirst is brought together with that of the mirror to close the tale.

Reflection is everywhere. Marlow has been reflecting upon the past, which is now reflected back to him in a look of weariness and deception. He maintains his faith in the sea, however, in the "absurd dream" of reality with its "hard knocks" (YET 39) long after he has lost faith in the exotic East, the romantic dream of illusion. When young Marlow rows towards the Javan shore he is envisioning a certain picture of the Eastern sea, a picture he does not actually see until the next morning, and one that he cherishes both as a projection of his youthful mind and later as an idealized recollection of a moment in the past. "I have the feel of the oar

in my hand, the vision of a scorching blue sea in my eyes" (YET 35). The present tense of this sentence applies both to the young Marlow projecting and to the older Marlow recollecting. What he sees in reality that night is "a wide bay, smooth as glass, and polished like ice, shimmering in the dark" (YET 35). Only in the morning, after the East has spoken to him in a Western voice, does he discover its colour and glitter under the bright sunlight and its sea that is "blue like the sea of a dream" (YET 38). At the end of "Youth" the "polished table" that reflects Marlow's and his listeners' faces "like a still sheet of brown water" recalls not the bright blue of the morning vision, the scene Marlow had originally hoped to see and now chooses to remember, but the intermediary picture of reality, the "shimmering" in darkness of water "smooth as glass and polished like ice."

The table is of *mahogany*. Originating in the Americas, *mahogany* represents those expensive, rare and exotic woods from which, like the South-east Asian teak, furniture is made for export to a wealthy consumer society in the West. It came to be associated with the British Raj in India -- another reminder of conquest and empire, like the ivory dominoes at the beginning of "Heart of Darkness." The *mahogany* table, with its highly polished surface, gives the looks and faces of Marlow and his friends back to themselves, telling all they have done, all that they are. In a sense this only repeats Marlow's own experience of the East, where not only the water shone and reflected like glass on that dark night, but in the morning the people also looked back at him.

And then I saw the men of the East -- they were looking at me. The whole length of the jetty was full of people. I saw brown, bronze, yellow faces, the black eyes, the glitter, the colour of an Eastern crowd. And all these beings stared without a murmur, without a sigh, without movement. They stared down at the boats, at the sleeping men who at night had come to them from the sea. (YET 38)

Again the purely visual. Even the previously accumulated olfactory and auditory experiences are absent because the scene is in fact a vision, and because it is a reflection. What strikes Marlow is that he came to look at the East and the East is looking back at him and the other men in the boats: "The East looked at them without a sound." The 'mirror of the other,' also a favourite thematic image of Romanticism, appears in "Youth" with its romantic value once again undermined. The gaze of the men of the East does not endow Marlow with any magical gift of wisdom and self-knowledge or any reverent sentiment of universal human fellowship. In fact it is meant to carry no special meaning beyond a patient and natural curiosity leading to nothing more. It is not a caring return gaze followed by action, and it indicates an attitude hardly more interested than that of the four Calashes who appear alongside the *Judea* after the explosion. They do not look back at the *Judea*'s crew.

This was my first sight of Malay seamen. I've known them since, but what struck me then was their unconcern: they came alongside, and even the bowman standing up and holding to our main-chains with the boathook did not deign to lift his head for a glance. I thought people who had been blown up deserved more attention. (YET 27)

These are the first Easterners Marlow really sees. But because of their reaction -- or lack of reaction -- Marlow passes over this moment, selecting the sight of the colourful crowd on the jetty as his first sight of an Eastern people because it very nearly conforms to his expectations. The silence and stillness that accompany the final vision and reflection of the East -- the people staring back at the seamen -- is made to appear pregnant with meaning. But in "Youth," as in "Heart of Darkness," Marlow gives himself away. His own silence -- what he passes over -- is really the silence of someone who, in the words of Jacques Darras, "is at a loss for words and does not really know what to say next. The ironic silence -- of the author, not

Marlow -- lies in the deepest recess of the text which deceives both eye and ear. . . . Marlow is not aware that his voice is echoing strangely, that it is not ringing true."<sup>30</sup>

Because Marlow cannot entirely free himself from the need to give a special meaning to the vision of his youth, in spite of having recognized its illusory character, the older Marlow remains very much a romantic. His language catches him out as he casts upon the powers of his youth a romantic glow that resembles all too closely the "magic light" that the young Marlow had thrown upon everything about him. The repeated references to his youth come in periodic interjections that resemble a litany: "O Youth! the strength of it, the faith of it, the imagination of it!" (YET 16) "O Youth!" (YET 23) "O Youth!" (YET 27) "Oh, the glamour of youth! oh, the fire of it . . . (YET 28); "Youth! All youth! The silly, charming, beautiful youth" (YET 33); "Ah! The good old time -- the good old time. Youth and the sea. Glamour and the sea!" (YET 39) The outer narrator can offer the excuse of inebriation for Marlow's sentimentalizing and exclaiming, but the degree of sobriety and perhaps also of maturity that is lacking in the older, narrating Marlow can be measured by a comparison with both the reminiscing voice of *The Mirror of the Sea* and the unnamed, first person narrator of "The Shadow-Line."

Although a mood of nostalgia continues to pervade *The Mirror of the Sea*, and often becomes sentimental, it is treated with the quiet and gentle indulgence of a wiser mind, not the confused and embarrassed mood swings of Marlow in "Youth" from mawkish tenderness and eulogizing to obvious irony and self-judgement. Conrad himself refers to *The Mirror of the Sea* as "autobiographical matter . . . "Youth" style upon the whole only not with the note of youth in it but of the wonderfulness of things, events, people, -- when looked back upon."<sup>31</sup> There are several places where the sea and everything related to the seaman's life are rendered in terms of the most exaggerated romanticism. In this respect *The Mirror of the Sea* is a very uneven piece of work. David Thorburn cites as a prime example of "vapid

romanticizing" a passage describing the "Westerly Wind . . . enthroned upon the Western horizon with the whole North Atlantic as a footstool for his feet and the first twinkling stars making a diadem for his brow."<sup>32</sup> For Thorburn, the passage illustrates the pitfalls of "lush prose" and "the rhetoric of romantic excess" to which Conrad is liable.<sup>33</sup> He contrasts it with a later passage in which romanticism still holds sway but is kept under control. The passage describes a "ship in dock" that resembles "a prisoner meditating upon freedom" whose "chain cables and stout ropes keeps her bound to stone posts at the edge of a paved shore . . ." (MS 140). Here the romanticism is tempered by enough factual information to prevent the metaphor of enchainment from degenerating into pure sentimentalism. Although the reminiscing voice is more natural and rings more true than Marlow's in "Youth," *The Mirror of the Sea* is revealing in bringing together the extremes of Conrad's strengths and weaknesses that, with all their contrast, originate in the same view of the world, the same "romantic feeling of reality."

In "The Shadow-Line," however, the narrator or speaking voice shows signs of a greater maturity than in either of the other two works.<sup>34</sup> Even the younger self that the narrator recalls is older in years and experience than the young Marlow of "Youth." At the beginning of "The Shadow-Line" he has already stepped out of the "enchanted garden," and begun to feel that his good months as first mate on an "excellent" ship, months "so full of new and varied experience," have become no more than "a dreary, prosaic waste of days" because "there was no truth to be got out of them."<sup>35</sup> He has begun to suspect that poetic truth or meaning does not lie hidden within objects or experiences in themselves. His new command takes him to Bangkok, the destination never reached in "Youth," and while the city is described in terms of praise and beauty ("there it was, spread largely on both banks, the Oriental capital which had as yet suffered no white conqueror" -- (SL 47), the young captain hardly notices: "Oblivious of my new surroundings I walked the deck, in anxious, deadened abstractions, a commingling of romantic reverie with a very practical

survey of my qualifications" (SL 48). His romantic reverie does not take up the myth of the Orient, does not reflect itself in an Eastern mirror, but mingles with practical considerations related to his new command. In fact the pre-ship section is taken up by the club and the quite explicitly non-exotic. The older narrator's comments on his youth are not made in a tone of wistful to bitter regret that resounds in the voice of the older Marlow of "Youth." And the litany of exclamation is missing, replaced by a more cautious and controlled appraisal: "Youth is a fine thing, a mighty power -- as long as one does not think of it. I felt I was becoming self-conscious" (SL 55); "I don't know what I expected. Perhaps nothing else than that special intensity of existence which is the quintessence of youthful aspirations" (SL 83).

What the young Marlow of "Youth" regards as the great test and trial of his character and his seamanship, with all the misfortune that befalls the *Judea*, resembles the plot of a boy's romantic adventure tale alongside the experiences endured by the young captain in "The Shadow-Line." Sickness, death, delay and the psychological obstacles that make up the legacy of the previous captain who died, as well as a suspicion of his own incompetence, all combine to provide the "experience" that carries the new commander over "The Shadow-Line," not so much from youth to age as from youth to maturity.

I had my hands full of complications which were most valuable as "experience." People have a great opinion of the advantages of experience. But in that connection experience means always something disagreeable as opposed to the charm and innocence of illusions. (SL 65)

The "disagreeable" events of his first command have none of the dramatic quality of events on board the *Judea* in "Youth." During the calm in the Gulf of Siam the young captain refers in his diary to the day his ship left Bangkok as the day of entry within a shadow: "It seems to me that all my life before that momentous day is infinitely remote, a fading memory of light-hearted youth, something on the other

side of a shadow" (SL 106). Before that time the "truth" he had been seeking without being able to explain "what truth" he meant, may well have been "that special intensity of existence" associated with youth, but the experience of that first command should not be expected to yield up anything of special or intense significance. As Captain Giles tells him after his return to Singapore, "the truth is that one must not make too much of anything in life, good or bad" (SL 131). Indeed the narrator ends his tale with the scene of farewell to Ransome, the loyal crew member who must leave the ship because of his heart defect that stands for the death that each of us carries around. The voyage is over and has been largely successful, but the story closes quietly, on an open-ended note, not with the exclamation and inebriation of the older Marlow in "Youth" where the intervention of a second narrator is required to enable the reader to assess Marlow fully.

There is an insistence on reflection in all three works, as a recurring thematic image in "Youth" through the many reflections in water and in the table, and as an overall, unifying movement of looking back over the past in the other two works where the central thematic image of the sea as a mirror is nonetheless preserved through the title (*The Mirror*) or through the epigraph (as in "The Shadow-Line"). In *The Mirror of the Sea* the sea replaces distant, foreign locales as both the object of exoticizing remembrance and the object of reflection. The exoticism that in "Youth" is shared between the sea and the East shifts entirely over to the sea and the seaman's life. But "The Shadow-Line" almost completely avoids romantic exoticism for the narrator's sober account of his first command and the psychological effects of the new responsibilities and experiences that came with it. Singapore, Bangkok and the South-eastern seas do not figure in this story for their foreignness, mystery or enchantment. With the possible exception of the strange weather and currents in the Gulf of Siam, they are no more than the locations in which the inner drama of the young captain's thoughts and feelings is played out, first when he learns of his command and later when he tries to deal with the

sickness and fever among his crew. From "Youth" through *The Mirror of the Sea* to "The Shadow-Line" the romantic-exotic element subsides, the role of foreign locale changes, and so do the theme of the voyage and the image of the sea as a mirror.

The voyage in Conrad's works is clearly more than a voyage in a particular ship or boat. In "Youth" it is also the passage through that period of life when all events, even misfortune, bounce off the optimistic spirit and appear to be nothing more than a glamorous and romantic adventure. In "The Shadow-Line" it is the passage from youth to maturity, but in both works, as well as *The Mirror of the Sea*, it is also the journey into the past and the attempt to rediscover there certain moments which the act of remembrance, a form of re-creation, endows with special meaning and continuity. Seen in this light the voyage is linked with reflection, and the sea is both physically and figuratively a mirror. Najder points to the contradiction inherent in the opening words of the thirty-eighth chapter of *The Mirror of the Sea*: "Happy he who, like Ulysses, has made an adventurous voyage" (MS 186). Conrad seems to be extolling the voyage of adventure where in fact he is reproducing the famous opening line of a sonnet by the sixteenth century French poet, Du Bellay, a sonnet belonging to a collection entitled "*Les Regrets*," and which goes on to emphasize the happiness of returning home after such a voyage to live among one's family for the rest of one's days.<sup>36</sup> Indeed the theme of all the poems of "*Les Regrets*" is nostalgia for the homeland, a reminder, says Najder, that Conrad had "no home to return to."<sup>37</sup> The Du Bellay poem could not be more contrary in spirit to that of another poem widely read and celebrated in Conrad's time, Tennyson's "Ulysses," in which the ancient hero who has returned home to Ithaca tires of idleness even in his later years and sets out again because 'travel is victory.' Both of these types of the nostalgic and wandering Ulysses figures appear together in Conrad who, having settled in England and given up the life of the sea, nonetheless returns to it in his mind, in his reflections upon the past. The contradiction between the meaning of Du Bellay's opening line and the meaning

Conrad gives it in quoting indicates the superficial quality of happiness he refers to and its relation to wanderlust.

I yet longed for the beginning of my own obscure odyssey, which, as was proper for a modern, should unroll its wonders and terrors . . . The disdainful ocean did not open wide to swallow up my audacity, though the ship, the ridiculous and ancient *galere* of my folly, the old, weary, disenchanted sugar-waggon, seemed extremely disposed to open out and swallow up as much salt water as she could hold. (MS 189, my ellipsis)

In *The Mirror of the Sea* Conrad records how his attitude to the sea changed.

On a calm and sunlit day he was sent in a boat by his captain to rescue the nine haggard survivors on a Swedish brig that was sinking after enduring weeks of stormy weather.

The clatter they made tumbling into the boats had an extraordinarily destructive effect upon the illusion of tragic dignity our self-esteem had thrown over the contests of mankind with the sea. On that exquisite day of gently breathing peace and veiled sunshine perished my romantic love to what men's imagination has proclaimed the most august aspect of Nature. The cynical indifference of the sea to the merits of human suffering and courage, laid bare in this ridiculous, panic-tainted performance extorted from the dire extremity of nine good and honourable seamen, revolted me. I saw the duplicity of the sea's most tender mood . . . In a moment, before we shored off I had looked coolly at the life of my choice. Its illusions were gone . . . (MS 174)

Already I looked with other eyes upon the sea. I knew it capable of betraying the generous ardour of youth as implacably as, indifferent to evil and good, it would have betrayed the basest greed or the noblest heroism. (MS 182)

The emphasis of these passages -- and the entire chapter -- is on the indifference, implacability and "conscienceless temper" (MS 168) of the ocean, of the "true sea" as opposed to the "false" one of boyish dreams. Youth may persist in

seeing there only what it wants to see. Neither romantic love and enthusiasm nor the pathetic fallacy of poetry can be applied to the sea in reality. Just as several Conradian characters are compelled to come to terms with their romantic idealization of exotic foreign locales, so this speaker has been forced by experience to lay aside culturally inherited romantic views of the sea and to live according to its reality, which for Conrad represents and illustrates the reality of life. But in describing a change of attitude to the sea Conrad does not entirely leave literary influence behind. The Romantic conception of the sea, praised or held in awe for its majestic power, had also been undergoing a subtle change, and by the time of Baudelaire the image of the sea has a distinctly dual -- even duplicitous -- symbolic value related not only to its changing moods, but also to its metaphysical implications. In the first place, in both its expanse and its colour, reflecting the sky, the sea is associated with the infinite ideal. On the other hand, its depth and darkness, its unconscious power to envelop and swallow up all life, make of the sea the most perfect representative in nature of the metaphysical abyss or void that surrounds conscious existence.<sup>38</sup> This duality of the sea is coupled with a markedly changed view of its role as a reflector.

That Conrad's epigraph to "The Shadow-Line" comes from Baudelaire's poem "*La Musique*" is no matter of whim, since Conrad must have known that for readers familiar with Baudelaire that epigraph sets the tone of the story they are about to read, relating it to a whole network of notions, feelings and attitudes that were current in late French Romanticism and in Symbolism. The epigraph is quoted from the final two lines of Baudelaire poem:

*D'autres fois, calme plat, grand miroir /  
De mon desespoir. (SL 3)*<sup>39</sup>

Music says the poet, has the same effect on him as the sea, at times swelling his chest like sails and tossing him like a tormented ship upon the waves of passions

and emotions, at others reflecting his own despair in its calm flatness beneath which lies an immense abyss ("*l'immense gouffre*"). Baudelairian despair is always related to the abyss, to the notion of human consciousness hovering on the edge of a bottomless gulf into which it is finally swallowed up through death. This is far from a simplistic image representing death, however; it evokes the whole ontological problem posed for man by his conscious existence in the cosmos as a part of natural, incomprehensible forces and processes. Analogous to this perception of the abyss is Conrad's notion of the "Infinite" (T 119), the "Incomprehensible that hangs over all our heads" (T 118), and the "impenetrable night" that surrounds the bright flames of youth (YET 30). Even passing descriptions in Conrad carry strong overtones of this continental European late-Romantic emphasis. In "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*," for example, the ideal and the abyss come together in a single sentence describing the passage of the lone ship: "Round her the abysses of sky and sea met in an unattainable frontier" (NN 18). The effect on Marlow of his conversation with Stein in chapter 20 of *Lord Jim* is to "open before [him] a vast and uncertain expanse . . . an abyss full of flames . . . a crystalline void" (LJ 201).

In "The Shadow-Line," during the worst night of the calm, the blackness of the sky and the blackness of the sea are merged, appearing to turn "solid," and the "quietness" is "like a foretaste of annihilation" (SL 108). The young captain penetrates "in one stride" the darkness that stands before him "like a wall," resembling "the darkness before creation" (SL 112, 113).<sup>40</sup> "And every form was gone . . . everything was blotted out in the dreadful smoothness of that absolute night" (SL 113). This is no mere physical description of the moment. It is the final "stride" across the shadow-line, the deliberate act of stepping into solitary individual consciousness, into full awareness and acceptance of the metaphysical abyss. It is also the cognitive and emotional underpinning of the captain's ability to cope with all the other harsh experiences of his first command. The quiet kind of courage

needed to penetrate that "absolute night" is identical to the courage required to face squarely up to life and reality, and contains no elements of dramatic heroism.

The captain-narrator in "The Shadow-Line," "had never in [his] life felt more detached from all earthly goings on," in "this stale unprofitable world" of his "rebellious discontent" (SL 19, 8); the impulse behind his reactions is an "obscure feeling of life being but a waste of days," a vague fear of "the menace of emptiness" (SL 22 - 23, cf.7). He is affected by a feeling that everything in life is absurd. This sense of the absurdity of human existence, of nothingness and emptiness as the ultimate reality, which dominates the captain, is opposed by a moral construct exemplified by Ransome, the "consummate seaman" (SL 126). Ransome has learnt (and taught the young captain) the final secret of disciplining the fear of death and the values with which to oppose an awareness of the ultimate absurdity of Being. This moral disintegration and re-integration of nihilism is replaced by stoicism, implying fortitude and endurance in the face of hard facts, an awareness of moral responsibility towards others. This is equated with Ransome's knowledge of the constant physical danger he has to live with. The "hated idea" of parting with Ransome at the end of the story shows the relationship between life and death, "the intimate delicacies of our relation to the dead and to the living, in their countless multitudes" (JCF 223). Ransome's "hard fate" can be due to his faint heart, but what he "consciously" suffers from is not particularly "bad luck." Rather, it is "our common enemy" (SL 132, 133), the presence of death in life, the "deadly enemy" Ransome is carrying within his "faithful breast" (SL 68, 133) that saps his power and risks his being "for some distinct ideal" (SL 126) that magnifies discipline, courage and heroism of seamanship.

This undramatic heroism may even at times appear "uncouth" and lacking in dignity, like the carter's plodding "against the background of the Infinite" in "Amy Foster" (T 119) or like the "ridiculous, panic-tainted performance . . . of nine good

and honourable seamen" in the above quoted passage from *The Mirror of the Sea*. And it may take the form of despair, in which whatever has to be done is performed in a state of hopeless resignation, the state at which the young captain in "The Shadow-Line" has arrived when he penetrates the wall of darkness. At this point the sea is so flat and still that it "might have turned solid" (SL 108). Physically, it cannot reflect anything in the dark, but metaphorically, its blackness represents and mirrors both the cosmic abyss and the related inner despair of the captain. The sea becomes "*le grand miroir de mon desespoir*." The Baudelarian motto "*D'autres fois, calme plat, grand miroir/De mon desespoir*," points out the correlation between the outer and the inner. All throughout "The Shadow-Line" Conrad consistently uses the mirror and reflection.<sup>41</sup> The disturbing mirror of the sea whose terrifying emptiness mirrors the emptiness within, flashing back at the young captain the image of his own despair; the empty immensity mirrors only itself in all directions. The glittering surface of the sea which hurts the eyes and the soul with its implication that death and nothingness are ultimate realities: "the sparkle of the sea filled my eyes"; "The intense loneliness of the sea acted like poison on my brain" (SL 91 - 92).

Mirrors can stimulate or reflect inner conflict and echo what the observer projects onto them. But the pure reflections offer no foundation for the feelings of revelation, rebuke, or reassurance which in Romanticism signify the human spirit touched, and in a sense disciplined, by a reality beyond its own invention. The self-communing young captain in "The Shadow-Line," just aboard his first command, is sitting quietly in the saloon among polished furniture looking at his face in the mirror:

The mahogany table under the skylight shone in the twilight like a dark pool of water. The sideboard, surmounted by a wide looking-glass . . . in the hot half-light sifted through the awning, I saw my own face propped between my hands. And I stared back at myself with the

perfect detachment of distance, rather with curiosity than with any other feeling. . . .

It struck me that this quietly staring man whom I was watching, both as if he were myself and somebody else, was not exactly a lonely figure. (SL 52, 53, my ellipses)<sup>42</sup>

The mirror here reflects the image of self-confidence the young captain is then presenting to himself. He is self-assured of his professional capacity and no inkling signs of the possibly destructive forces dormant in his spirit. The mirror and the "heavy polished" furniture in the saloon of the ship that "gleamed darkly" (SL 7), the gleaming of the interior of the saloon, are likely to reflect order and the strict exigencies of seaman's life which "asserted itself, stronger than the difference of age and station" (SL 33). The captain "discovered how much of a seaman [he] was, in heart, in mind, and, as it were, physically -- a man exclusively of sea and ships; the sea the only world that counted, and the ships the test of manliness, of temperament, of courage and fidelity -- and of love" (SL 40).

While the "still void" (SL 73) the captain later meets on deck strikes fear and terror into his soul and at the same time, paradoxically, holds him "spellbound" (SL 40) to his first command. This mirror also reflects the self-knowledge the young captain is achieving; flashes back a different picture from the one reflected by the mirror in the saloon. As utter stillness and immobilization are imposed upon him by the external situation, he turns his attention inwards, exploring the limits of his existence. The search after the inmost self can be motivated by the similar irresistible compulsion that describes the young captain in "The Secret Sharer." <sup>43</sup>

Like the sea itself, the life of the sea reflects faithfully things as they are. It continues to exert a fascination over those engaged with it, but also quickly cures them of any excess of romantic colouring. According to Richard Curle, Conrad ached to be freed of "that infernal tail of ships," declaring "I do wish all those ships of mine were given a rest."<sup>44</sup> But what Conrad really wanted to lay to rest were the

exclusively romantic-exotic interpretations of his sea settings, as of his foreign locales. In 1908 he wrote "I have always tried to counteract the danger of precise classification, either in the realm of exoticism or of the sea."<sup>45</sup> Like his foreign settings, the sea in Conrad's works punishes excess of exoticism, offering only the reality of existence and reflecting only the reality of human nature. The romantic-exotic appeal of the sea is simultaneously exerted and subverted, as demonstrated in "Youth."

In a letter concerning "The Shadow-Line" Conrad made the more general remark that he had "not been very well understood."

I have been called a writer of the sea, of the tropics, a descriptive writer, a romantic writer -- and also a realist. But as a matter of fact all my concern has been with the "ideal" value of things, events and people. That and nothing else. . . . Whatever dramatic and narrative gifts I may have are always, instinctively, used with that object -- to get at, to bring forth '*Les valeurs ideales*.'<sup>46</sup>

While these "ideal values" cannot be equated specifically with the Romantic convention of the Ideal as introduced by Novalis, it nevertheless derives from Romantic idealism in general and relates to the romantic perception of the essence or inner worth of things, their "internal glow." Conrad's process of idealization is to move from the inner world to the values of the outer world, to be in close touch with a postulated audience and its values. "*Les Valeurs ideales*" emerge as moral postulates rather than rigidly held certitudes. They often appear in the commentary of a dramatized first-person narrator like Marlow, who explores and asserts their validity. In the light of them characters are tested when confronted with the contradictory, the destructive, the inescapable, and the irreconcilable facts about life. On the other hand Conrad is ambivalent about the need to idealize, especially when it leads to idealism, whether that of the romantic dreamer that is Jim in *Lord Jim* or Charles Gould's falsely pragmatic idealism concerning material interests in

*Nostromo*, or yet the over-reaching and debilitating aspirations of Decoud that consequently fall prey to scepticism. With all its destructive potential, idealization is nevertheless repeatedly represented by Conrad as unavoidable, even a natural and necessary part of human life. The people's idealization of *Nostromo* is the collective manifestation of this need. Then there is the personal ideal of self as expressed in "The Secret Sharer," and the need to be "faithful to that ideal" you set up for yourself "secretly" (TLS 83). The captain-narrator in "The Secret Sharer," organizes the rescue because it is to him "a matter of conscience," a part of his personal secret ideal image of himself.

Like Conrad's exotic locales, the sea has the same dual and paradoxical quality as the "dream" of existence. Its very reality carries an appeal of wonder and unfamiliarity, while its power and indifference provide the "hard knocks" that reconcile an overly romantic nature to the real world. Even in sunshine the sea's "most tender mood" disguises its indifference. But the sea also reflects the human gaze, or, as Baudelaire has it in another poem, "*l'homme et la mer*," mirrors the bitter and unfathomable depths of man's soul.<sup>47</sup> If in "Youth" Marlow has difficulty accepting the indifferent return gaze of the men of the East, and selectively composes a 'mirror of the other' that will minimize that indifference, the reminiscing voice in *The Mirror of the Sea* and the narrator of "The Shadow-Line" find themselves and their lives reflected not as they wish, but as they are.

This is not to say that "The Shadow-Line" as a work of fiction is devoid of romanticism. A mildly nostalgic mood of reminiscence still invests the narrative, but it remains subdued and gains in authenticity through moderation. Conrad's preface indicates that some of his early readers interpreted the former Captain's diabolical character, his death in latitude 8<sup>0</sup> 20 and Burns' superstitious fear of that region as an example of overblown romantic supernaturalism. It is precisely in disputing that interpretation that Conrad makes his statement about having no need for the

supernatural in his works because there are enough "marvels and mysteries" in the world as it is. He is interested only in the psychological reactions of his characters to events that testify to the incomprehensible in nature and existence and cause a severe "mental or moral shock" (JCF 222). In *Burns* these reactions are heightened by fever. In the same preface Conrad goes so far as to comment that if he turned to the supernatural, his work would lose its conviction and its worth: "If I attempted to put the strain of the supernatural on it it would fail deplorably and exhibit an unlovely gap"(JCF 222). Conrad may well have been speaking from experience, since one work in *Within the Tides*, published only two years before "The Shadow-Line," suffers in just such a way.

#### Conrad's romantic excess

"The Inn of the two Witches" illustrates perfectly how a work can fail when Conrad's romanticism is completely unrestrained.<sup>48</sup> The story is indeed 'strained' by an uncharacteristic overdose (even for Conrad) of exoticism combined with supernaturalism. In tone and mood Conrad departs in places from the adventure story and moves into the realm of the fairy tale. The result is an unsuccessful melange of different approaches and atmospheres. The problem becomes apparent even in a brief summary of the plot. In 1813 Byrne, an officer on a small British warship off the coast of Spain, goes in search of his old friend and mentor, the sailor Tom Corbin, who had been sent the previous day on a mission into the mountains (the purpose of which remains vague). Stopping for the night at an old mountain inn, Byrne narrowly escapes Tom's fate in the four-poster bed whose canopy descends during the night and crushes the sleeper to death. The Spaniards in the story are uninspiring Latin stereotypes, and literary conventions pertaining to the

supernatural are heaped together throughout, as in the frequent allusions to the devil or "Evil One," the darkness of the night, and the desolateness of the landscape. The inn that is kept by two old hags resembles a haunted house and a witch's hovel combined, just as the entire narrative is an absurd medley of adventure tale, fairy tale and ghost story, and ultimately an unwitting parody of itself.<sup>49</sup>

Many of Conrad's works that combine romantic adventure and exotic idealism do not achieve the degree of conviction that was his aim. It is generally agreed that *Nostromo* and *The Arrow of Gold*, for example, stand at opposite ends of the scale of literary accomplishment. Conrad calls *Nostromo* a "romantic mouthpiece of the people" (discussed in chapter two above), and a strong dose of the romantic/exotic colours some of the early scenes that dramatize *Nostromo's* Latin temperament, his machismo and vanity, and his repute among the people. The perfect illustration is the incident outside the dance-hall when *Nostromo*, dressed "with more finished splendour than any well-to-do 'ranchero' of the Campo" (N 131), allows a young woman who is in love with him to cut off all the silver buttons of his jacket rather than be shamed before the onlookers for not bringing her a gift (N 133 - 135). For all the romantic/exotic extravagance of *Nostromo's* character, it is made so vivid by the surrounding wealth of concrete detail that it can still give the impression of being grounded in a specific socio-political reality. The roles of the many characters, the psychological complexity of their relations with each other and with the political developments, and the thorough organization of different aspects subtly interwoven, all contribute to the novel's conviction. In contrast, *The Arrow of Gold* is dotted with stilted, wooden characters who remain largely underdeveloped, some of them appearing accidental or even extraneous to the central plot and themes because they are ill-defined and inappropriate. The background political events are only half explained and seem unnecessarily vague and mysterious. The love interest, so rarely a convincing theme with Conrad, dominates the novel with its atmosphere of embarrassed reticence, and there is no compensation of concrete

detail in other aspects of the work. Two or three minor characters are more convincingly portrayed than the central ones, especially Dominic, who owns the boat involved in gunrunning for the Spanish. Like Nostromo, he is based on a real acquaintance of Conrad during his years in Marseilles. The original of these characters, Dominic Cervoni, is also portrayed in *The Mirror of The Sea*.<sup>50</sup>

Of interest as a borderline story between failure and achievement because of its heady combination of romantic adventure and exotic idealism is "Freya of the Seven Isles" in which Conrad's own struggles with his tendency towards romantic exaggeration appear to be represented in the characters and their conflicts. Freya's optimistic spirit and earthy energy, her romantic hopes tempered with a sensible, practical attitude to life, find themselves under constant strain, and are worn down and destroyed by the other characters' traits of possessiveness, jealousy, anger (her father and Heemskirk) or romantic extravagance of outlook (Jasper Allen). Baines believes that Conrad's comment on "The Planter of Malata" that the "life long embrace" of Felicia and Geoffrey would not have been "credible" may be equally applied to Freya. "What," says Baines, "would the life long embrace of Freya and Jasper Allen have been like? To Conrad it was inconceivable that a Freya should become a housewife. One did not marry such people; one married Jessies."<sup>51</sup> However, the fault of the story does not lie with Freya, but with the extremes of the other characters and the events. Old Nielsen's grief stricken reiteration that she was "such a sensible girl" (TLS 202) is more than an ironic reversal of the tragedy upon himself, who was far less sensible than his daughter. It also announces the loss of that influence on Conrad's work, just as the excess surrounding Freya finally overpowers her. Baines points out, and with reason, that for Conrad the confrontation between romance and reality leads inevitably to tragedy. However, tragedy is not melodrama and the melodramatic denouement, with its mood of romantic despair, especially in the effects of the events on Jasper and the

exhaustion, illness and death of Freya, also illustrates the surrender of the Conradian will to an overblown romanticism in the pseudo-tragic vein.

It is sometimes difficult, however, to distinguish between Conrad's extreme romanticism, allowed to play itself out in uncontrolled melodrama, and extreme romanticism in his characters, whose behaviour offers insights beyond romanticism for its own sake. Another ending held to be romantic in the extreme and a weakness of the work in which it occurs is Geoffrey Renouard's suicide by drowning in "The Planter of Malata" (discussed in chapter three above). Although suicide seems an inevitable outcome of Renouard's own character as affected by the other developments, it is rendered in terms of formal poeticism that cut it off from the rest of the story: "For to whom could it have occurred that a man would set out calmly to swim beyond the confines of life -- with a steady stroke -- his eyes fixed on a star?" (WT 115) In this respect the ending closely resembles that of a well known French Romantic novel, Victor Hugo's *Les Travailleurs de la mer*, in which Gilliat, the hero, finally sits upon a rock waiting for the tide to come in and drown him after the heroine has departed with her beloved in a steamship. Baines notes the probable influence on Conrad's childhood of this work translated into Polish by his father, Apollo. In *A Personal Record* Conrad remembers being asked to read the proofs of his father's translation.<sup>52</sup> Baines also remarks that "both father and son . . . would have seen . . . in the portrait of Gilliat's position, in isolation amid a hostile society, a reflexion of their own fate."<sup>53</sup> The ending of that novel, also criticized for its romantic unreality, no longer belongs to the realm of prose, but is transformed for Hugo into a formal poetic statement of representation of the hero's mental and metaphysical state. In both works the 'real' events are no longer important as such. These endings are meant to concede their value as narrative to their function as stylized final statements of a particular view on life and the world.

In Geoffrey Renouard, as in other Conradian characters like Axel Heyst, are to be found the self absorption, unnaturalness, and morbidity associated with the post Romantic Decadent movement -- a deliberate and complete saturation in some of the most extreme aspects of combined romanticism and aestheticism. What the captain/narrator in "A Smile of Fortune" calls "seeking the unknown in our sensations," which always concludes in defeat and a rediscovery of the "mediocre" (TLS 71), translates in "The Planter of Malata" into Renouard's attempt to make of Felicia Moorsom an extraordinary discovery and a new experience. To render his sensation at his first sight of her, "startling like the discovery of a new faculty in himself" (WT 15), he turns to extreme imagery and extravagant description. The expression of her eyes, for example, is "a shadowy mysterious play of jet and silver, stirring under the red coppery gold of the hair as though she had been a being made of ivory and precious metals changed into living tissue" (WT 13). But in their very excess, the dazzling colours, the flashing brilliance of gems and polished metal, the general movement towards the unnatural, the exotic and the new, are in themselves cultivated and far - from - new conventions of Romantic Decadence. And Decadence is the final, self-conscious step in the complete realization, that there is nothing new and that the romantic/exotic lure, like art itself, is a cultural phenomenon, an artificial state entirely created by the human mind.

This recognition is not brought immediately before the reader, but is communicated through descriptions like the above that imply the artificial nature of the whole relationship between the two main characters and build up a vague sense of puzzlement and discomfort in the reader before the emptiness of so many exaggerated and contrived romantic images. Conrad's comment in the preface to *Within the Tides* that he had destroyed by too much explicitness the "characteristic illusory glamour" (JCF 212) of Geoffrey and Felicia makes it clear that to create "illusory" characters was indeed his intention. With all their differences, in this respect Geoffrey and Felicia are no more than reflections of each other. Their

illusory quality redoubles every time they attempt to relate or interact, the surface image bouncing back and creating more unreal reflections, further distance.

Decadence is an experience opposed to the idea of progress. It is a reproach and a condemnation for the literary purist. The literature of decadence, exuding decay, is superficially preoccupied with the exotic and the erotic. The decadent hero is a kind of pervert, portrayed in boredom, melancholy, disillusion, and the decadent writer, by consensus, is obsessed with the strange and the inconsequential, and the fear that Western civilization is fast drawing to an end because of man's moral, social, political, and religious decay.<sup>54</sup>

The literary Decadent movement is a form of art for art's sake. The artist turns to art because he abhors his wretched society, vulgarity and ugliness. He is a slave of convenience, luxury, sensuality, and pleasure that lies in his sensitive and artistic ordering of life. *L'art pour l'art* has a fundamental tenet that art is quite useless: non-functional. It serves no utilitarian or social purpose. The aesthete's frustration with modern life and his despair in failing to come to grips with it, compels him to turn to art as his succour, his religion, and his salvation. The decadent aesthete is apart from his immediate predecessor, the romantic who is a grandiose rebel, poet-prophet, seeker, but never an aesthete.<sup>55</sup>

The notion of "decadence," says Nietzsche, is "Decay, decline, and waste, are, per se, in no way open to objection; they are the natural consequences of life and vital growth. . . . decadence is just as necessary to life as advance or progress is: we are not in a position which enables us to suppress it," and it is not "a thing that can be withstood: it is absolutely necessary and is proper to all ages and all peoples."<sup>56</sup> Progress, in so far as it involves luxury, necessarily brings decadence in its train. Baudelaire follows, almost, in the same line of Nietzsche's thought about decadence. "The phrase *decadent* literature," says Baudelaire, "implies that there is a scale of

literatures, an infantile, a childish, an adolescent, etc. This term, in other words, assumes something fatal and providential, like an ineluctable decree; and it is altogether unfair to reproach us for fulfilling the mysterious law. . . . it is shameful to obey this law with pleasure and that we are guilty to rejoice in our destiny . . ."

"But what the narrow-minded professors have not realized is that, in the movement of life, some complication, some combination may appear, quite unforeseen by their schoolboy wisdom. And then their inadequate language fails, as in the case -- a phenomenon which perhaps will increase with variants -- where a nation begins with decadence and thus starts where others end."<sup>57</sup> Baudelaire views decadent literature as an imposition upon human affairs, an order derived from the natural process of birth, growth, and decay. He undermines the "mysterious law" of nature and its ordinary moral and social implications and dismisses the idea that natural law embodies an ideal for human aspirations or grounds for "reproach." If decay is the law of history as well as nature, why blame the decadent for accomplishing the natural destiny of culture? Baudelaire turns the making of symbols from nature into one of the pleasures of decadent culture rather than a summons away from culture to natural and divine allegiances.<sup>58</sup>

The idea of decadence is apparent in Conrad's letter of 14 January, 1898 to Cunninghame Graham: "The fate of a humanity condemned ultimately to perish from cold is not worth troubling about. If you take it to heart it becomes an unendurable tragedy. If you believe in improvement you must weep, for the attained perfection must end in cold, darkness and silence. In a dispassionate view the ardour for reform, improvement, for virtue, for knowledge and even for beauty is only a vain sticking up for appearances."<sup>59</sup> Like Nietzsche and Baudelaire, Conrad laments and complains of the dying sun, of decay, of want of hope and lack of improvement that sap the vitality of virtue, knowledge, beauty. But his main concern is more cosmic than seasonal. The end is tragic for all mankind who "do

not know life" and do not "know even [their] own thoughts"; impending doom and final decay are fated for this world. He speaks here of the universality of fear, of a "residue of egoism [that] remains in every affection"<sup>60</sup> and of the innate falseness of "man[']s heart" (OI 130). The fact that man is a stranger to himself and his world underlies comments upon the "weakness that may lie hidden, watched or unwatched, prayed against or manfully scorned, repressed or may be ignored more than half a lifetime, not one of us is safe" (LJ 74) and upon the fact that "every age is fed on illusions, lest men should renounce life early and the human race come to an end" (V 89).

#### Reflection doubled: "The Secret Sharer"

Reflection dominates another short story of Conrad in a more obvious but even more complex way. In "The Secret Sharer" it is the resemblance of two characters that stands out at first and their distinction that struggles to gain ascendancy. Even this work, which Guerard considers (together with "The Shadow-Line") to be the model of Conrad's "plain and pure" style,<sup>61</sup> and therefore the furthest removed from the romantically exotic and elaborate style of earlier works, is constructed around a favourite Romantic convention. The story contains nothing of cross-cultural interaction, at least not in the customary sense, but the romantic conventions that in many other works Conrad applies to intercultural situations are assigned in this case to circumstances that might be considered the reverse: a meeting of two men so alike that they appear to be reflections of each other, although the resemblance is largely superficial. Reflection is the central thematic image of this story, and through it the 'mirror of the other' continues to come into play, but is combined with another literary convention predominant in Romanticism

-- that of the double. The double has been closely associated with Romanticism from the time of the early German Romantics who used it heavily in their works, and has continued to prevail in later movements that grew out of Romanticism.<sup>62</sup>

A young ship's captain, new to his command, gives asylum to Leggatt, the mate escaped from the ship *Sephora* after killing a crew member. Both ships are anchored within sight of each other in the Gulf of Siam. Although the captain relates the story in the first person, his own name and that of his ship are not given. He hides Leggatt in his cabin for several days and reveals nothing to the captain of the *Sephora* who comes to make enquiries about the fugitive. Finally, he risks the safety of his own ship and crew by sailing extremely close to an island during the night so as to give Leggatt the opportunity to slip overboard and swim ashore. Unlike Geoffrey Renouard swimming out into the night at the end of "The Planter of Malata" and heading "beyond the confines of life -- with a steady stroke" and "his eyes fixed on a star" (WT 115), Leggatt is portrayed as "a free man, a proud swimmer striking out for a new destiny" (TLS 124).

When the young captain first finds Leggatt clinging to the ship's ladder he is naturally surprised, but although he refers to this night visitor hiding in the water as resembling a "headless corpse" shining with a "greenish cadaverous glow," at this point he does not call Leggatt a stranger. In fact, within a page of the initial discovery, he is already describing Leggatt as his double, a phenomenon rendered more intriguing by the captain-narrator's previous allusion to his own "strangeness" with respect to his ship and crew that extended to a feeling of being a stranger to himself: "my position was that of the only stranger on board"; "what I felt most was my being a stranger to the ship"; "if all the truth must be told, I was somewhat of a stranger to myself" (TLS 83 - 6). As a first-time captain, he wonders if he will turn out to be "faithful to that ideal conception of one's own personality every man sets up for himself secretly" (TLS 83). Being strangers on board turns out to be one of

the links and resemblances between the captain and his visitor, as he implies in a later description: "we, the two strangers in the ship, faced each other in identical attitudes" (TLS 97); "our eyes met -- the eyes of the only two strangers on board" (TLS 109).

The constant references to "my double" (TLS 88, 89, 122), "ghost" (TLS 91), "other self" (TLS 93, 97), "secret self" (TLS 100) and "second self" (TLS 124) are reinforced by images of reflection: "It was, in the night, as though I had been faced by my own reflection in the depths of a sombre and immense mirror" (TLS 89); "I was constantly watching myself, my secret self, as dependent on my actions as my own personality" (TLS 100). This effect of reflection suggesting identity increases when the captain gives Leggatt his second sleeping suit, so that in spite of different physiques the same clothing gives them the appearance even of physical resemblance. Leggatt takes on the role held by the sea in many other works where it reflects the reality of life and the world and of the seaman's natures. A reminder of the sea as a mirror and its connection with Leggatt appears in his description of his swim after leaping from the *Sephora*. Besides the metaphysical loneliness and incomprehensibility implied by his comparing the sea to "a thousand-feet deep cistern with no place for scrambling out anywhere," Leggatt says that "The water was like glass" (TLS 96), thus again linking reflection with the abyss.

As with the 'mirror of the other,' the double or self reflection that the captain sees in Leggatt brings both a deeper knowledge of himself and the capacity ultimately to act with courage and to come through the crisis imposed by his night visitor from the sea. He is to learn more about the unconscious side of his personality, the man lurking beneath the ego and always threatening to escape control. When Leggatt returns to the sea the captain "has shared," to use Morton Zabel's words, "the secret of the guilt all men carry behind their pride and courage."<sup>63</sup> The captain hardly welcomes at first this kind of self knowledge

bringing full awareness of his weaknesses and the possible consequences of giving into them. From the beginning he senses that in his double he will find some of the negative aspects of his own character. For all the uncanny feeling of conferring with his own reflection, strengthened by the discovery that Leggatt is "a Conway boy" like himself (TLS 89), the captain-narrator is desperately keen to emphasize the difference between them, as if afraid of resembling the other too closely: "He was not a bit like me, really" (TLS 93). This is a surprising admission from the narrator, considering his previous and emphatic reintegration that Leggatt is his double. His antics with the mate and helmsman suggest confrontation with his alter ego which shocks his soul to its very depth; "If he [the captain of the *Sephora*] had only known how afraid I was of his putting my feeling of identity with the other to the test!" (TLS 105) The same spirit that in other works leads Conrad to evoke fellowship and identify with other people including those of foreign cultures (as with Lingard in *The Rescue*) here leads to the same motion in reverse -- a struggle to establish a separate individual identity and distinguish it from that of a person of frighteningly similar background who does not appear different enough. The convention of the 'mirror of the other' serves not to draw together people of different cultural origins but to establish a distinction between those whose common cultural heritage even has them graduating from the same institution. While the formal emphasis of the story appears to be on 'mirror,' the narrator makes sure to insist on 'other' as the reality underlying the appearance. This attitude ties in with the captain's earlier expressed fear of not living up to his ideal self, and confirms the view of Leggatt as both the unfortunate and the transgressive alter ego. Albert Guerard believes that the story "reflects insecurity and a consequent compulsion to test the self," and relates it in this regard to the *Patna* incident in *Lord Jim*.<sup>64</sup>

Another quite different type of reversal in "The Secret Sharer" has been noted by Cedric Watts. This concerns the nature of reflection. Mirroring is not merely the exact repetition of aspects of the narrator's self, but occurs in the same

kind of reverse image form that would take place in an actual mirror, offering a "symmetrical contrary" that "reverses relationships on a horizontal axis."<sup>65</sup> Thus while Leggatt killed a man to avoid shipwreck, the captain-narrator risks shipwreck to save a man, Leggatt; and while Leggatt, as first mate of the *Sephora*, had acted fearlessly and his captain had been fearful, the narrator-captain acts boldly to set him free and his own first mate is fearful. Watts regards this kind of reverse reflection in the tale as an aspect of the "janiformity" to be found in many of Conrad's works.<sup>66</sup>

This janiformity is well suited to a work that in other respects, too, pulls in opposite directions, as in the need to draw attention to the otherness of the narrator's apparent double. Leggatt may be, superficially, a cultural clone of the narrator, but his innermost self is different, and the narrator fears being identified with him. At the same time he sympathizes with Leggatt's predicament and does everything in his power to assist him for the very reason that he recognizes something of himself in the other man. The captain also admires aspects of Leggatt's character, especially his courage and spirit of adventure balanced by a realistic attitude to his situation. When Leggatt suggests that he be "marooned" on one of the nearby islands and the narrator protests that "we are not living in a boy's adventure tale," Leggatt counteracts with scorn: "We aren't indeed! There's nothing of a boy's tale in this" (TLS 114). This remark recalls Attwater's bland contempt for Davis, the loafer and captain of the stolen schooner *Farallone*, in Stevenson's *The Ebb-Tide*, "you seem to me to be a very twopenny pirate!"<sup>67</sup> Leggatt goes on to explain that he does not fear prison or the gallows, but despises the mockery of a trial in which "twelve respectable tradesmen" would be in a position to judge something they could not understand. "As long as I know that you understand," says Leggatt. "It's a great satisfaction to have got somebody to understand" (TLS 115). The captain's 'understanding' will even extend to a failure to perceive the irony of risking his ship and crew for one man, or the irony of Leggatt's stepping beyond

the bounds of solidarity by killing an insubordinate crew member for doing the same. Even though the captain is aware that his own professional honour is at stake and would like to believe in a profound moral distinction between himself and Leggatt, he makes no direct statement of certainty as to how he would have acted in circumstances similar to Leggatt's on the *Sephora*.

Perhaps Conrad finally achieves in communicating here something he has been striving for in earlier works like *Lord Jim* and as recently as *Under Western Eyes*: that the demarcation between heroism and shame, courage and guilt, loyalty and betrayal, is not always so clear as we wish to think and depends very much on our own attitude. Stephen Land points out the contrasting reactions of Razumov to Haldin's crime and of the captain to Leggatt's. He describes Leggatt as "closest to Haldin, his immediate predecessor, in that the crime for which he is pursued is murder, but a murder committed under mitigating circumstances of which the hero is asked to take cognisance." He is also "the sacrificial male of the political novels, except that in this short story, because of the hero's strength of character, the sacrifice is avoided, and Leggatt is allowed to make good his escape."<sup>68</sup>

"The Secret Sharer" makes clear, however, that strength of character is not synonymous with innocence. The captain gains some of his strength of character from Leggatt himself. What influences and convinces the captain is not Leggatt's story, but his self possession: "the voice was calm and resolute. . . . The self-possession of that man had somehow induced a corresponding state in myself" (TLS 87); "when at last he opened his eyes [from sleep] it was in the full possession of his senses" (TLS 100);<sup>69</sup> " 'I never thought of that,' I whispered back . . . marvelling at that something unyielding in his character which was carrying him through so finely" (TLS 114). This quality in Leggatt as well as a strong sense of a shared cultural identity and the shared seaman's life, incomprehensible in many ways to land people, leads the captain to grant Leggatt his wish for a chance to begin anew.

Thus 'understandable' reasons are given in the story for Leggatt's 'marooning,' and the romantic element of this event that would otherwise indeed resemble a boy's island adventure tale, is disguised behind considerations of a psychologically realistic nature, bringing conviction to the entire story. Leggatt's second escape at the end of "The Secret Sharer" is very far removed from the romantic escapism that ironically besets Jim's efforts to face up to himself by taking on challenge after challenge in a bid for personal heroism. Leggatt is not the romantic that Jim is, and when he swims off into the darkness he is returning to "the destructive element" of which Stein speaks in *Lord Jim* -- a "proud swimmer" who, in spite of his crime, knows at least how to make "the deep, deep sea keep [him] up."

#### The 'noble savage'

A brief mention was made at the beginning of this chapter of another literary convention beloved of Romanticism, and taken up and subverted in some way by Conrad: that of the 'noble savage.' Conrad's treatment of this Romantic myth explains some of the ambiguities in his attitude to race (discussed in the second chapter above). It also relates to exoticism and to other, more general aspects of the cultural question in his work. The modern attitude to this convention in literature and the arts is that it patronises native peoples and that its praise of the simple, 'natural' ways of life is condescending and paternalistic. The 'noble savage' theme in literature perpetuates the attitude that 'primitive' people are simple children who live in greater honesty and dignity because they have not attained the same level of development and sophistication. The paternalism inherent in this attitude goes hand in hand with colonialism. However, when it was widely disseminated by Rousseau and the early Romantics it was perceived as a reaction to earlier prevailing beliefs, as put forward by Hobbes, that man is naturally selfish and 'savage,' and

only civilization can improve him. Modern Western society has had to find ways of coming to terms with what appeared to be an awkward dilemma arising, on the one hand, from the moral reprehensibility of imposing its 'civilization' and cultural mores both on its own provincials and on native peoples of other cultures, and, on the other hand, from the moral irresponsibility of 'letting them sleep' by withholding information, knowledge, and the opportunities to experience a wider world. While Conrad may at times appear to be returning to the Hobbesian view in presenting characters who 'go native' or 'revert' to their primitive selfishness and chaos when isolated from their communities, his point of view is in fact more complex and not easily classified under any one theory. "An Outpost of Progress" gives every impression of upholding the Hobbesian view.<sup>70</sup> But the title of "An Outpost" is ironical not merely because the situation turns out to be one of 'regress' for the two main characters, but because it throws doubt on the validity of the very notion of 'progress.' For the most part the story represents civilization as little more than a false disguise or, at best, a set of props.

The Romantic myth of the noble savage, conceived in protest against the hypocrisy of civilization, later came under fire for its idealizing, exoticizing and patronising viewpoint, and whether Conrad used the convention consciously or not, the way it is handled in several of his works indicates the growing complexity of the contemporary dilemma concerning attitude to, and meaning of, 'native,' 'savage,' 'civilization,' 'progress.' . . . In Conrad's short stories the noble savage myth follows a chronological development from characteristically romantic and exotic, and highly conventional, to what might be termed a subversion of a subversion.

In both "The Lagoon" and "Karain" the description of the 'noble savage' adheres so well to the literary models of this type, and the native Malay's language and behaviour is of such exaggerated simplicity and noble dignity that the stories parody the entire 'noble savage' myth; but at this point Conrad appears to be

perfectly serious, and it is not surprising that on these two stories Max Beerbohm based his own parody of Conrad in *A Christmas Garland*.<sup>71</sup> Although Arsat in "The Lagoon" is far from innocent, his 'crime' makes no difference to his presentation as a character. Arsat is still the honest, self-respecting but simple native, full of pride and dignity as well as remorse. This portrayal of Arsat is reinforced by the description of the Malay canoers' attitude to "the white man," who is unnamed, as if representing his race. They regard the sophistication of white men as a corrupting influence, and their view of the "unbelievers . . . in league with the Father of Evil" (TU 173) might have been convincing were it not for the highly artificial poeticism and contrived simplicity supposed to reflect the native mind. Not only this passage of indirect discourse, but the whole story, whether description or dialogue, is composed in this style.

If Karain is more complex than Arsat, his character is no less steeped in this type of portrayal, which detracts from the value of the help he receives from his white friends by making his acceptance of Hollis's jubilee six-pence appear to derive from childish credulity rather than from cultural difference. It also contributes to the critical misinterpretations of Hollis's action as "cynical" or a "trick."<sup>72</sup> Even the more fully developed personalities of native Malays in Conrad's first two novels, *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*, do not escape this treatment in spite of their interesting individual idiosyncrasies (e.g. Babalatchi), and in *Lord Jim*, Jim's Malay friend and 'double,' Dain Waris, seems at times a little too conventionally 'noble' to be believed. All the same, aspects of Karain's character portrayal do begin to make inroads on this romanticized native stereotype, although they are too weak to reverse it. The theatricality of his majestic augustness concealing a very real fear and conscience-haunted state of mind makes it impossible for him to lead a simple life and bears witness to the overlay of ceremony and acting in all his affairs. His noble manner is very much a disguise and an illusion. This more complex aspect of

his personality is spoilt, however, by his oversimplified and stereotypical 'native' speech when addressing the white men.

Conrad must have been in some measure aware of this weakness, as he begins early to undermine the Romantic 'noble savage' stereotype. If Arsat and Karain are not entirely innocent, Makola, the African assistant in "An Outpost of Progress" (discussed in chapter ii above), is still less innocent than the Malays, but is far more complex, real, and human a character. That Makola has been exposed to Western society does not entirely explain the story's different presentation of the native African. Conrad undermines the 'noble savage' convention here in a more complex way than by introducing a native who has been 'corrupted' by 'civilization.' Kayerts and Carlier at first perceive all the Africans that come to the station as "funny brutes" and "fine animals" (TU 89), as simple, 'noble savage' grotesque, especially Gobila, the old chieftain of the local tribe. They are unsure how to treat Makola because it is obvious to them that being a "civilised nigger" (TU 97), Makola does not fill the bill, but then neither, in reality, do Gobila and his villagers, or any of the Africans that inhabit or visit the outpost.

Not the simple African, then, but Kayerts' and Carlier's simplistic perception of the African, contributes to their problems in running the outpost and their inability to understand or communicate with any of their visitors. The best they can manage is a condescending joviality with Gobila ("Carlier slapped him on the back, and recklessly struck off matches for his amusement" -- TU 91). This inability is one of the traits that leave them unprepared for the more complex troubles that descend on the station and set in motion the tragic sequence of events. "An Outpost of Progress," while it countenances Hobbes' theory of man's innate selfishness, opposes any easy belief that man is necessarily improved by civilization, a belief that causes Kayerts and Carlier to bask lazily in their assumed supremacy and permits them to hold their simplistic view of the African as a simple savage.

The Africans can be, like the Europeans, 'noble' or 'savage' or both, or neither. Makola himself is spoilt not by civilization as such but by others like Kayerts and Carlier who brought with them the most corrupt and the most superficial aspects of their civilization. But Conrad also makes it clear that in Makola he is presenting a native African pragmatically concerned with his own and his family's survival, not one who conforms to the Westerner's idealistic and patronising image of him.

With "Heart of Darkness" Conrad moves away from the Romantic convention of the noble savage in the same way as he turns the Romantic adventure story and the quest into a nightmare. The childhood wish that becomes a reality -- "when I grow up I will go there" (HD 11) -- ultimately seems unreal in the number and intensity of horrors Marlow must witness. The quest proves empty and false because although Kurtz is found he yields nothing for Marlow, no special meaning, no secret to the enigma of the journey, only a deepening of the incomprehensible puzzle of human existence and horror of human behaviour. The course of the steamer upriver through the jungle might be a path through a maze, leading nowhere. The whole African enterprise is for Marlow the reverse of all that the traditional Romantic adventure story represented (a learning experience that reaffirms existing social value). He finds no benevolent mentor to advise him, and no African equivalent of Man Friday, Atala, or Chingachgook to guide him. Most of the white men, whether company employees or pilgrims, are corrupt and "hollow at the core" (HD 58), most of the Africans are completely oppressed or completely 'savage,' especially those found with Kurtz. Of those on board the steamer Marlow says that they amazed him by not attacking and eating the whites whom they outnumbered. Not understanding African tribal practices, Marlow admits to being puzzled, even mystified, by this restraint. But he does not ascribe it to any innate nobility of the uncorrupted native, nor does he refer to it in the artificially poetic terms of excessive romanticism. Wondering what could be the cause of this restraint, Marlow passes the enigma of the Africans' behaviour to his listeners,

leaving with them (and with the reader) the unanswered question, the burden of interpretation.

Only one African appears, for a fleeting moment, to embody something of the traditional noble savage in dress, carriage and demeanour, and that is the woman assumed to be Kurtz's African mistress. Her description is handled quite differently, however, from those of Arsat and Karain, for example. The style of the two full passages devoted to her has none of the false poetic simplicity of those early stories. Its wealth of physical detail builds a picture of concrete reality that is far more convincing than any of the portrayals of natives in "The Lagoon" and "Karain," and contains only a hint of literary convention, enough for us to recognize what Conrad has done with it.

She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high, her hair was done in the shape of a helmet, she had brass leggings to the knees, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces of glass beads on her neck, bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch-men, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her. She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul. (HD 60)

The description is indeed poetic, is even touched with that "internal glow" of romanticism that gives life to the figure that is its subject. The majesty and dignity that dominate the passage flow naturally from the woman herself, and if there is something of the theatrical performance about her actions and gestures, these too

appear to be part of a ritual of real grief, comprehensible only to the performer and her companions, alien to the white observers. But they offer to the more discerning Marlow an insight into the inner world of the African, of 'the other,' a glimpse as fleeting as the appearance of the woman. In her the heart or "soul" of the African wilderness, "immense," "tenebrous" and "passionate," is reflected as in a mirror. He is to remember her once more, not in Africa, but in Europe, when he recognizes the same dignity in suffering in Kurtz's "Intended": "She put out her arms, as if after a retreating figure, stretching them back and with clasped pale hands . . . a tragic and familiar shade resembling in this gesture another one, tragic also and bedecked with powerless charms, stretching bare brown arms over the glitter of the infernal stream, the stream of darkness" (HD 75). In the pathos and dignity of grief, the European and African women are merged, the familiar and unfamiliar come together through this supremely human gesture. And the "stream of darkness" is no longer a river through an African jungle, nor is it a straightforward symbol of the Styx, but calls to mind the passing of all things through life, through time, and through the "Incomprehensible." The description of the African woman goes far beyond the romantic convention of the noble savage that it appears to imitate. Resembling a vision, yet imbued with a strong sense of concrete reality, it serves the central themes of the story.

The majesty and 'nobility' of the African woman is associated not with the happy innocence of primitive man in the lost paradise, but with grief and the "tenebrous" world of passing 'shades,' the "impenetrable" night represented by the African jungle. In fact, Conrad's tropical forests and jungles, like some of his native Africans and Malays who subvert the noble savage convention, stand for everything that is the reverse of the Garden of Eden. In the Conradian perception, these forests can only be the Tree of Knowledge (or consciousness) multiplied. Whether we interpret them literally or as signifying the dark entanglements of the human mind, they reflect the natural world as it appears to man after his loss of innocence, that is

-- after man gained more than an instinctive consciousness of being. In his letter to Cunninghame Graham, referring to the tragedy of our consciousness of being "the victims of nature," Conrad explains further: "to be part of the animal kingdom under the conditions of this earth is very well, -- but as soon as you know of your slavery, the pain, the anger, the strife, -- the tragedy begins. We can't return to nature, since we can't change our place in it."<sup>73</sup> 'Primitive' or 'elemental' human beings do not escape that consciousness. The absolute innocence and purity of the 'noble savage,' like the Garden of Eden, is nowhere to be found. Nobility comes to 'primitive' and 'civilized' alike (African and Intended) through their conduct in the face of grief and in the face of the tragic consciousness.

The nostalgic harking back to the innocence and purity of Adam's earthly paradise is associated, in a few of Conrad's characters with the simple rustic, or modern Western society's own provincial version of the 'noble savage.' The stilted figures (not always in a bad sense) belonging to the pastoral of aristocratic, neo-classical convention were replaced in the works of the early Romantics by characters like Wordsworth's Michael or Solitary Reaper, whose real life of honest toil represented the uncorrupted ways of the simple country folk in harmony with nature.<sup>74</sup> These, like the noble savage, enact a return to nature because they lack self-consciousness. Two Conradian characters in particular stand out in this connection: Yanko Gooral and Singleton.

As noted in the first chapter of this study, Yanko in "Amy Foster" is the epitome of trusting, rustic ignorance and innocent, inexperienced youth thrown out into the 'savage' world of cruel nature and washed up on the shores of a foreign land. That the people of the coastal English village view themselves as members of a civilized society while yet remaining for the most part, both less 'noble' and more 'savage' than Yanko, is further complicated by the fact that they are themselves a simple folk, indeed the English counterparts of the peasant society from which

Yanko hails, and not the representatives of the urban "civilized crowds" against which the innocence and simplicity of the noble savage or pastoral hero might be set.

Yanko's own innocence and ignorance, though convincing and eliciting sympathy, is not without a touch of the humorous grotesque in its childlike gullibility, as in his way of perceiving ships, trains and cities and giving credence to talk of "the American Kaiser." Conrad indicates some of the probable consequences of gullibility in "An Anarchist." This is not to say that Conrad blames Yanko for his naivete, although he does hold Paul, the anarchist, morally responsible for his. Yanko is too young and too much the product of an isolated rural community to be blameworthy, but Conrad is also clearly not upholding Yanko's innocence as a model for man to 'return' to, as the object of any nostalgic quest for pastoral simplicity. This simple youth might have been the rustic hero of a boy's adventure tale in that he leaves home to seek a new life in a new world where he believes gold may be picked up freely in the streets -- his own innocent dream of an Eldorado quest. In this resemblance to the romantic adventure tale Conrad's story also proves false, since it ends in a complete reversal of that tradition's reintegration of the hero into society and re-affirmation of social values following hardship. Yanko dies having neither 'returned' nor 'arrived' anywhere, and without having achieved any real measure of social integration because of the cultural breach that results from being shipwrecked on a foreign shore half way in his journey.

An even more complex example of the simple rustic, but in the seaman's guise, is Singleton, the idol of veneration and worship in "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*." In fact Conrad seems at first to make an exception of Singleton, among all his characters, by linking him with that Golden Age of pure nature when man was an unthinking, "elemental force," and he calls Singleton "that unconscious man."<sup>75</sup> This statement cannot be taken as categorical, since it is made as part of

Conrad's argument against portraying Singleton as educated. As noted above, Conrad himself believed that consciousness is what distinguishes man from the animal world, and what makes him "tragic." Singleton does not escape that condition. His 'unconsciousness' is comparative, depicted in contrast with other characters in the story. The poignant scene in which Singleton becomes most fully aware of age and approaching death bears out the fact that he cannot possibly be another pastoral Adam. Nor does he have the innocence and inexperience of youth like Yanko. Age has brought him "clearer knowledge" and "completed wisdom" (NN 61). He "had already seen all that could happen on the wide seas" (NN 79). A patriarchal 'nobility' is conferred upon him by his own unassuming, heroic toil, and if he remains as 'unconscious' as humanly possible, it is because the life of the sea keeps the true seaman active and alert without permitting him "to meditate at ease upon the complicated and acrid savour of existence" (NN 55). Against Singleton are set not only Wait and Donkin in "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*," but also characters of other works like Axel Heyst in *Victory*, Geoffrey Renouard in "The Planter of Malata," or Verloc in *The Secret Agent*, all of whom tend to luxuriate in thoughts of the futility of action. Only upon returning exhausted from thirty hours at the helm does Singleton have a glimpse of the abyss that the sea could represent for him, "a pitiless vastness full of unrest, of turmoil and of terror . . . that claimed all the days of his tenacious life, and, when life was over, would claim the worn-out body of its slave. . . ." (NN 61) This awareness like his wisdom, is not something he can put into words. Because he is uneducated, Singleton does not easily give conscious expression to his inner knowledge gained from experience, but the rest of the crew sense that he "radiate[s] unspeakable wisdom" (NN 80). This is why Singleton, in all his simplicity, wise with age and experience, but too active to stop and ponder on questions of the human conditions, can be aptly portrayed by such paradoxical phrases as "profound and unconscious" (NN 80).

Singleton is far from exotic, in spite of the romantic nostalgia that surrounds him and the type of seamanship he stands for. Less exotic still, and less romantic, is Falk, a character who seems to combine 'noble savage' with Sylvan mythological traits. Like Singleton ("tattooed like a cannibal chief . . . and [a] savage patriarch" -- NN 2 - 3), Falk is called an "elemental" man. Having committed the one deed that classes him, in the eyes of the 'civilized,' with the most savage of primitives - cannibals, he turns out to be a sympathetic character whom the narrator admires for his simple and honest refusal to play along with the social game of "keeping up appearances" at all cost. Falk attains the furthest possible distance from Arsat and all false models of the noble savage, although it is still possible to recognise in him the signs or reminders of that myth, if only through Conrad's antithetical treatment of it. As a European whose actions appear primitive to his fellows but are in fact grounded in reality and necessity, Falk overthrows the literary image of the naturally savage primitive artificially endowed with a 'natural' poetic nobility. The inauthentic aspects of that convention, which Conrad began to undermine in earlier works by introducing complications that did not belong to it, he now completely reverses.

In "The Secret Sharer" we participate vicariously in the captain's sense of meeting his double, in his dilemma and the burden of his ultimate decision to aid the escape of Leggatt. In "The Planter of Malata" we are brought to experience the emptiness of the romantic conventions whereby Renouard idealizes Felicia and unwittingly seeks a form of escape from himself through illusion. Because these obvious and contrived images and conventions are recognizable, readers share in a sense of responsibility for Renouard's idealism and escapism, just as, through another but similar process of recognition and reflection, they share with Marlow a sense of responsibility for Jim's idealism and escapism in *Lord Jim* or young Marlow's in "Youth." "Falk" and especially "A Smile of Fortune" also make of the reader a 'secret sharer' in the voyeurism of their captain-narrators; when the self deception of these characters comes to light the author's unspoken reminder of the

reader's role is gradually revealed with it. This may be summed up in the famous final line of the Baudelaire poem, "To the Reader":

"Hypocritical reader, -- my likeness, -- my brother!" <sup>76</sup>

Baudelaire taunts and urges the complacent reader to confess his hypocrisy and to adhere to his responsibility for the work of art (especially author and character) he is reading. To Baudelaire, complacency means dishonesty. Readers recognize themselves in the myriad reflections of the author, narrators and characters of Conrad's stories in much the same way as the narrator of "The Secret Sharer" finds his own reflection in Leggatt . . . But at this point I am encroaching on the subject of the next and final chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Form, narrative voice and point of view:  
Disclosures of Cultural construction in  
relation to intercultural communication

This final chapter discusses narrative viewpoints in relation to the question of culture and intercultural discourse. It treats several of the shorter tales discussed in the foregoing chapters of this study. Although passing reference has been made to some of Conrad's longer works, *Under Western Eyes* meets here a detailed treatment because of its relevancy to the question of cultural understanding (or lack of it) and intercultural discourse.

The observation was made in the first chapter on "Amy Foster" that through the two narrators and Dr Kennedy's occasional adoption of Yanko's language the events of the story can be seen from different perspectives, and the reader is drawn into participation in interpreting and judging the characters -- or suspending judgment, as the case may be. It was also pointed out that Dr Kennedy, while he appears to represent, as a man of science, the impartial view of the objective observer, has a personality of his own that is not without its limitations and idiosyncrasies, and that these do indeed colour the picture presented to the reader. If there were no other narrator of "Amy Foster," we would have to take the story as the interpretation of Dr Kennedy. There is another, however, to whom Dr Kennedy recounts the events and whose function is to give corroborative evidence for the doctor's puzzlement, "fear of the Incomprehensible" and his uneasiness of the events of the story. The outer narrator speaks of Dr Kennedy's mind "penetrating power": "His intelligence is of a scientific order, of an investigating habit, and of that unappeasable curiosity which believes that there is a particle of a general truth in every mystery" (T 116). But in diagnosing the cause of Yanko's death, the doctor,

although a man of science, gives a relatively certain answer: "physiologically . . . It was possible. . . . Eventually I certified heart-failure as the immediate cause of death" (T 155).

Leaving the question of Amy's behaviour ostensibly unanswered, Kennedy believes sincerely in his impartiality. The formality of his language, which he does not seem entirely at ease with, and its moralizing tendency remind the reader that no observer is objective. Still less are those who retell what they observed because to tell is already to bring one's own background, concerns and prejudices to bear on the facts being recounted. The implication for the reader is more far reaching. Invited to follow Dr Kennedy's example of impartiality in interpreting the narrative, the reader can do none other than repeat the process of bringing the self to the object observed, and will, at various moments in other narratives, be 'caught in the act' (see the first chapter above).

"Amy Foster" stops short, only just, of ruffling the reader's composure, and leaves the onus of subjective interference with Kennedy. The main thrust behind Kennedy's manner of narration set within the account of another narrator is that neither his view of the events nor the apparently greater detachment of the outer narrator suffices to give the 'whole story,' which can best be approached through an understanding of several viewpoints and an alternation of involvement and detachment.<sup>1</sup> This is not the gathering of viewpoints to arrive at a conclusion on some harmonious middle ground. On the contrary, it requires keeping the various perspectives separate and distinct, recognizing rather than reconciling differences. For Conrad, not to lose sight of the disparities is to gain that "glimpsed truth" (HD 69) that is the larger picture.

According to Conrad's preface to "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*," the artist strives to create a "vision" that will "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." With these "convictions" the artist "cannot be faithful to any one of the temporary formulas of his craft. The enduring part of them -- the truth which each only imperfectly veils -- should abide with him as the most precious of his possessions . . ." (JCF 163).<sup>2</sup> "Formulas" refers to contemporary movements in literature ("Realism, Romanticism, Naturalism"), but the same statement can equally apply to Conrad's alternations in voice and perspective as stylistic and structural "formulas" (different from those in brackets above) of his craft. Thus he attempts to give some intimation of the larger picture of which each limited and temporary view is but a part. In presenting several points of view, each with conviction, Conrad draws his readers into a more eclectic approach to social systems and cultures, and thereby into tolerance, awareness of shared humanity and "the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation" (JCF 161). This is also the reason why Conrad introduces into his fiction so many characters of different nationalities, races and cultures. They "demand" to be expressed "on the grounds of that mysterious fellowship which unites in a community of hopes and fears all the dwellers on this earth" (JCF 128).

It has been observed that Conrad's many narrators are born of his efforts at distance and detachment.<sup>3</sup> This clearly cannot be the apparent detachment of the traditional omniscient author, but comes from acquiring an understanding of different perspectives by putting oneself 'in the other's shoes,' and grows out of participation and involvement. Says Werner Senn: "to be merely a neutral spectator is not enough, for cognition can only yield knowledge but cannot allow us to participate directly in experience, which would seem a pre-requisite if we are to judge our fellow-men with the fairness and the sympathetic understanding Conrad demands."<sup>4</sup> Conradian detachment includes this notion of "fairness." Even aesthetically, it replaces the aloofness of the all-controlling artist with a constant

movement and delicate balance between distance and involvement, affirming the validity of each and manipulating the reader into a sense of doubtful fidelity to both.

A number of Conrad's early works experiment with narrative voice in an attempt to incorporate different viewpoints. What may have begun as an unconscious need later develops into a demonstrably methodical process of adopting any one viewpoint at any moment but none of them definitively. Whether the points of view appear as separate or related, momentary or preponderate, as definite, closed interpretations or inconclusive musings, the reader remains uncertain as to which view or voice is carrying the entire burden of the text, and is obliged to 'collect' them as they occur and to assume full interpretive responsibility. In the early works especially, this reaction of uncertainty in the reader is a consequence of Conrad's own groping for a way to orchestrate the different views and voices. In "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" perspectives multiply, but are not yet fully mastered in terms of the voices expressing them.

The growing number and complexity of viewpoints and the attempts to control them can be traced as an almost linear chronological development in works leading up to "Heart of Darkness." Two of the earliest tales, "The Lagoon" and "An Outpost of Progress" provide the basis for future development of the framed first person narrative and the authorial third person narrative respectively. As noted at the beginning of the first two chapters above, "An Outpost" is simply, straightforwardly told, and its irony is obvious. It also tends towards the didactic and rhetorical. "The Lagoon," aside from its framed structure, is also simply told, especially the inner story related by Arsat. The outer frame offers a notion of some future stylistic developments in the occasional phrase or passage. As mentioned in the third chapter of this study, the statement that the white man liked Arsat "not so much perhaps as a man likes his favourite dog" indicates the condescension in his regard for Arsat, although this aspect of the white man is not developed.

Nonetheless, the phrase heralds many others of the kind that slip by in later stories, undermining the surface image of a character or situation, and belongs to another 'voice' hidden within the narrator's own. The interweaving of this voice with the narration is handled more deftly and more subtly in later fiction, as in the outer narrator's passing description of Marlow as a buddha without a lotus flower in "Heart of Darkness" and the link between his religious simile and Marlow's own religious imagery of sacrifice and 'bowing down' to the 'idea.' There is also the passage in "The Lagoon" giving the Malay canoers' view of the white man as if in their own words. For a brief while the text approaches the style of indirect free discourse, to which I will refer again shortly and which, like the hidden 'voice,' will be used to greater advantage in later third person narratives.

The problem of "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" is that its many voices constitute both a strength and a weakness. Whether intentional or unconscious, the mingling of different points of view sometimes achieves an astonishing effect in its subtlety and quiet manipulation of the reader's perceptions; at others it creates confusion, even when it succeeds brilliantly in shifting the emphasis from one viewpoint to another at a crucial moment in the narrative.

The introduction of the first person plural through the possessive adjective "our" appearing briefly on the fourth and sixth pages of the second chapter manages to be surprising yet unobtrusive ("Mr Baker . . . kept all our noses to the grindstone" -- NN 19, "the setting sun dipped sharply, as though fleeing before our nigger" -- NN 21).<sup>5</sup> It prepares the way, together with the equally unobtrusive pronoun object "us" that occurs a page later, for the more definite and conspicuous subject "we" ("We hesitated between pity and mistrust" -- NN 22), the full, open stride into first person plural narration, which then continues for several long paragraphs to the end of the chapter (as Marlow's pronoun changes from "I" to "we" "they" "us" in "Heart of Darkness"). The narrator, whom we took to be the author at the beginning of the

tale, now appears as one of the crew, though which one he is, if any of those named, is not made clear. The third chapter resumes the more detached, 'authorial' voice of the first, again referring to the crew as "they," and the "we" re-enters quietly after a few pages: "he [captain Allistoun] never took his eyes off the ship. He kept his gaze riveted . . . We all watched her" (NN 30 - 31).

Such gentle oscillations in voice from one page or passage to another are not disturbing if we take the first person for an anonymous projection of the third person narrative voice, a temporary 'incarnation' of the story's creator as one of his creatures, not specific but delivering the collective viewpoint as from someone inside it. (The religious analogy is apt considering Conrad's ethical/aesthetic intent of fellowship with all creation through empathy and vicarious experience). Nor are these the only two modes, for all that the necessary grammatical change distinguishes them more conspicuously, but the narrative moves back and forth along the entire range from the extreme detachment of lofty omniscience to the close involvement of individual participation, stopping frequently along the way, and often taking up the thoughts and feelings of some of the other characters. To return to the passage (discussed in the second chapter above) giving James Wait's view of the world from his 'sickbed':

When the lamp was put out . . . Jimmy . . . could see vanishing beyond the straight line of top-gallant rail, the quick, repeated visions of a fabulous world . . . the lightning gleamed in his big sad eyes that seemed . . . to burn themselves out in his black face . . . He could hear . . . soft footfalls . . . He was cheered by the rattling of blocks, reassured by the stir and murmur of the watch, soothed by the slow yawn of some sleepy and weary seaman . . . Life seemed an indestructible thing. It went on in darkness, in sunshine, in sleep; tireless, it hovered affectionately round the imposture of his ready death. It was bright . . . it made him safe . . . (NN 64)

This is the first of those passages in which the narrating voice presents James Wait's feelings and reactions. A fellow crew member could not possibly have known Jimmy's thoughts alone in his cabin, just as he could not have been present to hear certain dialogues, such as those between Allistoun and his officers, Jimmy and Podmore (the cook), or between Jimmy and Donkin.<sup>6</sup> The whole passage is an unsettling amalgam of authorial detachment and participation in Jimmy's own sensations; it hovers on the edge of free indirect discourse. Although the scene around him is presented through Jimmy's eyes and ears, and through his feelings and reactions ("Jimmy could see . . . He could hear . . . He was cheered . . . reassured . . . soothed . . . Life seemed . . . It was bright . . . It made him safe . . ."), the occasional word or phrase recalls authorial omniscience, which also moves from detached ("the lamp was put out") to empathetic ("his big sad eyes," "hovered affectionately") to censorious ("imposture"). Thus only in the fourth chapter, and after being 'enlisted' among the crew through the collective "we," does the reader enter unexpectedly into Jimmy's mind, even into his half-conscious conflict between the reality and the mask or "imposture" of approaching death. Besides maintaining the reader's interest in the question of 'truth' or 'shamming' on Wait's part, the adoption of Wait's thoughts, like Jukes' in "Typhoon," at this point plays a crucial role in undermining any single view of the story's events or characters that the reader may have settled into, reversing cultural mindsets and subverting the view of Wait as 'him,' of the black crew member as 'other.' This aspect of the shifts in point of view succeeds in disturbing the reader's possible complacency as to his or her own reactions and allegiances, but it also creates confusion as to who is telling the story and so (for readers seeking certainty at this point) disrupts the narrative continuity.<sup>7</sup>

On the smaller scale, at the level of detail, these shifts work remarkably well. The reader is not permitted to settle comfortably into any one perspective, whether it

be "theirs," "ours" or "his," "his" being at one moment Wait's point of view for instance, at another captain Allistoun's, at another Donkin's. At times the language does not hesitate to enter fully into free indirect discourse, as when Allistoun ponders over the "unprovoked row" on board his ship: "Didn't he know them! Didn't he! In past years. Better men, too. Real men to stand by one in a tight place. Worse than devils too sometimes -- downright, horned devils. Pah! This -- nothing. A miss as good as a mile. . . . The wheel was being relieved in the usual way. -- "Full and by," said, very loud, the man going off. -- "Full and by," repeated the other, catching hold of the spokes. -- "This head wind is my trouble"; exclaimed the master, stamping his foot in sudden anger; "head wind! all the rest is nothing." He was calm again in a moment. "Keep them on the move to-night, gentlemen . . ." (NN 77 - 78). The sentences of indirect discourse are cunningly interspersed with passing remarks to his officers, nautical commands relayed among the crew on watch and pieces of narration or description.<sup>8</sup> A similar free indirect monologue approaching interior monologue occurs when Donkin is contemplating the "dying Jimmy": "it seemed to him he could hear the irremediable rush of precious minutes. How long would this blooming affair last? Too long surely. No luck" (NN 95).

Another major disruption in narrative continuity through shift in voice occurs at the end of the tale when both the detached authorial voice and the collective "we" suddenly give way to the singular "I" as if the author and the narrator/seaman were stripping their masks to reveal that all of the voices that went before belong to a real person, one and the same, who cannot escape his narcissistic self or ego with its own thoughts, opinions, reactions, judgments and even the same kind of sentimentalism that had previously brought about moral decay among the men of the *Narcissus*. And yet this first person narrator follows the same pattern, 'in the flesh,' as the earlier, disembodied or anonymous narrative voices. He detaches himself from the knot of men on their way to the Black Horse where "illusions of strength, mirth, happiness" will be dispensed among them. When

Belfast bursts into tears in the London street, the narrator tells us "I disengaged myself gently" (NN 106). These words apply not only to his conduct with Belfast, and not only to his detachment from the crew in general (he does not accompany them to the Black Horse), but to the recurring movements of detachment that have taken place throughout the story, just as the words that open the following paragraph repeat the sympathetic turning back towards them: "But at the corner I stopped to take my last look at the crew of the *Narcissus*" (NN 106). For a moment the narrator is poised ("stopped") between coming and going, involvement and detachment. But this halting as he is about to leave is in fact the first step -- first in the events narrated and first in the text -- in the movement of sentimental recollection that will close the tale, the same movement that initiated the tale, or motivated the narrator to tell it.

The men of the *Narcissus* are no longer (physically) 'at sea,' and yet on land they appear 'lost.' There is an underlying irony in the narrator's standing back as if he had some special dispensation from this condition when he calls them "castaways" and uses the verb "drifted" three times to describe their movement as a group towards the tavern. This gathering of men in a "dark knot" that recalls both the possibilities of corruption within them ("dark") and their solidarity on board the *Narcissus* ("knot") has already begun to show signs of dispersal -- since Donkin, Charley, Belfast and the narrator/seaman have individually parted company with the others -- and of the disintegration that will overtake them all in time: "The sea took some, the steamers took others, the graveyards of the earth will account for the rest" (NN 107). But the narrator's final address to their "shades" suddenly re-introduces the collective "we," and mingles it with "brothers" and the vocative: "Haven't we, together and upon the immortal sea, wrung out a meaning from our sinful lives? Goody-bye, brothers! You were a good crowd" (NN 107). It is in solidarity, the narrator reminds us, when they are *together* in times of crisis, that people 'wring out' a "meaning" from their lives, and this is what the narrative re-

enacts, consoling its creator against the solitariness of his detached ego, bringing him (and his reader) into empathy with his creatures (characters), into that "subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts" and "binds together all humanity" (preface to "NN" in JCF 161).<sup>9</sup>

However, the narrator's final eulogy reminds us that it is not always easy to distinguish between a quality and its excess, between solidarity and sentimentalism, since this excess (empathy to sympathy to pity) soon degenerates into its opposite (narcissism), as was also shown to be the case between truth and deceit (Jimmy's illness and approaching death) -- between reality and illusion. David Manikom has written that the story's "central dichotomy, the conflict between sympathy, attachment and egoism, detachment . . . is in fact closely linked to the style of narration," and that the "subjective/objective dichotomy that the narrative technique absorbs is the same tension as that between reality and illusion. Where one begins and the other ends is entirely dependent upon perspective."<sup>10</sup> The constant shifts in voice and point of view are the aspects of narrative style that most strongly convey that dichotomy and tension.

Even though the more abrupt changes in voice appear at times artificial and contrived, the narrative could only be 'smoothed' and made more 'natural' in this respect at the expense of the thematic intent and its ingenious imitation in the language, form and structure of the work.

In "Karain" the management of voice change, more tightly restricted than in "The Nigger" or in "Heart of Darkness," has a direct bearing on the question of intercultural discourse. Point of view is controlled by means of the boxed story, as in "The Lagoon" but unlike "The Lagoon" or "The Nigger," "Karain" does not at any time enter into the third person mode. The narrator manages to keep his own

identity well in the background until the moment of his full participation in the events. Early in the narrative he remains hidden behind the broad screen of a vague and general "we" -- the opening word of "Karain" -- with only three flashes of "I," two of them in groups of about three sentences. These early glimpses of the narrator as an individual serve mainly to indicate his sense of personal nostalgia, to establish his relationship with Karain, and to enliven the reader's curiosity: "He was an adventurer of the sea, an outcast, a ruler -- and *my* very good friend. I wish him a quick death in a stand-up fight . . ." (TU 17, *my italics*). "Karain" is divided into six short sections, and this first person singular voice is introduced only at the end of the first section. It recurs briefly at the beginning of the second section ("There were at first between him and me his own splendour, my shabby suspicions" -- (TU 18), in the middle of the second section ("I fancy that to the last he believed us to be emissaries of Government . . ." -- TU 20; "He liked to talk with me because I had known some of these men . . . But he preferred to talk of his native country . . . I had visited it some time before . . ." --TU 21), and it does not return until the middle of the third section, almost half way through the entire narrative, when the "we" is at last broken down into three distinct personalities of white men in charge of the schooner visiting Karain's group of island villages; Hollis, Jackson and "I," the unnamed narrator.

Under the mandate of the early ruling "we" Karain is described in terms of the impression he made on "us," the foreign or non-Malay visitors to the bay. "We" looked at "him" and his people, "them," "an ornamented and barbarous crowd" (TU 13), and "we" saw all this splendour and magnificence as a theatrical illusion. Karain indicates his domain with a "theatrical sweep of his arm" (TU 14), and the bay is "the stage where, dressed splendidly for his part, he strutted, incomparably dignified" (TU 15). Karain is "treated with a solemn respect accorded in the irreverent West only to the monarchs of the stage" and is "clothed in the illusion of unavoidable success" (TU 16). These are only the first of several references to the

theatre that illustrate Conrad's insistence on what may appear initially as a passing image or minor leitmotif. The recurrence ensures that the reader absorbs the narrator's sense of deceptive artifice and unreality in Karain and his surroundings. It is characteristic of Conrad's use of repetition. The theatrical image grows in meaning and value with every added variation, colours the rest of the text and influences our understanding of later developments.

The illusion seems at first to be generated by Karain himself who "presented himself essentially as an actor" (TU 16), but a closer scrutiny of the text reveals that it does not depend on Karain's conduct alone, for the Westerners also insist on regarding Karain's world as an exotic locale, separate and 'other.' The poetic descriptions of the bay also occur in this early part of the narrative where the theatrical imagery is extended beyond Karain to the scenery. "We" are the theatre audience and "they" the Malay actors in a play that is performed on the other side of an invisible screen between two cultures, in a microcosm completely cut off -- or so it seems to "us" -- from time and space, removed from reality. This land does not give "a hint of the ominous sequence of days. It appeared to us a land without memories, regrets, and hopes" (TU 14). Everything in it, even nature, seems theatrically exaggerated or magnified, whether sights or sounds. The sunshine is dazzlingly brilliant, colours are unusually vivid; when the canoes take Karain back to shore their paddles strike together "with a mighty splash that reverberated loudly in the monumental amphitheatre of hills" (TU 18) which is massive and lasting, vast and impressive, and blocking the broadcasting of human acts played on its stage. Although it is "landlocked from the sea and shut off from the land by the precipitous slopes of mountains," Karain's domain appears at one and the same time perfectly "complete" in itself and yet boundless, "immense and vague" (TU 14). To the visitors the rest of the world is "shut out forever from this gorgeous spectacle" that has "the suspicious immobility of a painted scene" (TU 17). Like the opening of *Nostromo* with the imprisoning windlessness of the dark gulf, equally walled off to landward by a

barrier of hills shaping an "enormous semi-circular and unroofed temple open to the ocean, with its walls of lofty mountains hung with the mourning drapiers of cloud" (N 39). Here the sea, not the land, is the stage haunted by the futile ghosts of treasure-seekers.<sup>11</sup>

The theatre, then, is the thematic image that dominates the first part of this story, and it continues to resonate in the last part. The narrator regards this "painted scene" as suspicious, but he allows us to perceive that the source of his suspicions, as of the overall theatrical illusion, lies in his own heart. Although Karain is acting out a role to keep remorse at bay, as his story later reveals, he is not an impostor, but is offering an exaggerated rendition of his own personality: "He was not masked -- there was too much life in him, and a mask is only a lifeless thing" (TU 16). If Karain is concealing the anxiety of guilt and shame under an "aggressive disguise," his role and the country he rules are as real to him as they appear theatrical and illusory to his white visitors. In a brief moment early in the second section when the "we"/"they" distinction is adjusted to focus on "I" and "he," the narrator states explicitly that the theatricality of the romantic/exotic scenery creates a barrier between himself and Karain, implying that it interferes with communication between the two cultures: "There were at first between him and me his own splendour, my shabby suspicions, and the scenic landscape that intruded upon the reality of our lives by its motionless fantasy of outline and colour" (TU 18). Without realizing the full import of his words the narrator as much as admits by association, that this "fantasy" world appear suspicious because he so perceives it, and since the Malays -- even with a love of colour and ritual -- clearly do not consider their own lives or their part of the world theatrical in the sense of 'illusory' or 'unreal.' The narrator's words imply that only for Westerners, and more specifically for himself, does everything encountered in this island 'paradise' appear separated from reality.

The unnamed white narrator describes the commotion and the theatricality of the London street after learning that Karain's private torment is at least as real as life in a London street (which, too, looks like a description of a scene in a play): "A clumsy string of red, yellow, and green omnibuses rolled swaying, monstrous and gaudy; two shabby children ran across the road; a knot of dirty men . . . discussing filthily; a ragged old man with a face of despair yelled horribly in the mud the name of a paper; while far off, amongst the tossing heads of horses, the dull flash of harness, the jumble of lustrous panels and roofs of carriages, we could see a policeman, helmeted and dark, stretching out a rigid arm at the crossing of the streets" (TU 56).<sup>12</sup> Graver points out that Karain's "moral discovery" has affected Jackson as well as the narrator. Jackson's uneasiness may give a hint or a clue to the ultimate reality of Karain's story. The "theatrical posturings" of Karain and his absurd belief in talismans "are perhaps more real than the confusions of a crowded city street" like London.<sup>13</sup> The last remark the narrator contributes in the story is directed to Jackson, that blond fellow who has been too sympathetic to help. Jackson, just returned to England, says that somehow Karain and his story seem more real to him than the crush of prosaic life that surrounds both men as they stand talking in a London street: " 'Yes; I see it,' said Jackson, slowly. 'It is there; it pants, it runs, it rolls; it is strong and alive; it would smash you if you didn't look out; but I'll be hanged if it is yet as real to me as . . . as the other thing . . . say, Karain's story' " (TU 56). The narrator replies, "I think that, decidedly, he had been too long away from home," not necessarily meaning that Jackson is wrong in his opinion.

Considering the first person plural voice that from the beginning encourages the reader to identify with the white visitors, the theatrical imagery offers a hint of warning against the romantic/exotic setting. This illusion dissipates at night because at that time Karain presents himself aboard the schooner simply and without ceremony, and also because he is visiting the Englishmen in their own

quarters, the "little cabin" to which their field of nocturnal vision is restricted, with no exotic backdrop, and where they can "treat him in a free and easy manner" (TU 20). At such times Karain enters their reality, becomes "one of us." This parting with the illusion thus occurs simultaneously for Karain, dispensing with his theatrical role, and for the Englishmen, no longer hampered by the fantasy of the surroundings. The point where the illusion recedes furthest, on the night when Karain swims out to the ship alone, coincides with the point in the text where the "we"/"they" dichotomy is broken down into identifiable individuals. Into this last part of the narrative is inserted Karain's story, told in the first person so that the former "he" and "they" referring to Karain and the Malays become "I" and "we." The reader sees Karain's world through his own eyes.

Throughout the first part of "Karain" the reader is drawn into the narrator's and "our" (Western) perception of Karain's world as a theatrical illusion, and is led to mistrust it even while responding to its appeal. But does this mean mistrusting the exotic appearance of the landscape itself or the exotic descriptions and theatre imagery that translate the narrator's perception of it? Bruce M. Johnson sees a similar underlying pattern in "Karain" and *Lord Jim*. Just as Jim flees the shame of lost honour in Patusan, Karain seeks refuge from guilt among the Western "unbelievers": "the native flees to the white man, the white man to the native . . . as though both expect the guilt to become manageable at some sort of cultural barrier. Conrad's point in *Lord Jim*, though not in 'Karain,' is that this kind of purgation is illusory. . ."<sup>14</sup> But Johnson also points to the "ironic distance" established between Conrad and his narrator in "Karain," and to the role of Hollis as the chief "instrument of Conrad's irony." The narrator, like Marlow in *Lord Jim*, insists upon a definite distinction between the illusion and reality because he is "afraid of the consequences of not doing so," and he cannot "therapeutically manipulate illusion," whereas Hollis is able to do so by means of the jubilee sixpence, "not because he is

immune but because, in Stein's famous image, he is 'immersed,' letting the 'deep, deep sea keep [him] up.' "15

The illusion perceived by the narrator is, after all, Karain's reality, and quite different from the illusion set up by Karain himself to stave off the haunting effects of his conscience. Hollis perceives this and can leave the real world as the white man knows it and enter temporarily into the world of the white man's illusion that is Karain's reality. From this generous act of faith, Hollis creates the new reality for Karain that Karain was seeking. Although the narrator plays along, he feels inhibited, and his inability to perform such an act is illustrated again at the end of his negative response to Jackson's statement that after many years Karain's story still seems more real than the London streets in which they are standing. In spite of this ending the reader has learned, through the developments that take place around Hollis, to mistrust the repeated references to theatrical illusion subsumed under the narrator's too authoritative "we," and senses that such an attitude is the real barrier to intercultural discourse, notwithstanding the declaration that Karain was "*my* very good friend." In fact the narrator is equally capable of condescension, examples of which contribute to the ironic distance at which Conrad places him. At one point he says of Karain that he had "a steadfastness of which I would have thought him racially incapable" (TU 25).

The weakness of "Karain" is that ironic distance diminishes when the story focuses on Karain himself, whose language and manner, as noted earlier, resemble too closely the 'noble savage' stereotype of the simple native and matches the narrator's clichés such as "barbarous dignity" and "childish shrewdness" instead of living up to the more discerning observations that the narrator occasionally lets slip concerning Karain's "ironic and melancholy shrewdness," his "foresight" and "sagacity" (TU 21), or his "ominous" and "complicated" sentences (TU 16). We are given no glimpse of the real Karain as a complex personality through the overlay of

Karain as the narrator perceives him, except for the one matter of his haunted conscience which does not suffice to carry the day. Ironic distance is carefully prepared by the subversion of the narrator's view of Karain's world as a theatrical illusion and by the gradual changes in voice moving away from the all-encompassing "we" to the less comfortable voices and viewpoints of individuals, white and native. It is affirmed by the behaviour of Hollis, but not fully sustained in the presentation of Karain himself.

Another experiment with ironic distance through point of view takes place with the introduction of Marlow in "Youth." The outer frame situates Marlow drinking claret with four friends around a *mahogany* table, telling the story of a voyage in his youth. With the occasional exception of a reference to himself and the crew of the *Judea* as "we" or an address or appeal to his four listeners, the first person singular voice dominates the narrative. Once in a while it is the outer narrator who intrudes to remind us that Marlow is drinking (thus drawing attention to Marlow's state of mind as he tells his story), and to recall the entire situation of the outer frame and the fact that he, the narrator, is among the listeners. Through the narrator a distance is established between Marlow and the reader who receives the narrative at a second remove and is frequently reminded of this distance when tempted to become 'lost' in the story. In "Youth" Conrad manipulates the reader through an alternation of involvement and detachment.

The distance between Marlow and the reader is not in itself synonymous with ironic distance, but can, once ironic distance is established, contribute to its effects by giving the reader the opportunity to stand back and observe Marlow in the outer frame; it encourages caution and discernment in the act of 'listening to' (reading) Marlow's tale. Although voice does not change except where the outer frame intrudes, point of view within the inner story is dual, being controlled by the juxtaposition of past and present, since Marlow speaks at one moment for himself in

the present, at another for the youth that he was. The fact that both are represented by the same speaker enables the point of view to pass smoothly from one to the other and at times allows Marlow the narrator and Marlow the youth to overlap or 'co-exist,' as when he suddenly adopts the present tense to render both the reality of a moment in the past (the historic present) and its permanence as a fixed image in his memory: "And this is how I see the East. . . . from a small boat . . . I have the feel of the oar in my hand, the vision of a scorching blue sea in my eyes. And I see a bay . . ." (YET 35). From this alternation and combination of past and present points of view develops the hidden view, the silent voice that tells more than what Marlow can articulate.

Marlow's present attitude continually encroaches on his portrait of Marlow the youth. Even at those points in the narrative where the two come together, the concurrence is fleeting and gone before the reader knows it, as in the passage containing the above quote. While still in the present tense Marlow moves rapidly and imperceptibly from his enduring "vision of a scorching blue sea" to "a bay . . . shimmering in the dark. A red light burns far off upon the gloom of the land and the night is soft and warm. We drag at the oars with aching arms . . ." (YET 35). The reader is taken from the permanent and dazzling daylight vision back into the time sequence of the story, into the night, when everything is vague, gloomy, and "impalpable." As in "Karain" night connotes the reality of passing time, and the bright morning light of the East is associated with fixed images and illusions of unchanging beauty like "painted scenes" but here in "Youth" the overlap implies that the dreams are made possible only by the night and growing out of it, out of the absurdity of reality.

Marlow himself does not fully understand the relationship of illusion and reality that underlies his exaggeration of their differences. The tension in "Youth" develops not so much between the Marlows of past and present as between Marlow

the narrator's critical appraisal or judgment of his youth on the one hand and indulgence -- even eulogy -- on the other. He speaks of his youth, at times almost mockingly, as a period full of illusions and sees "a stealthy nemesis" in the reality of the East and, in a sense, of time. He also looks back upon his past with so much sentimental nostalgia that he seems to wish he could still believe in its illusions, as though he were angry and disgusted with life for depriving him of them. The older Marlow perceives himself with extreme pessimism and scepticism, as if the loss of youth were to be equated with the end of life. According to John Howard Weston, Marlow's scepticism is no less an "illusion" than his earlier romantic idealism. His romantic vision is eternal within him, while his scepticism every moment evanesces before the onrushing flow of succession. Neither his scepticism nor his romantic idealism is capable of seeing 'facts,' for each outlook is a transmutative existence and a distortive view of time. He tries to shape existence through suspension and withdrawal, and his resorts to nostalgic apostrophes and drinking show his long-lost immediate engagement in life. Yet the older Marlow's image of existence is more enduring than that of his younger self. Marlow excites himself by "his previous exploits, he treats his earlier self with a bemused patronization," perhaps "to confront and justify his and his friends' aging paralysis."<sup>16</sup> Marlow's scepticism is motivated by the same "egoistic self-projection" that governed the young second mate of the *Judea*, more concerned with going to Bangkok and seeing the East than with taking the ship there safely, and more interested in leading the first long-boat to the Javan shore than in the safety of the crew after they abandon ship: "Always the romantic egoist he risks his and his crews' lives, all for 'independent cruising.'"<sup>17</sup>

In the forced tension between illusion and reality as Marlow perceives them, and between his criticism and indulgence, his sentimentalism and scepticism, lies the ironic distance between Marlow and the underlying implications of the text. Marlow's exclamatory eulogizing rings false. He wallows in himself, as in the wine, allowing himself to view the past and the present in extremes. The conflict between

the two attitudes calls on reader participation through detachment: detachment from either extreme view, participation in sensing, if not consciously choosing, a point somewhere between these opposite poles as the 'reality' that Marlow has distorted.

"Heart of Darkness," which followed immediately after "Youth," is the second completed work that presents Marlow as narrator and the only other work in which he also figures as the main character. Kurtz is conspicuous for his absence throughout most of the story and for his abstract, illusive quality as object of a quest. He is not the main actor but the "pivot" of the action, reflection and interpretation in which Marlow engages. (Jim and Flora de Barral are the central characters of *Lord Jim* and *Chance* respectively, the only other works in which Marlow appears).

The relevance of "Youth" to "Heart of Darkness" extends beyond the 'birth' and subsequent development of Marlow, and beyond the refinement of narrative method. The two works shed light on each other, and similar aspects of their structure and presentation inform the content of both. Marlow speaks to the same group of friends, identified by their modern urban professions and their fellowship in sharing past professional experience of the sea. At the beginning of "Heart of Darkness" an indirect allusion links the listeners to those of "Youth": "Between us there was as I have said somewhere, the bond of the sea" (HD 7). That 'somewhere' can only be "Youth" which means that the outer narrator is also the same.<sup>18</sup>

"Youth" ends with the narrator and other listeners nodding in accord to the appeal of nostalgia and yearning evoked by Marlow's tale of his early days at sea, a tale nonetheless told (and heard) in a state of inebriation. In "Heart of Darkness" Marlow is sober and the narrator informs us explicitly that the bond of the sea "had the effect of making us tolerant of each other's yarns -- and even convictions" (HD

7). Clearly they were disposed to regard with tolerance not only the length of the yarns but specifically the attitudes and opinions couched within them, "convictions" that might not necessarily be the listeners' own. The statement also leads the reader to expect that the narrator will transmit Marlow's story with tolerance and a suspension of judgment, and as faithfully as he remembers Marlow telling it. Like Dr Kennedy in "Amy Foster" he will be impartial and, again like Dr Kennedy, will prove more partial in his self-conscious tolerance than he can know, prefacing Marlow's story with his own introduction, begun in an omniscient, authorial voice, imperceptibly moving into spokespersonship for a select few, the "we four" listeners of Marlow's tale, and as imperceptibly detaching himself from the group in turns. He also precedes Marlow's response to the Thames setting with his own. Both men see the river in relation to its past, but while the outer narrator singles out the *history* of the Thames as the waterway of a great and powerful nation, Marlow dates it back almost to its *prehistory* as the furthest and wildest military outpost of another, older empire that has died. The Thames flowed only at the periphery of Roman affairs and Roman history. Marlow's picture stands out in sharp contrast to the more conventional view the narrator takes of the Thames' past. The difference in response to their setting serves to indicate the bias and relative truth of any one perspective, the most flattering one having become the most socially acceptable -- the 'norm,' since the contemporary prevailing culture writes the history. It also increases the distance between Marlow and the reader, reminding us that we will receive his story by relay, filtered through yet another point of view, tolerant of -- but not necessarily the same as -- Marlow's own.

Nina Schwartz has suggested that "the implicit romanticism of Western imperialism is merely disguised and repeated in Marlow's imaginative colonization of the jungle and natives of Africa."<sup>19</sup> Marlow is not entirely unaware of this romantic imperialism of the imagination. His story has the quality of a reticent, faltering confession, shared with most of Conrad's other first person narratives. From the

sense that Kurtz is in some way his alter ego or 'double' and the guilty sharing in some of his temptations, if not in his actions, to the final 'uncovering' of the lie to Kurtz's Intended, Marlow's story evolves into a half-knowing, half-willing disclosure of the "dark" secrets of his own "heart," including the realization that his boyhood dream of going "there" to the unmarked parts on the map of Africa, is another of those culturally "taught" responses of conquest and invasion through the imagination. The reality of the actual experience is only the beginning of this unveiling. It is in the telling that Marlow moves closer to conscious awareness of the difference between the dream and the reality, of how that disparity resists his attempts at mind appropriation and shows them to be a form of conquest. The most obvious example of this learning in the telling is in "Youth" where his imaginative appropriation of the East is fully discovered in phrases like "I sat weary beyond expression, exulting like a conqueror . . ." (YET 35). This new awareness does not have to mean that he has grasped the full intellectual and moral implications of his own words, but it does indicate a groping towards them, and points in the direction the listeners (including the outer narrator) and the readers must follow in order to complete the journey.

In "Heart of Darkness" the narrator's juxtaposition of his own view of the historical Thames sending forth great conquerors and adventurers with Marlow's view recalling its earlier conquest by 'others' signifies the bias and limitations of the narrator's perception *before* hearing Marlow's story, as well as his greater capacity to admit of a relative perspective after *hearing* it. In this sense the narrator has indeed proved to be "tolerant." The relative values and the broader perspective increase, so it seems, with each narrator and each retelling, and in proportion as the distance increases between the experience as it is lived and the 'receiver' to whom it is told. Tolerance builds up with the accretion of layers or outer frames and their tellers and the variety and contrast of views they bring. Not only Marlow's tale but the

narrator's -- and finally Conrad's -- finds its meaning "not inside like a kernel but outside" in its envelope (HD 7).

In "Youth" the sympathetic irony of Marlow towards his younger self does not adequately represent the irony of the story, since it cannot contain that of the text towards the older Marlow but is in fact contained by it. Only the distance created by the outer narrator, by the context of the frame and by the great disparity between Marlow's youthful enthusiasm and his later cynicism nudges the reader towards a notion of broader irony and latent meaning hidden beneath Marlow's intent. In both works Marlow is always saying more than his words, giving himself away, whether in speech, manner or behaviour. But his reflective, meditative nature does not permit him to act innocently and unconsciously. He always reveals himself half way along the road to self knowledge, in the process of trying to shape a meaning out of the conjunction of whatever is within and without him. The unfamiliar familiarity of the East speaking to him in a Western voice in "Youth," for example, measures his disillusionment at not hearing the expected babble of utterly foreign, unintelligible words, at not being able to enjoy the romantic discovery (conquest, appropriation) of the unfamiliar, but finding it already 'contaminated' by earlier contact with the West and in a position to appropriate its (his) own language. Following the build up of his romantic expectations concerning the East, all his disappointment is registered in the single word "but": "the East spoke to me, but it was in a Western voice" (YET 36). Shortly after "exulting like a conqueror" he finds himself the object of violent curses in foreign-sounding English, as if he had "sinned against the harmony of the universe" (YET 36-7).

The nemesis that the youthful Marlow escapes in the East comes closer to ensnaring him in Africa where he is able to see at close range its effects on others, of whom Kurtz is only one. The fate of Kayerts and Carlier in "An Outpost of Progress" would indicate that the nemesis is not of Eastern origin, though it may be more

stealthily hidden in the East, but has its source in the heart of the conqueror, and waits only to be brought out in the invaded or colonized places.

Oddly, and therefore not accidentally, the East appears briefly in "Heart of Darkness," in another case of cross-cultural unfamiliar familiarity. To the narrator Marlow resembles an "idol" in his cross-legged position, "yellow complexion," "straight back" and "ascetic aspect" with his "arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards" (HD 7). Two pages later the narrator is more specific in comparing Marlow's pose to that of "a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus flower" (HD 10). It is no coincidence that the subject of Marlow's "preaching" is conquest. This European all too self-consciously adopts and appropriates a position, literally and figuratively, of Eastern authority to speak of the "unselfish belief in the idea" behind Western conquest. This manner of introducing his narrative, if it does not disconcert all his listeners and broaden their horizons beyond the bounds of their own culture, has clearly been noticed by the narrator who makes a point of passing it on to the reader. We know that much of Marlow's irony is intentional, that he teases his listeners with talk of "invading" their homes and having "a heavenly mission to civilize" them. His teasing occurs more than once, in the course of the story, as demonstrated by the growl of one of his listeners: "Try to be civil, Marlow" (HD 36), and the same occurs in *Lord Jim* chapter 8 when one of Marlow's hearers says "you are so subtle, Marlow" (LJ 112). But it is still the narrator who brings out the deeper irony of the situation in which Marlow tells his story through his description of Marlow, irrespective of what Marlow may have intended in adopting his oriental pose. Thus the whole question of conquest and imperialism, whether real and concrete or epistemic and imaginative, depends for its interpretation on point of view, narrative voice and what has been called, perhaps inappropriately, narrative reliability.<sup>20</sup>

Conrad, says Frank Kermode, "abrogates authority . . . by interfering as usual with the 'normal' sequence of the story and by installing an unreliable narrator; all narrators are unreliable, but . . . the more unreliable they are, the more they can say that seems irrelevant to or destructive of, the proprieties. They break down the conventional relationship between sequential narrative and history - likeness, with its arbitrary imposition of truth; they complicate the message."<sup>21</sup> The narrative complexity of "Heart of Darkness" does not only lie in the distance between its two narrators, so difficult to measure, or in the extent to which either of them reflects, more or less reliably, the author's position on so many of the themes and questions that "Heart of Darkness" raises, but also in another kind of distance in Marlow himself between teller and character. Less obvious and clear-cut than in "Youth," the difference between the two Marlows is nevertheless significant. Although it still relates to a division between past and present, the emphasis is not on a contrast between youth and age, innocent enthusiasm and ironic cynicism or sentimentalism, but on the process by which an individual consciousness moves through experience to a fuller awareness of the world and the self, a self that is not quite cynical but mildly ironic and surfeited with the new or unfamiliar, or shocking. The Marlow who enters the Brussels office or watches a French ship firing into the African continent is not the same as the Marlow to whom Kurtz whispers "The Horror!" "The Horror!" or who tells a lie to Kurtz's Intended, and he is also different from the Marlow who tells the story on the *Nellie*. On the other hand the African experience might be called a 'shadow-line' in which the Marlow who sets out for Africa moves, from the point of his departure, increasingly rapidly towards the Marlow that the teller of the tale has become, and in fact only rejoins him finally in the act of telling.

The Marlow at the beginning of "Heart of Darkness" can still be astonished and affected by his experiences, and it is around him that the language of dislocation, displacement (or delayed decoding) is concentrated, conveying his

stunned reactions of disbelief in some of the events, and communicating his own impression of moving through a dream. The bones of Marlow's predecessor showing separately through the grass, the arrows that he at first takes for little sticks, the long cane that turns out to be the shaft of a spear in the helmsman's chest, these serve not only to shock and defamiliarize, or to represent the dream-like, 'surreal' world through which Marlow feels he is moving, but also to indicate the distance between the 'shockable' Marlow of these early experiences and the wiser, more knowing person who tells them. Thus the instances of these phenomena increase in intensity through most of the narrative, but are attenuated in the last part, especially after the arrival at Kurtz's station. By the time Marlow sees the scene that should be the most shocking of all, the heads on the stakes, he has become so used to the horrific and nightmarish quality of his experiences that he is only momentarily surprised to discover that the ornamental knobs on pales are really heads on stakes: "I was not so shocked as you may think. The start back I had given was really nothing but a movement of surprise. I had expected to see a knob of wood there, you know" (HD 57). This is the last of those experiences in which ordinary objects appear to be transformed suddenly as if by magic, into gruesome instruments and symbols of death and horror. In this case delayed decoding is not so much a process of his mind as the logical result of physical distance; the objects are impossible to distinguish until he uses the field glass. After this incident, climactic in its revelation, but anti-climactic in Marlow's reaction to it, he surrenders to the growing cynicism within him and becomes doubly acerbic in his intercourse with everyone around him, the manager, the Russian, the Pilgrims, who represent varying degrees of the hollowness that Kurtz epitomizes. He receives his last "moral shock" (HD 63) that same night on discovering that Kurtz has slipped away.

The multiple divisions within Marlow that result from this process of change, this constant 'becoming' as he moves up river -- a condensed Heraclitean progression of extreme intensity -- joins with yet another kind of division marked by

pronoun changes, especially "I" and "we," (like those pronouns pointed to in "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*") that appear to have more to do with Marlow's inner state than with narrative voice but that ultimately link it with narrative method and point of view, thus joining theme or content with form. The division I refer to is that which L. J. Morrissey calls the "terrible dilemma" between "the collective consciousness" and "the individual ego."<sup>22</sup> In Morrissey's view Kurtz is the central hollow 'box' containing only a resounding, echoing egoism, the Russian is a false compartment, Marlow an intermediary 'box' (though 'box' is unfortunately a solid analogy) between empty egoism and human fellowship, and the narrator, especially at the beginning, is the outer 'box,' at one with the other listeners, his fellows, through the "bond of the sea." The entire story moves from an emphasis on "we" in the outer frame (the outer narrator uses "I" only three times), to the persistent and emphatic appropriateness of Kurtz's ego: " 'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my --' everything belonged to him" (HD 49). And later Marlow repeats the list of Kurtz's obsessions, adding the more abstract ones: "My Intended, my station, my career, my ideas" (HD 67). Marlow's confusion reaches its height on the river steaming towards Kurtz. Says Morrissey:

As a seaman [Marlow] has been trained to see crew and passengers as a kinship group, and his pronouns assert this -- 'we came upon a station,' 'we penetrated deeper' . . . 'we were cut off' (HD 36 - 37). But his crew is made up of twenty cannibals . . . and his passengers are the disgusting 'they' of the Central Station. So Marlow is caught between his habit and training (the collective 'we') and his isolating ego ('I made,' 'I said' . . . 'I stood' [HD 46 and 48]). He is deeply confused.<sup>23</sup>

When wondering why the blacks "didn't go for us" (HD 42), Marlow uses "they," but he also states that the pilgrims open "their" Winchesters to fire into the bush. Thus Marlow dissociates himself from different groups on the steamer at different times. At the end, Marlow sits apart from his listeners, and so does the

outer narrator, who has clearly been the most affected by Marlow's story, and who "listened" and "listened on the watch for the sentence, for the word that would give [him] the clue to the faint uneasiness inspired by [Marlow's] narrative that seemed to shape itself without human lips in the heavy night-air of the river " (HD 30).<sup>24</sup> The shock of Marlow's experiences in Africa, relived in the telling, give him a strong feeling of separation from his fellow men, a feeling at its most intense upon his return to the "Sepulchral city" full of "intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretence" (HD 70).

In spite of Marlow's necessary alienation, the telling of the story approaches the best possible healing process, bringing the shocked Marlow of the African 'adventure' forward in consciousness to join with the more equanimous, reflective Marlow as narrator, and bringing his scared, alienated ego as nearly in line as possible with the collective consciousness of fellowship, a sharing in the telling.

A similar sort of process is involved when the Marlow of the *Nellie* confesses to his listeners the lie to the Intended. He knows the injustice of his lie, since he tells them that when he left the house, he expected it would "collapse," or "that the heavens would fall upon my head" (HD 76), adding that they do not fall "for such a trifle," and wondering whether they would have fallen if he had told her the truth. Aside from the predominant Victorian attitude Marlow holds that women and their world should be protected ("we must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own lest ours gets worse" -- HD 49), Marlow also sees Kurtz's Intended as representing the nobler side of Kurtz before he went to Africa, the "moral impulse which at the last allowed him to recognize 'the horror' he had made of his life," and for this reason Marlow becomes "subconsciously aware that he must lie to preserve the small, frail truth inherent in Kurtz's dying exclamation."<sup>25</sup> In spite of Marlow's good intentions, he hates to tell this lie, and reveals a moral and almost physical repulsion to lying, not because he believes himself to be "straighter than the rest of

us," but because he is appalled by the "taint of death" and "flavour of mortality in lies . . . exactly what I hate and detest in the world -- what I want to forget. It makes me miserable and sick, like biting something rotten would do" (HD 29).

Garrett Stewart focuses on the thematic coupling of death and the lie throughout "Heart of Darkness," but concludes that the irony of Marlow's final lie to the Intended signifies his own falsehood and "spiritual death and undermines his moral reliability as a narrator."<sup>26</sup> However, as Jerome Meckier points out, "Marlow's final act in 'Heart of Darkness' is confessional, not deceitful; far from telling a lie, he tells about having once told one," and taking the lie to the Intended as Marlow's last act means "a cheapening of Kurtz's deathbed integrity and an undermining of Marlow's avowed dedication to truth"; that lie should not replace the yarn aboard the *Nellie* as Marlow's last act, since "the Marlow who recalls the story of Kurtz for his companions on the *Nellie* speaks only the truth."<sup>27</sup>

Marlow's lie and the dependent question of his narrative reliability become even more important in the light of their relationship to the cultural question in "Heart of Darkness." Prevarication joins with corruption, deceit and hypocrisy as the trademarks of colonialism and cultural invasion. To cite Meckier again, "'Heart of Darkness' contains clever variations on the theme of the inadvisability of lying, whether it is done culturally as a collective enterprise or privately as a means of extricating an individual from difficulties. . . . the Marlow-Kurtz encounter explores the tragic consequences of cultural lies, including the absurd belief that civilized man is morally superior to the primitives he exploits under pretence of raising them to his own level."<sup>28</sup> James Clifford in his remarkable book, *The Predicament of Culture*, develops this cultural aspect beyond the enormity and obviousness of the colonialist lie, explaining that "Marlow recognizes . . . different domains of truth -- male and female as well as the truths of the metropole and the frontier" that "reflect . . . knowledge divided by gender and by cultural centre and periphery."<sup>29</sup> Clifford

sees Marlow as learning, despite his abhorrence of lying, "to communicate within the collective, partial fictions of cultural life."<sup>30</sup>

Writing of culture from an anthropological point of view, Clifford emphasizes that the limited, "staged truths," for ever contradicting each other, that have so disturbed Marlow and that he retells on board the *Nellie*, are received by an even more limited audience of Englishmen -- social types who cannot have experienced the exposure to the ultimate truths that Marlow underwent in Africa. And we cannot be sure of the extent to which the second narrator, repeating Marlow's story as faithfully and tolerantly as it is in his power to do, has appreciated that relative message which he and Marlow half-knowingly grope to understand. But his is the " 'outermost' . . . stabilizing voice whose words are not meant to be mistrusted" because he "salvages" and ironically believes these staged truths enacted on the stage of the yawl's deck . However, "cultural relativism as a stable subjectivity, a standpoint for a self that understands and represents a cultural other" has proven to be a partial knowledge of other cultures.<sup>31</sup> Cross-cultural understanding is no more than a "rhetorical construct" traversed by ambivalent attitudes. That the narrator passes on Marlow's lie and the confession of that lie indicates his own and Marlow's straining towards telling the truth. Peter Brooks in *Reading for the plot*, states that "Heart of Darkness" presents its truth as a "narrative transaction" rather than a "summing up" (as in Kurtz's last words). Meaning in the narrative is not a revealed kernel; it exists outside, dialogically, in specific transmission; it is "located in the interstices of story and frame, born of the relationship between tellers and listeners."<sup>32</sup> In stressing the tale's "interminable analysis" Brooks minimises the first narrator's stabilizing function as a special listener (reader), not named or given a limited cultural profession like the others (listeners) on the deck: "Of course in this you fellows see more than I could then. You see me, whom you know" (HD 30). This listener's invisibility guarantees a certain ironic authority, the possibility of seeing and not being seen, of speaking without contradiction about relative truths.

The lie, because it is admitted in shame, does not defeat Marlow's reliability, but reinforces it. Eloise Knapp Hay's argument that confession of limitations may also be an evasion of "other serious deficiencies" and may even be "a kind of excuse for partial honesty, a bid for absolution that will purge sins rankling unrecognized along with the sins one is ready to admit" can only hold true if we regard Marlow as completely unaware of the larger implications of his act and the experiences that triggered it.<sup>33</sup> (This again may be true of a 'real' situation, but in fiction the other possibilities are severely limited). While he may not have achieved the fuller knowledge that his one listener who passes on his story attains, or the even fuller knowledge that is expected of the perceptive reader (a knowledge that gains with each telling), it cannot be forgotten that Marlow is the character who sets the process in motion. Marlow and not Kurtz, or any other character in the inner tale, values individual dignity, integrity, restraint, over collective, cultural civilization. These qualities of character may be present or lacking in individuals of any culture, dominant or not. As a reminder, I refer, for instance, to the restraint exhibited by the "cannibals" on the steamer in not 'going for' the whites, but not by the black helmsman, the Belgian pilgrims, the Russian harlequin or the pan-European Kurtz. It is Marlow who recognizes the arbitrariness of a 'civilization's' support systems upon which too many rely as a testimony to their own inner strength (as in "An Outpost of Progress").

Conrad intended Marlow's lie to disturb. It is meant to discompose Marlow himself at the time he performs it, his listeners at the time he narrates it, and the readers at the time the outer narrator retells it. "Heart of Darkness" leaves the lie with us as Marlow leaves it with his companions, who do not move or break the ensuing silence until one of them, the Director of Companies, takes that silence for the formal *finis* of the tale by changing the subject in an abrupt, awkward and embarrassed return to present reality: "we have lost the first ebb" (HD 76). Conrad

himself, in a letter to Blackwood, places some emphasis on the lie as the "final incident" which in most of his stories gives the preceding pages their "value" and "significance." He writes that "the interview of the man and the girl locks in -- as it were -- the whole 30,000 words of narrative description into one suggestive view of a whole phase of life, and makes of that story something quite on another plane than an anecdote of a man who went mad in the Centre of Africa."<sup>34</sup>

These words do not have to mean that the lie is central to the tale, only that it helps the important moments and episodes to "fall into place," relating them to those parts of "Heart of Darkness" that are situated outside Africa, linking the colonized world with that of its colonizers, so far away, different, unaware. In the European world the accountant plays abstractedly with his *ivory* dominoes, the same four listeners in "Youth" sit around a *mahogany* table, and the entrance door to the home of Kurtz's Intended is also of *mahogany*. True, Marlow builds up to the lie on more than one occasion in Africa: "I laid the ghost of his gifts with a lie" (HD 49). When the Russian expresses concern for Kurtz's reputation, Marlow answers that his "reputation is safe with me" and then comments: "I did not know how truly I spoke" (HD 62). The double irony in these words reverses Marlow's intended irony, for although he lies to the fiancée so as not to betray Kurtz, the truth will out in the "yarn" aboard the *Nellie*. With the outer narrator's story the circle of the audience grows and ultimately reaches the 'public' in the reader.

The lie is a backlash, a part of the "nemesis" of colonialism, and "locks in" the entire story by illustrating that Marlow, with all his perception and understanding of what took place around him in Africa, and with all his efforts to resist contamination from the stifling corruption he found there, cannot escape the fact that he is one of the "conquering race," cannot come away clean from such an experience. It inevitably taints him, embroils him in complications whose repercussions continue well into the period after his return. What matters is his

recognition, complete or groping, of this effect on himself. In telling of his experience, and capping that narration with the account of a lie, he implicates himself and so also his audience in the horrors he has witnessed, since he is "one of us," and has joked about having a heavenly mission to civilize his listeners. He does indeed become a "missionary to, not from, civilization; for, as an enlightened emissary of darkness, he brings the cautionary truth about man with him out of the jungle."<sup>35</sup>

In the above-quoted letter Conrad lists the episode of the lie with all those incidents that clinch his stories, those "final incident[s]" in the light of which a "whole story in all its descriptive detail shall fall into its place -- acquire its value and its significance. This is my method based on deliberate conviction. I've never departed from it."

Here Conrad refers to *method* as it relates to a major *intent* of his writing: conviction and credibility. The lie and its confession enhance Marlow's credibility and give conviction to the entire story. At least one of his listeners is convinced enough to pass that story on, and, to repeat Conrad's quote of Novalis, " 'It is certain my conviction gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it.' " The reader is presented with one soul's conviction of Marlow's story, retold as the narrator claims to have heard it from Marlow's lips. Through his confession of the lie Marlow draws his listeners in and, far from soliciting their absolution, brings them to that sense of complicity that the outer narrator is driven to share, in like manner, with a wider audience. The egoism of Kurtz's 'true nature' is finally 'published abroad,' but with it is imparted his saving death-bed "glimpse of truth"; and Marlow's lie is confessed at the end, but with it is communicated the responsibility of 'all of us.' This is the value of the lie, as of the narrative frame and another reason why, in the "starkly ironic tale told by first person narrators" -- as

Morrissey states in reference to the tensions between the "unleashed ego" and collective consciousness -- "the form is the meaning."<sup>36</sup>

As noted above, in telling his story Marlow arrives at his most conscious awareness of the moral implications of his journey in Africa, and the lie together with its confession demonstrate that he cannot remain innocent, cannot avoid responding in culturally predetermined ways, that he knows this and accepts his own personal responsibility. In this respect, and in spite of some comments of the outer narrator that could possibly be interpreted as revealing more about Marlow than he knows himself (as in the Buddha image), Marlow is more self aware and more equably self critical in "Heart of Darkness" than in "Youth" or than any of Conrad's major first-person narrator-participants in other works of short fiction.

In "Karain" and "Youth" we have seen how the irony of the text speaks louder than the voice of the narrator through the lapses, silences, and contradictions, and through disparities with the situation presented. In "Heart of Darkness" Marlow makes a genuine effort to remain in touch with himself, with his reactions and responses to every experience; and he is largely successful because the periods of failure to do so are always followed (immediately or much later, in the telling) by moments of reflection in which he catches up with himself, discovers where he stands or what his own feelings have been. He admits to being baffled by the restraint of the Africans aboard the steamer, or to being tempted by the jungle as Kurtz undoubtedly had been. This recurring movement of self recognition culminates in his confession of the lie. Two other short stories in which the narrator moves towards such self awareness are "Falk" and "A Smile of Fortune," but in neither tale does he achieve it, since he gives the impression, as in "Karain," of not really wanting to attain that open kind of honesty that Marlow seeks (while knowing that he cannot present his story bluntly to his listeners) in "Heart of Darkness."

Honesty and the various forms of its opposite can be counted an underlying theme not only in "Heart of Darkness" as Meckier suggests, but in these stories too, especially in "Falk," where the narrator and Hermann are alternately contrasted with Falk's blunt and "brutal" frankness. Again this concern of the tale emerges partly from the situation and characters and partly from the manner of first person narrator who, unlike Karain, made a mask from his diplomacy to conceal, for a while, the abruptness of Falk's truth. All of these stories pose the question of their narrators' honesty which is one measure of narrative reliability and also reflects the more general problem of the impossibility of complete communication. But for Conrad, all forms of deception, whether prevarication, retention of information, gossip, illusion or self deception, are a necessary corollary of a complicated, civilized society. While such an implication lies partly hidden among the more open themes of "Karain" (the narrator hides aspects of his attitude to Karain from himself), nowhere is the discomfort of this position more apparent than in "Falk" and "A Smile of Fortune," where a confession of sorts, similar to the final confession of "Heart of Darkness," but less open and less full, concludes the story and leaves an unsavoury aftertaste. In "Falk" this is not Falk's confession of his act of cannibalism but the narrator's admission of his enjoyment of the diplomatic role which contrasts with the foolish role he appears to have held in the eyes of others in the shipping world (aspects of his behaviour considered unbecoming to a ship's captain). His admission follows the repeated references throughout the story to the Hermann family's social concerns and to the 'cannibalism' of gossip. In both gossip and diplomacy speech is the main -- or the only -- medium by which a desired effect is achieved (see chapter three above).

Confession, like eating and cannibalism, gossip and diplomacy is also performed through speech or language. And the mouth itself is the part of the body that in one way or another "Falk" keeps returning to, and through which, according to Tony Tanner, the story emphasizes the "inter-relationship . . . of these three

planes of human activity: the biological . . . the economic . . . and the linguistic."<sup>37</sup> Tanner points out the characteristic first person plural of the outer frame that opens the tale and "conceals the solitude of writing behind the communality of conversing"; it also "seems to transform the author into an author of a tale not of his own making; and it makes the written text appear as a vehicle for speech."<sup>38</sup>

This is all part of that general movement to reduce distance, but in fact it creates and develops that irony whereby the author will not at first appear responsible for the narration, like the impartial Dr Kennedy in "Amy Foster," and may even cast a different light on it. The intimacy of narration in fact distances the conventional reader-author relationship. For "Falk" is as much about narration and the art of story-telling as it is about the conflicts between 'elemental' and social/civilized man. Both are the co-ordinates whereby the position and viewpoint of the tale are disclosed. The story breaks down the conventionally accepted dichotomy between primeval and civilized by giving an inner moral strength to Falk and a simian aspect to characters like Hermann, or like Johnson, the former pilot and the only man besides Falk who can tow the narrator-captain's ship out of the harbour. The narrator finds Johnson living in primitive conditions, domineering his native wife, eating bananas and surrounded by garbage. There is also a continuous tension between the need to tell and the impossibility of communicating, as in Falk's own story.

Because language has increasingly become an autonomous cultural medium that carries man away from his natural state, it is thoroughly implicated in what Tanner terms the "ambiguous position" of individuals "in nature and culture." The impartial narrator must attempt to "translate Falk's unique wordless experience into the vocabulary of people like Hermann, his listeners, and ourselves . . . Falk had to eat the uneatable, and in so doing he discovers the radical relativity of cultural

categories; the narrator has to speak the unspeakable and in so doing he encounters the insoluble problematics of utterance."<sup>39</sup>

It becomes clearer in "Falk" than in any other Conrad tale that narration is an impure combination of acts of confession, gossip and diplomacy, all interlaced, in which the end or purpose of each is compromised by the other two. Without a balance of these elements the message is not received or understood, as Falk's own confession reveals. The reader, especially the contemporary reader, is among those who would not accept or appreciate the full significance of the story if it were conveyed in the completely honest or confessional mode, were that possible. To use a term suggestive of the Victorian Age, the narrator must 'sully himself' in his role of translator and diplomat, not only between Falk and Hermann but also between his story and his listeners. And behind that narrator, the author does the same with his readers who demand to be entertained by the 'gossip,' even as they are made amenable by the diplomat and uncomfortable by the confessor.

The discomfort may well be all that readers bring away from a Conrad story, as good a reason as any for his lack of popularity among his contemporaries. Even if readers do not consciously recognize the story's reflection of their own part in the 'impure' negotiations of the social life, they are left with an aftertaste of the compromise with which the narrator-character must often extricate himself from a difficult situation. This is probably a major reason why "A Smile of Fortune" has not been one of Conrad's best loved tales.

This story also ends with a confession of sorts. Language, honesty (including confession) and gossip are not threaded into the story as heavily as they are in "Falk," nor do eating and the mouth recur as frequently, but their presence is nonetheless felt and Tanner's three interrelated planes of biological, economic and linguistic activity are nonetheless worked into the story's central concern with

communication at both the verbal and non-verbal levels. The problem of communication between the captain-narrator and Alice, the focus of the story, is reflected '*ad infinitum*' in the relationships of the other characters (Alice and her father, Alice and her aunt, her father and his brother, her father and the captain, her family and the rest of the town, the captain and his mate, etc). On the non-verbal plane the senses take on a mounting significance. Food appears (as if by magic, it seems) at the beginning of the tale when the captain first meets Alfred Jacobus, who provides the ship-board breakfast or initial 'bait' by which the captain will be 'caught' in a situation considerably more compromising than that of mediator in "Falk." A kiss on the mouth is the climactic deed that leads to the personal economic compromise of the potato debacle (a return to food) and the half-confession of the captain at the end.

We are likely to find the final confession that does not succeed in making a "clean breast of things" but only manages to rub off some of the sense of guilt onto the reader, particularly disconcerting in its obvious incompleteness and because it lacks listeners to act as a 'cushion' between the storyteller and the reader (like Marlow's listeners in "Heart of Darkness" or the narrator's in "Falk"). We are directly confronted with the embarrassed foolishness of the captain-narrator; we must learn of it first-hand. The reader, then, is more directly compromised, having been 'buttonholed' and cornered in the role of confessor, and perhaps even entertains feelings like those of the listeners at the end of the inner story in "Heart of Darkness" who remain silent or shuffle and change the subject: "We have lost the first of the ebb" (HD 76). The uncomfortable note of confession with which the story ends could well explain why the story has had so few commentators.

Thus the reader may save face until the end at least, the embarrassment having been cannily absorbed, although it in fact grows stealthily behind -- and because of -- this very situation of the story's telling. Baudelaire, on the other hand,

compromises the reader directly -- *hypocrite lecteur*, -- and his use of the vocative is part of the power and fascination that draws the reader in, mingling accusation with brotherhood. Speaking of the monster 'Ennuï' he suddenly ends the poem with this address in the familiar second person: *Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre delicat, / -- Hypocrite lecteur, -- mon semblable, -- mon frere!*<sup>40</sup> To recognize what Conrad is doing here is to perceive new structural/metaphoric connections in the tale. Like "Heart of Darkness" and "Falk," "A Smile of Fortune" focuses as much upon itself, the art of story-telling, and the relationship between writer and reader, as upon its ostensible themes, such as the relationships of gender, paternity, family, friendship, profession, class and ethnic groups (see chapter three above).

The choice of an initial subsidiary narrator in all three of these texts enables the confessions to take place that bring about the reader's discomposure and his full participation in the creative process. Readers are obliged, even if unconsciously, to take a stance on the moral issues that are raised, and to recognize their own roles as individual members of a social system that requires, permits or denies certain patterns of behaviour, often arbitrarily. Custom institutionalizes ways of thought and moral attitudes. This narrative method is one of Conrad's ways of not allowing his readers to settle comfortably into any one of the points of view presented, least of all the narrator's who may at first seem to represent conventional social views. However, although the majority of Conrad's short stories are told by dramatized narrators, he uses different methods to achieve the same objectives in stories that appear to adhere more closely to the conventional, omniscient author presentation. One such text worth examining in this regard is "Typhoon."

F.R. Leavis thinks of "Typhoon" as a minor work but singles it out as a text in which Conrad's "strength may be found in its purest form."<sup>41</sup> John H. Wills emphasizes what he calls the "organic nature" of "Typhoon," and notes that the

theme of the tale is "dissolved in the structural and stylistic elements" of the story.<sup>42</sup> "Typhoon" shows Conrad's concern with the question of physical self-possession: he makes the point that the crew of the *Nan-Shan*, like that of the *Patna*, are subjected to a sudden and unexpected test, and that this particular test (the typhoon) uncovers what is hidden in a crew member like Jukes or the second mate. The most obvious example of theme merging with form is in the letters the crew members send to their families and friends.<sup>43</sup> Each crew member who is a main character in the story writes home in a style that tells us more about his own character through his descriptions of the typhoon (or lack thereof) than about the typhoon itself, and this is brought into relief by the contrast between each of their letters. Thus the third person authorial narration is overlaid with several strata of first person points of view towards the end, inducing comparison of each with the others and also with the narration that went before.

"Typhoon" consists of six parts of equal length: parts I and VI frame the story's central action, which is basically constituted by the ordeal of the storm (and the tumbling of the coolies) which captain MacWhirr meets heroically. Wills states that the first and last parts are "primarily comprised of observations by others upon the character and actions of MacWhirr."<sup>44</sup> It is thematically important that the story ends with Jukes' letter, with no authorial comment appended to it. It is left entirely to the reader to form his judgment. The very beginning of the story immediately establishes an authorial voice with the attention focused on MacWhirr, the captain of the *Nan-Shan*, whose "physiognomy -- was the exact counterpart of his mind: it presented no marked characteristics of firmness or stupidity; it had no pronounced characteristics whatever; it was simply ordinary, irresponsible, and unruffled" (T 3). To emphasize the narrator's authority -- which is strengthened, but not directly verified, by his omniscience -- is not to suggest that all his statements and views should be accepted uncritically. Paul S. Bruss, for example, talks of MacWhirr's "verbal absurdity,"<sup>45</sup> -- a phrase the authorial narrator would never

have employed in the course of telling the story. MacWhirr, besides being non-imaginative, reliable and factual, is described by the narrator as follows: "Yet the uninteresting lives of men so entirely given to the actuality of the bare existence have their mysterious side. It was impossible in captain MacWhirr's case, . . . to understand what under heaven could have induced that perfectly satisfactory son of a petty grocer in Belfast to run away to sea" (T 4-5). The narrator here is both pitying and sympathetic, and ironic through using the oxymoron "perfectly" and "petty" to describe MacWhirr at the "age of fifteen." He also gives his point of view of MacWhirr and his likes, and introduces an analeptic narrative movement outlining MacWhirr's background.

The function of this analepsis (flashback), says Jakob Lothe, "incorporates the first of the several letters which throughout the novella serve as an important, variant on the authorial narrative" and "establishes a contrast . . . between life ashore and aboard the *Nan-Shan*."<sup>46</sup> The letters, written in an unsophisticated manner, provide personal perspectives on the events related by the narrator: "We had very fine weather on our passage out"; "The heat here is very great"; "On Christmas day at 4 p.m. we fell in with some icebergs" (T 5 - 6) MacWhirr wrote his parents. And later he wrote very brief letters to his wife and children: ". . . They are called typhoons . . . The mate did not seem to like it . . . Not in books . . . couldn't think of letting it go on. . . ." ". . . A calm that lasted over twenty minutes," "See you and the children again. . . ." (T 103, Conrad's ellipses). Mrs MacWhirr comments on her husband's letters also very briefly -- "The climate there agrees with him" -- foolishly thinking that "poor MacWhirr had been away touring in China for the sake of his health" (T 105).

Solomon Rout, the chief engineer, also sent brief letters to his wife: "wonders will never cease. . . . That captain of the ship he is in -- a rather simple man -- has done something rather clever"; "If it hadn't been that mother must be looked after, I

would send you your passage -- money to-day . . . We are not growing younger" (T106, Conrad's ellipses). Jukes, the chief mate, still celibate then, who had "no talent for foreign languages mangled the very pidgin-English cruelly" (T 14), also sent more detailed letters to his friend in the Western ocean trade expressing his 'racial superiority' (see chapter two above) and cultural point of view through the omniscient narrator: ". . . It struck me in a flash that those confounded chinamen couldn't tell we weren't a desperate kind of robbers . . . we need have been desperate indeed to go thieving in such weather, but what could these beggars know of us?" "It wasn't made any better by us having been lately transferred to the Siamese flag; though the skipper can't see that it makes any difference -- 'as long as we are on board' -- he says . . . My notion was to keep these Johnnies under hatches for another fifteen hours or so. The old man couldn't see it somehow. He wanted to keep the matter quiet. A trouble with a cargo of chinamen is no child's play" (T107, Conrad's ellipses).<sup>47</sup>

Jukes finishes his letter with a personal comment on his skipper thinking that MacWhirr "got out of it [the trouble] very well for such a stupid man" (T 112). Sharing with a friend his impression of MacWhirr, Jukes, in an early letter, considers the captain "so jolly innocent" (T 20) and elaborates upon his 'dullness.' This description substantiates rather than contradicts Jukes' remark: "He (MacWhirr) doesn't do anything actually foolish" (T19), which is in keeping with the authorial viewpoint "his [ MacWhirr's ] mind . . . presented no marked characteristics of firmness or stupidity" (T 3). This early letter of Jukes is immediately followed by the narrative commentary: "Thus wrote Mr. Jukes to his chum in the Western ocean trade, out of the *fullness* of his heart and the liveliness of his fancy. He had expressed *his honest* opinion. It was not worth while trying to impress a man of that sort. If the world had been full of such men, life would have probably appeared to Jukes an unentertaining and unprofitable business. He was not alone in his opinion" (T 20, my italics).

The use of letters, especially MacWhirr's and Jukes' giving both information and personal points of view, provides a crucial variation in the narrative that at times appears to be monotonously authorial. Jukes' concluding letter reduces the main narrator's focus on MacWhirr, but without ignoring or debasing his profession as a captain. The comment, "I think that he got out of it very well for such a stupid man" (T 112), is an example of curiously modified irony. The narrator here distances himself from Jukes, for MacWhirr's heroic handling of the storm and the coolies clearly does not meet with Jukes' epithet "stupid," and "what was needed," Conrad remarks in his author's note to the story, "of course was captain MacWhirr. Directly I perceived him I could see that he was the man for the situation" (JCF 180).

"Free indirect discourse" combines certain linguistic features of direct and indirect speech: "It evokes the person, through his words, tone of voice, gesture, and it embeds the character's statement or thought in the narrative flow, and even more importantly in the narrator's interpretation, communicating also his way of seeing and feeling."<sup>48</sup> Free indirect discourse fuses perspectives and combines several points of view, by imposing the primary speaker's voice on a secondary speaker's words, though the hierarchy is often inverted. In "Typhoon," the authorial narrator briefly lends his voice to the Chinese coolies to express their own perspective of the hard situation they are facing: "The coming of the white devils was a terror. Had they come to kill?" (T 86) None of the Chinese is heard to speak during the moments of hardships and danger, and if they had spoken they would not have been understood. The statement proceeds from the narrator's omniscience, but he reports it as the coolies' collective utterance or thought, had they been able to speak or think in English. The phrase "the white devils" clearly indicates their point of view. When Mrs MacWhirr catches, at the top of a page in her husband's letter, the phrase "see you and the children again." She has, as the narrator reports, "a movement of impatience. He was always thinking of coming home. He had never

had such a good salary before. What was the matter now? . . . She let fall her hands. No: there was nothing more about coming home. Must have been merely expressing a pious wish" (T103 - 4). This instance shows how slight the bridge from pure narration to free indirect discourse can be, and how unobtrusive the transition from single to dual voice. The reader only gradually realizes the fusion of perspectives: of the narrator and Mrs MacWhirr.

One of "Typhoon['s]" concerns is the moral implication of interpretation. The characters are faced with the problem of making sense of their world from limited information. The problem of interpretation in the story occurs at different levels: captain MacWhirr has to make credibility of the omens of bad weather, the recipients of letters have to interpret them, and then the reader has to use his interpretative experiences in reading the tale against the imaginative procedures depicted in the text.

"Typhoon" is told in a straightforward way (although ironic on some occasions), far from sophistication, the various constituent aspects of its narrative -- the authorial omniscience, the shifts of perspective, the use of letters -- present several thematic concerns that are both persuasive and suggestive. The drama of the *Nan-Shan* struggling with the storm emphasizes human perseverance, courage, solidarity, and the ability to face up to difficult ordeals. The disparity in the many voices and perspectives, so strong at the beginning and the end of the story, gives way temporarily to a sense of unity at its climax, in the description of the crew in the midst of the storm: "a knot of men, indistinct and toiling, were making great efforts in the light of the wheelhouse windows that shone mistily on their heads and backs" (T 41).

To elaborate more on the cultural theme through narration and cultural point of view, may I be allowed to take one longer Conrad work, *Under Western Eyes*

which presents an entire story largely from a single cultural perspective. The "Western Eyes" are not only those of the narrator as an individual but also the eyes of all the West as represented by the English teacher of languages. The Russian characters of the novel are "exposed cruelly to the observation of [his] Western eyes" (UWE 322); "difference of nationality is a terrible obstacle for our complex Western natures" (UWE 144). The role and significance of cultural viewpoint throughout this novel are emphasized in the title which already implies that the events narrated will never yield up their full significance to the Western reader, that they cannot be fully understood because of the limitations of custom in ways of perceiving, limitations that act as the frame of the story.

In his author's note to *Under Western Eyes*, Conrad states that his main concern "was the aspect, the character, and the fate of the individuals as they appeared to the Western Eyes of the old teacher of languages. He himself has been much criticized; . . . He was useful to me and therefore I think that he must be useful to the reader both in the way of comment and by the part he plays in the development of the story. In my desire to produce the effect of actuality it seemed to me indispensable to have an eye-witness of the transactions in Geneva" (JCF 203, -- which is regarded as the "heart of democracy, . . . A fit heart for it" -- (UWE 213). But the narrator disclaims all the skills of the story-teller and only offers to tell the facts. Conrad admits that this narrator "has been much criticized":

Conrad's use of the English teacher as narrator is a most unsatisfactory device. This is partly a technical weakness. His presence during the confession scene between Razumov and Natalia is embarrassing, as if he were a voyeur peeping in at this scene of torment. We may echo Razumov's complaint: 'How did this old man come here?' His insistence on his lack of imagination appears ridiculous, for he recounts his tale with compelling force . . . He is himself a participant during important scenes, and this double role, as uncomprehending bystander and imaginative narrator, muddles his effects, particularly when he is describing his impressions of Razumov in Geneva.<sup>49</sup>

The narrator seems to contradict himself; and from the beginning he gives the impression of an unreliable narrator. He is at pains to describe himself as unimaginative and unskilled; and he invariably apologizes for his interpolations:<sup>50</sup> "I wish to disclaim the possession of those high gifts of imagination and expression. If I have ever had these gifts in any sort of living form they have been smothered out of existence a long time ago under a wilderness of words. Words . . . are the great foes of reality" (UWE 55).

The narrator, like those discussed earlier in this chapter, is making a confession of sorts that tells us more than what he is ostensibly saying and more about himself -- and about ourselves -- than we are perhaps willing to hear. His reference to words discloses two things about language in particular: first, that precisely because it is a medium (a transmitter and not the 'thing-in-itself'), language obstructs and interferes with meaning and communication as much as it facilitates them; second, that the narrator feels this strongly as a personal problem because he is a teacher of languages (and not an artist, for example, or a poet). On the one hand we suspect this disclaimer as a kind of false modesty that produces much the same effect of discomfort in the reader as the confessions of those other short story narrators discussed above, and on the other hand we begin to look for some failings in the narrator that might have led him to make such a statement. In due course we discover that for all his ability to convey an interesting picture of the situation and events he describes, the man is indeed no poet because he tends to be prolix, and his prolixity is related to his voyeurism. Words do get in his way, not only because of the nature of language, but also because of his own personal failings. Sight and speech (and hand-touch on some occasions) are his way of living vicariously -- also a condition of authors and readers. Finally, words get in his way because of the cultural limitations on his perspective, a problem that he is partly

aware of. His Western way of seeing, and of reproducing or re-creating what he sees, is totally bound up with language. Thus his own wordy fastidiousness also reflects the Western bondage to the word. While in one sense he could be said to have too much "imagination and expression" these "gifts" are inseparable from his ego and his cultural background, and cannot transcend these limitations.

The narrator's view of the Russian language is almost directly opposite: rather than Western language that is at best only partially informed by "our deepest affections," Russian language and even Russian silences are governed by informing energy, informing feeling, "Whenever two Russians come together, the shadow of autocracy is with them, tinging their thoughts, their views, their most intimate feelings, their private life, their public utterances -- haunting the secret of their silence" (UWE 173). This brings in the precise tension between words and silences, a distinction the narrator draws between West and East bondage to the word. What remains striking to the teacher of languages is "the Russians' extraordinary love of words. They gather them up; they cherish them, but they don't hoard them in their breasts; on the contrary, they are always ready to pour them out by the hour or by the night with an enthusiasm, a sweeping abundance, with such an aptness of application sometimes that, as in the case of very accomplished parrots, one can't defend oneself from the suspicion that they really understand what they say" (UWE 56). Language expresses its object and its emptiness at the same time; it refers outwardly to the world and inwardly to its own conventionality and arbitrariness. Lacking the gifts of understanding the Russian language, in any 'universal' or 'metaverbal' sense, the teacher of languages cannot also comprehend the Russian characters:<sup>51</sup> "The illogicality of their attitude, the arbitrariness of their conclusions, the frequency of the exceptional, should present no difficulty to a student of many grammars; but there must be something else in the way, some special human trait -- one of those subtle differences that are beyond the ken of mere professors" (UWE 56). The limitation of the narrator here is not restricted to his Western eyes, but

extended to his occupational role. As a professor and grammarian he is locked in by a dependency on words he no longer finds meaning in.<sup>52</sup>

Familiar with Russia and the Russians, he offers to understand the mystique of the Russian character which he sees as cynicism. He frequently confesses himself baffled; "Admitting that we occidentals do not understand the character of your [Miss Haldin's] people" (UWE 135); "vague they were to my Western mind and to my Western sentiment . . . I was like a traveller in a strange country" (UWE 135); "The Westerner in me was discomposed" (UWE 300); and "one must be Russian to understand Russian simplicity" (UWE 134). This bafflement may prompt the reader to wonder whether the narrator is Conrad's device for incorporating his own thoughts and feelings into the novel, but in disguise. Conrad again in his author's note to *Under Western Eyes* distances himself from the narrator (who also "felt profoundly [his] European remoteness" -- UWE 314), claiming that he "had never been called before to a greater effort of detachment: detachment from all passions, prejudices, and even from personal memories" (JCF 203). If the narrator expresses Conrad's views, it is in a crude way; and thus he may have served to release some of the tensions Conrad went through while writing *Under Western Eyes*,<sup>53</sup> and also he may have helped Conrad, in Guerard's words, to "keep his saving distance," a characteristic Conradian gesture of "forceful imaginative removal . . . from the world of his story."<sup>54</sup> For John Palmer, "this emotional withdrawal yields a narrator who is full of theory instead of feeling, and whose pompous abstractions often hide the book's subject, instead of bringing it closer."<sup>55</sup> The novel's view on Russia, says Kermode, "are not Conrad's; his were not Western eyes. Here is a difference in points of view that produces an authentic stereography. And that expression 'points of view' is inherent in narrative; he did not discover them, nor has he shown that they came into being with the great cultural changes of the modern era."<sup>56</sup> These points of view, whether the narrator's or the author's, relate to the difference between Russians (but not the simple, rustic people of the East depicted in "Youth"

or "Karaïn") and the West of Europe, especially to the difference between Russia (which is "a nation so difficult to understand by Europe" *NLL*, P.98) and Switzerland the stage of political freedom and the 'bastion' of democracy.

The narrator's double role of "uncomprehending bystander and imaginative narrator," with its confusion of attitudes, is not only connected with Conrad's "split vision" but also with his narrative strategy to create uncertainty in the presentation of Razumov's by no means simple moral predicament. Guerard also argues that there is "no small degree of intellectual identification with Razumov."<sup>57</sup> Conrad might have felt this saving distance to be a fictional necessity. The narrator bases his narration mainly on observations, Razumov's notebook, which is "like the open book of fate" (*UWE* 135), Peter Ivanovitch's autobiography and other documents, shifting his Western cultural point of view between a third-person omniscient observer and a first-person eye-witness - participant.<sup>58</sup> "The very words I use in my narrative are written where their sincerity cannot be suspected" (*UWE* 214). He is "a mute witness of things Russian, unrolling their Eastern logic under [his] Western Eyes" (*UWE* 348).

*Under Western Eyes* is the novel of eyes. Like "Falk" and "A Smile of Fortune," *Under Western Eyes* is dominated by voyeurism and the language of eyes which pervades most of Conrad's work.<sup>59</sup> The language teacher is infatuated by Miss Haldin's "trustful eyes . . . the most trustful eyes in the world" (*UWE* 330); her glance "was direct and trustful as that of a young man yet unspoiled by the world's wise lessons. And it was intrepid, but in this intrepidity there was nothing aggressive" (*UWE* 102). The narrator is struck by her "grey eyes shaded by black eyelashes" (*UWE* 132), and more than once he refers to her "trustful eyes."

The grey and trustful eyes of Miss Haldin no less than the black and glittering eyes of Sophia Antonovna prove to be a significant feature through the

telling of the story. A compelling emotional intensity is conveyed and sustained throughout the many voyeuristic and erotic instances in which references to eyes show how Miss Haldin and the narrator affect each other (although she does not show any response) either by the ways they look or by the ways they try to read each other's secrets. In the beginning of the second part of the novel the narrator casts several lustful glances at Miss Haldin with the eyes of a lover (however platonic and decorous his feelings for her might be); thus the narrator's attention to her physiognomy indicates her effect on him and reveals him to be an embarrassing character, reminiscent of the voyeuristic captain-narrators of "Falk" and "A Smile of Fortune." This embarrassment is passed to the reader from a biased narrator who despite his protestations that he "judged [Miss Halden] . . . with an unbiased mind" (UWE 133), states that he is "not ashamed of the warmth of [his] regard for Miss Halden" (UWE 193). Her impact on him is unmistakable: "her fine eyes met mine with a very quiet expression" (UWE 133); "she directed upon me her grey eyes shaded by black eyelashes, and I became aware, notwithstanding my years, how attractive physically her personality could be to a man capable of appreciating in a woman something else than the mere grace of femininity. Her glance was as direct and trustful as that of a young man yet unspoiled by the world's wise lessons." "I shall confess that I became very much attached to that young girl" (UWE 132 - 3); "she looked at me searchingly with her clear grey eyes" (UWE 135); "her clear eyes . . . shone upon me brilliantly grey in the murky light of a beclouded, inclement afternoon" (UWE 138). The sequent string of sliding/twining adjectives: "grey" "murky" "beclouded" and "inclement" all reflect upon the dark Russian lives in their submission to/or revolt against autocracy, tyranny, cruelty and death, but do not suggest, as the old teacher may think, seductiveness or lust.

The narrator, at the end of his story, parts with Miss Haldin in a mood of regret: "My existence seemed so utterly forgotten . . . I ceased to exist" (UWE 322); "[we] should never see each other again. Never!" To his "Western eyes she seemed

to be getting farther and farther from [him], quite beyond [his] reach" (UWE 343). He says "good-bye to Natalia Haldin. It is hard" for him to think that he will "never look any more into the trustful eyes of that girl . . . It's difficult to believe that it must be good-bye with us" (UWE 345). The narrator's feelings of sexual attraction and jealousy for Miss Haldin are not acknowledged. Maureen Fries has noted that "the narrator tends to see her as a sublimated sex object."<sup>60</sup> In the last interview between Razumov and Natalia, the narrator describes her "marvellous harmony of feature, of lines, of glances, of voice, which made of the girl before him a being so rare" (UWE 340). The narrator, a silent spectator, notes "while speaking [with Razumov] she raised her hands above her head to untie her veil, and that movement displayed for an instant the seductive grace to her youthful figure . . . her grey eyes had an enticing lustre" (UWE 323). The narrator parts with Miss Haldin "with an expressive and warm handshake. The grip of her strong, shapely hand had a seductive frankness, a sort of exquisite virility" (UWE 162). His description of her hand "shapely" and "seductive" implies the narrator's concealed undercurrent sexual attraction to Miss Haldin, while "grip" and "virility" suggest the lack of response to his longings. In contrast to this handshake is the handshake between the teacher and Razumov: "Before Miss Haldin had ceased speaking I felt the grip of his hand on mine, a muscular, firm grip, but unexpectedly hot and dry. Not a word or even a mutter assisted this short and arid handshake . . . I intended to leave them to themselves, but Miss Haldin *touched* me lightly on the forearm with a *significant contact*, conveying a distinct wish" ( UWE 199, my italics).

In *Under Western Eyes*, with its stress on the authenticity of facts recorded in "verifiable" documents, the narrator cannot be considered the ultimate authority on the truth value of his statements. His obvious bias is clearly in favour of Miss Haldin, his latent jealousy and dislike of Razumov, ("I was . . . displeased with that unknown young man" -- UWE 189, the "Incomprehensible youth" -- UWE 210) and his virulent antipathy against Peter Ivanovitch and *Madame de S* -- are all built on

private information and on his personal observation. He confesses to "having looked upon these young people as the quarry" of Peter Ivanovitch (UWE 190). His professions of critical self-awareness alert the reader to its limitations: "so I judged with I believe an unbiased mind"; "it is a vain enterprise for sophisticated Europe to try and understand these doings" (UWE 151); "I was but a Westerner" (UWE 162); "difference of nationality is a terrible obstacle for our complex Western natures" (UWE 144); "my Western eyes had failed to see" (UWE 345); "It is quite possible that I don't understand" (UWE 134); he is "a dense Westerner . . . a dense occidental" (UWE 141); he is pleased to call himself with slight coquetry, there is nothing for him to do but strain his eyesight and scan faces in order to try to understand what is Russian.

Throughout *Under Western Eyes*, as Tony Tanner has suggested, the narrator constantly asserts his inability to comprehend and tries to impress on the reader "the alienness, the regrettable primitiveness of his material"; he alludes to the fact that "this is not a story of the West of Europe" (UWE 72) and to his own profound "European remoteness" and detachment as a Western observer.<sup>61</sup> The narrator, from first to last, is a disclaimer: "To begin with," he says at the opening, "I wish to disclaim . . ." and he ends "without comment in [his] character of a mute witness . . ." This statement shows the generative antitheses of the narrative as a whole, as the narrator conceives of them: the tension between East and West, order and ambiguity ("Eastern logic"); words and silence -- "There runs throughout a counterpoint of East and West," -- as Guerard has put it, and this "counterpoint becomes necessarily, and perhaps unluckily for the West, a counterpoint of Russia and Switzerland."<sup>62</sup> The narrator allows himself an "impious" and ironic utterance at the end succumbing to a simple story, the seemingly "childish, crude inventions . . . for the theatre or a novel" (UWE 138). The narrator's peculiar combination of reservations, inconsistencies, and simplifying generalizations leaves the reader doubting his intellectual integrity and coherence and assumed 'superiority' of his

own Western culture. Throughout his narrative, embarrassment (without feeling shame) cloaks the narrator especially whenever he shows his passions and regard for Natalia Haldin.

The Western tendency to associate the erotic with the exotic (especially the oriental exotic), turns up in several of Conrad's characters. The strongest early example is the relationship between Willems and Aissa in *An Outcast of the Islands*, but the motif recurs several times, especially in *Lord Jim* and a number of the short stories. In "Falk" and "A Smile of Fortune" voyeurism comes to the fore as a particular perversion of the erotic theme, and although the object of that voyeurism is a Western character in "Falk" (Hermann's niece) and a half-caste in "A Smile of Fortune" (Alice), the effects of the exotic setting and the decadence of the Westerners in that environment indicate the influence of the exotic/erotic association. In *Under Western Eyes* the link is even stronger between the language teacher's voyeurism and his Western attitude.

The continued insistence on the incomprehensibility of Russian life and thought, the reiterated suggestion of a missing piece to a puzzle, and the general feeling of mystery the narrator believes to pervade the Russian characters, all contribute to the peculiar relationship with Miss Haldin of curiosity, awe, attraction and protection, and also to the prying quality of his presence in delicate situations such as that referred to by Cox (quoted above). Not only voyeurism but also eavesdropping may be included among his traits in that scene between Natalia Haldin and Razumov. But because he is a teacher of languages who relies, in Western fashion, chiefly on verbal communication, and even tends towards prolixity, through him Conrad is posing the question of the implicit voyeurism of language and especially of literature, particularly as it relates to the exotic/erotic escape. A similar connection was implied in "Falk" through the unsettling similarity of

voyeurism and gossip. In both the story and the novel the reader is caught up in the implications of these connections.

Through the act of reading, and of reading fiction in particular, readers find themselves reflected in these all too human character-narrators, as does the author in the act of writing. Although storytelling is universal, fiction writing and reading are institutionalized particularly in the novel in Western cultures to the point that we are no longer aware of their distortion of nature and reality. They are a form of vicariousness and may even be perceived, in the extreme, as an alternative to living. Perhaps more than any of his contemporaries, Conrad, who gave up an active life in another profession that literally led him to so many different places and experiences in the real world, must have been plagued by these inherent contradictions in the writing of fiction, and could surely only agree with his narrator, but with a far greater awareness of the ironic implications of the statements, that words "are the great foes of reality."

Conrad's intricate narrative method suggests an understanding of some of his fiction as complex, multi-faceted, and partly unresolved thematically. There are several narrative strategies within the Conrad canon; and *Under Western Eyes*, is perhaps the Conrad text which does most to justify this generalization.

Conrad uses both the authorial voice and dramatized narrators with multiple viewpoints, narrative frames filtered through unidentified narrator. Altered perspective, the serpentine movements of the narrative in place and time, the variety of stylistic modes, the numerous defamiliarization devices, displacement and delayed decoding -- all these oppose and test conventional and romantic notions of the world by emphasizing disparity, diversity, complexity, contradiction and ambiguity. They also express the factual and moral uncertainty that besets the act of narrative understanding.

Conrad also chooses to reveal his characters gradually, restricting the reader to what can be gathered from hints, gossip, and indirect report. The full disclosure of hidden facts can itself produce a powerful surprise, forcing the reader to modify or even reverse his earlier impressions. In "The End of the Tether," for instance, Conrad creates surprise by withholding information about Whalley's blindness; when his plight is revealed, presented in sympathetic terms as the last of a long series of misfortunes, it intensifies both his tragedy and our involvement with him. Elsewhere the delayed disclosure acts as a more obvious plea for sympathy, or shock, as can be seen in Stevie in *The Secret Agent* and in Falk in "Falk" respectively.

The selection of Conrad's shorter fictional works discussed in this chapter can be representative and varied enough to justify the generalization about his style, narrative method and form. The other shorter works that did not find a place here are already discussed in chapters three and four above where the focus is mainly on the theme of culture and intercultural communication with considerable allusion to those works' form and narration, especially the first-person participant-narrator stories like "The Secret Sharer," "Freya of the Seven Isles," "The Shadow-Line" and other stories.

## CONCLUSION

Conrad held little hope for intercultural communication at a communal or collective level, especially where political or economic interests reinforce collective conceit and officially sanctioned corruption. As soon as colonialism is involved, cultural interaction must necessarily be negative, not only between the exploiter and the exploited but also among the exploiting nations competing with each other. Exploitation, exploring, 'civilizing,' 'enlightening' all include cultural and intercultural confrontation.

Conrad had no illusions about intercultural communication on a grand scale. In a celebrated letter to Cunninghame Graham he frankly declares that an organized social and political unity of all men is an impossible illusion.

International fraternity may be an object to strive for, and, in sober truth . . . I will try to think it serious, but that illusion imposes by its size alone. . . What would you think of an attempt to promote fraternity amongst people living in the same street. I don't even mention two neighbouring streets. Two ends of the same street. There is already as much fraternity as there can be -- and thats [sic] very little and that very little is no good. What does fraternity mean. Abnegation -- self-sacrifice means something.<sup>1</sup>

He later adds: "Fraternity means nothing unless the Cain-Abel business. That's your true fraternity." What people achieve in the practical world falls far short of their theories and ideals. Movements to improve society as a whole and bring about universal brotherhood, politically or otherwise, must come under suspicion for the very idealistic and illusory quality of their goals. But Conrad did believe in national identity. He saw Russia as an imperialistic power, as he states explicitly in

"Autocracy and War," a power that had largely destroyed the national independence of Poland, his own country of origin:

. . . the ghost of Russian might, overshadowing with its fantastic bulk the councils of Central and Western Europe, sat upon this gravestone of autocracy, cutting off from air, from light, from all knowledge of themselves and of the world, the buried millions of Russian people.

[The] spectre of Russia's might [soulless autocracy] still faces Europe from across the teeming graves of Russian people . . . Russia's might is unavoidable. (*Notes on Life and Letters*, pp.83 - 114)

And the "Imperial impulses" of Germany, says Conrad, prove "that no peace for the earth can be found in the expansion of material interests which she seems to have adopted exclusively as her only aim, ideal, and watchword" (*Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 113).

But national identity is not synonymous with chauvinism or xenophobia, which Conrad deplored. He still maintained that strong sense of human fellowship and community of which he speaks in his prefaces and which he attempts to impart or recall to his readers through his fiction.

For Conrad that fellowship also includes the bond in human weakness. All characters (whether virtuous or vicious) portrayed in a Conrad text are treated as 'one of us,' and all share a kinship even with the basest of humankind. In a letter to Edward Garnett of 24th Sept. 1895, Conrad writes "to me [these characters] are typical of mankind, where every individual wishes to assert his power, woman by sentiment, man by achievement of some sort -- mostly base. I myself . . . have been

ambitious to make it clear and have failed in that, as Willems fails in his effort to throw off the trammels of earth and of heaven."<sup>2</sup>

At the individual level, the success or failure of attempted communications between people from different cultures (and the ensuing acts of loyalty and betrayal) is a central preoccupation of most of Conrad's work. But failure to communicate is more frequent than success, and characters are driven back to their crippling solitude and normal human condition, to "the tremendous fact of our isolation, of the loneliness impenetrable and transparent, elusive and everlasting; of the indestructible loneliness that surrounds, envelopes, clothes every human soul from the cradle to the grave, and, perhaps, beyond" (OI 205).

In most of the short stories and tales discussed in the foregoing chapters, individuals find themselves either under pressure from their culture or, more often, in isolation from it. The isolation may be physical or it may take the form of social ostracism or mental alienation (as the case of Decoud in *Nostromo*). Separate or combined, whatever its forms, this condition almost invariably activates the individuals' worst traits, exposes their defects and weaknesses, often for the first time even to themselves, repeating the situation of Kayerts and Carlier in "An Outpost of Progress." In a few cases they are, like Yanko in "Amy Foster," or Alice Jacobus the helpless victims of circumstances; in others their flaws lead them deeper into the isolation from which they suffer (Geoffrey Renouard). All of them face moral choices or dilemmas through which isolation or social pressure (or both, as with Falk, Freya, Renouard), test their character and lead them to honour or betray their loyalties, to persist in self deception or achieve self recognition, to succumb to illusion or wake to reality. They are not all white, Western European characters, but in such a situation they all undergo similar experiences, whatever their culture may be.

Although in several of Conrad's novels interest in ethnic cross-cultural relationships tends to focus on exogamous courtship or marriage, his short stories revolve around a wider variety of intercultural relationships, from courtship and marriage as in "Amy Foster," through paternal relationships as with Alfred Jacobus and Alice in "A Smile of Fortune" to friendship and acquaintance based on trade, wars, adventure ("The Lagoon," and "Karain"). In some cases the relationship is one of personal, national or ethnic rivalry and hostility ("Freya of the Seven Isles," and "The Duel"). Others omit the ethnic aspect altogether, but continue to present the influence of culture on the shaping of political differences and political personalities ("An Anarchist," "The Informer"). Some characters live so long in isolation that attempts to communicate with those of their own culture pose as many problems as ethnic cross-cultural relationships ("Falk," "A Smile of Fortune," and "The Planter of Malata"). To this situation must be added the role of class culture in setting up distances and barriers ("Falk," "The Planter of Malata," and "The Return"). Conrad's characters represent more than themselves. They embody the spirit of a nation or class, and the dramatic conflict in the stories stems from the clash of the different cultures they represent. Wanderers, exiles, and outcasts, for example, are a product of the society from which they are banished or banish themselves.

Conrad also knew that romantic exoticism was not the solution either to the individual's problems within the community or to intercultural distrust and conflict. He recognized, too, that romanticism concerning the foreign was as much a cultural product of European society as its racism, colonialism, imperialism, that it was little more than one of Romanticism's many superficial conventions.<sup>3</sup> In several short stories that abound in Romanticism's favourite conventions, Conrad manages to entice his readers into implicitly condoning his subversions and reversals of those conventions, which he reshapes to fit characters, events and issues that belong to his own times. The conventions are no longer recognizable as such, so well do they blend with the feeling of reality Conrad strives to convey with conviction, even when

they also bring to it a dreamlike quality. In "A Smile of Fortune," for instance, echoes of ancient myths and motifs from traditional folk and fairy tales reverberate throughout the story of a very ordinary and business-minded shipping chandler and his daughter, only to work against themselves and ironically serve to underscore the contrast with the entirely unmythical situation of the characters. Conrad's unusual use of romantic conventions, like his treatment of exoticism and adventure, is one of the means by which he infuses his stories with a mixture of dream and reality as two faces of the same phenomenon of life and nature. But the more obvious romanticism in most of the tales has yet another role whereby Conrad sets a trap for his readers as much as for his characters. The lure of the exotic entices his readers towards what appears to be a form of romantic escape, but the escape that his Eastern and other foreign locales seem to promise is soon transformed into a sharing in the responsibility for his characters' escapism, as for some of their other actions. In *Lord Jim* readers recognise as their own the society that produced Jim, that tried him, and that offered a perception of the world through which he would be lured into behaving as he did.

The East nonetheless remained a source for Conrad's fiction. It provided him with the creative impetus both initially -- he wrote in *A Personal Record* (P. 87), "If I had not got to know Almayer pretty well it is almost certain there would never have been a line of mine in print" -- and on into his last stories. Of *The Shadow Line* he says in the author's note: "As to locality, it belongs to that part of the Eastern seas from which I have carried away into my writing life the greatest number of suggestions" (JCF 224). But this was in part because the tensions and ironies of the romantic-exotic could best be played out in exotic settings, as could the problems of intercultural communication to which they are related.

At least once in every Eastern tale Conrad refers to the abyss or void, to some encounter with nothingness. Of Almayer he says that "day after day, month

after month, year after year, he had been falling, falling, falling, it was a smooth, round, black thing, and the black walls had been rushing up with wearisome rapidity" (AF 89). The vision of the abyss is partly the product of Western man's infatuation with action. Conrad elaborates this obsession from two different but related points of view. On the one hand, most of his stories centre on a personal quest for values and success; on the other, this effort is "sanctioned and directed by established custom whose authority derives from a spurious philosophy of progress and linear historicism."<sup>4</sup> Conrad himself stresses "action" on more than one occasion. He speaks of "Action" in which "is to be found the illusion of a mastered destiny, can alone satisfy our uneasy vanity and lay to rest the haunting fear of the future -- a sentiment concealed . . . Let us act lest we perish. . . ." Also in a letter to William Blackwood, Conrad affirms that the essence of his fiction is "action . . . nothing but action -- action observed, felt and interpreted with an absolute truth to my sensations . . . action of human beings that will bleed to a prick, and are moving in a visible world."<sup>5</sup>

Conrad brings to readers an awareness of other possible constructions of reality through changes in point of view. Multiple points of view and stories within more than one outer frame act as a reminder that there is no single reality shared by all, and that even when social consensus sets up one system of beliefs, it holds true within that community, where "every form of legality is bound to degenerate into oppression, and the legality in the forms of monarchical institutions sooner, perhaps, than any other" (*Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 101).

Individual relationships of an intercultural nature may not be lasting and enduring. Few Conrad characters benefit from such contacts. The cause of their failure lies within themselves, but is also linked with the failure of intercultural communication at the grander, collective level. The village of Colebrook in "Amy Foster" never fully accepts Yanko. It fails to establish a basis of communication

with the castaway. Amy Foster makes the effort and appears to be the exception. Her ultimate failure has its source in that same fear and ignorance that she inherits from her community.

Conrad did not accept that a certain culture was superior to another. As I hope to have shown in the previous pages, the implications of Conrad's fiction are that we should willingly take other cultures on their own terms and try to understand them or at least to treat them with tolerance instead of ignoring or ignorantly vilifying them. Conrad himself may well have entertained some of the prejudices of his time but understood the relativity and transience of most belief systems, and cultural conventions. He sought deeper values that might possibly be shared by all people of this planet but constantly cautioned (through characters and viewpoints) against the rigidity and limited vision of too close an adherence to one perception, point of view, set of beliefs or conventions. He led his readers to reappraise their views of the issues of racism and 'supposed superiority.' Both Hunt Hawkins and Peter Nazareth, for instance, have pointed out that a number of Third World writers recognise and appreciate this aspect of Conrad. Hawkins states that Conrad "was not able to break entirely free from the racial biases and epithets of his age. But we should recognise his special status as one of the few writers of his period who struggled with the issue of race."<sup>6</sup> No one is free of all prejudice, but Conrad fared better on that score than his contemporaries. In the words of C.P. Sarvan, Conrad "was not entirely immune to the infection of the beliefs and attitudes of his age, but he was ahead of most in trying to break free."<sup>7</sup>

For Conrad the distinction between 'civilized' and 'primitive,' a distinction which was taken as the essential premise of life by his European characters living in or trading with far remote places and islands especially in the Eastern seas or in the Pacific and Indian oceans, was fundamentally apocryphal. In the 1895 author's

note to *Almayer's Folly*, Conrad stresses the common plight of all mankind. I find it suitable to end with these words:

I am content to sympathize with common mortals, no matter where they live; in houses or in tents, in the streets under a fog, or in the forest . . . for, their land -- like ours -- lies under the inscrutable eyes of the Most High. Their hearts -- like ours -- must endure the load of the gifts from Heaven: the curse of facts and the blessing of illusions, the bitterness of our wisdom and the deceptive consolation of our folly.<sup>8</sup>

I never pretended to be better than the people in the next street or even in the same street.<sup>9</sup>

## END NOTES

## NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Conrad, *Last Essays* (London: Dent, 1926), pp. 207-8. Some of Conrad's famous novels are begun as short stories: *Lord Jim* was titled "Tuan Jim: A Sketch," *The Secret Agent* was "Verloc," and *Under Western Eyes* was "Razumov."

<sup>2</sup>Ramond Williams in his *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Great Britain: Fontana paperbacks, 1976, repr. 1981), pp. 87-93, says that culture has come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought. He gives a thorough account of the etymology of the word in several languages and the different connotations in English. The connotations most relevant to this study are discussed briefly in Chapter One above.

<sup>3</sup>The "form/content dichotomy," says Jakob Lothe, "is seen as a most complicated relationship which can be observed in Conrad's fictional texts. When the relationship is productive and successful, as in 'Heart of Darkness,' it becomes particularly difficult to discriminate between constituent aspects of form and content," *Conrad's Narrative Method* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1989), p.2. Edward Said remarks that Conrad's fiction is "great for its presentation, not only for what it was representing," "Conrad: The Presentation of Narrative" in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p.90,cf.p.101.

<sup>4</sup>The reason for this problem is that "Conrad often endows his narrators with an ability or tendency to generalize; and such generalizations may appear to approach the author's own views," Lothe, pp.10-11.

<sup>5</sup>Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1987), pp.70-77.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter I of Zdzislaw Najder, *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>2</sup>Tolerance was the catchword associated with Voltaire. The emphasis on tolerance, on a relative view of laws and customs, and on secular attitudes can be found in Voltaire's works from the *Lettres philosophiques* (1734) through the tales and poems to the *Essai sur les mœurs* (1756) and the *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764). Refinement of the sensibilities appears especially in Rousseau's fiction (e.g. *La Nouvelle Heloise*, (1761). Of the three major 'philosophes' who so strongly influenced European thought, Diderot best exemplifies this notion of culture; his wide range of interest is reflected in the immense variety of his works in the form of letters, dialogues, essays, plays or novels on science, art, music, philosophy, the theatre from *Lettre sur les aveugles* (1749) to *Le Neveu de Rameau* published posthumously in 1821.

<sup>3</sup>The best example of a cultured individual (in the Conradian sense) at variance with received culture in "Heart of Darkness," in which Marlow revolts against the sham Belgian objectives of 'enlightening' the peoples of Africa, i.e. imposing their own culture upon another community and exploiting it. See Chapter Two of this study.

<sup>4</sup>See Robert D. Hamner, for example, "Joseph Conrad and the Colonial World: A Selected Bibliography." *Conradiana*, 14, No. 3 (1982), 217 - 229. This contains theses as well as articles. Of the published books I am thinking in particular of Norman Sherry's two related works, *Conrad's Eastern World* (Cambridge, 1966) and *Conrad's Western World* (Cambridge, 1971).

<sup>5</sup>Jane Miller, "Writing in a Second Language," *Raritan: A Quarterly Review*, 2, No. 1 (1982), 115 - 132.

<sup>6</sup> "An Outpost of Progress" was one of the first five short stories Conrad published under the title *Tales of Unrest* in 1898, two years after *An Outcast of the Islands* and just three years before "Amy Foster."

<sup>7</sup>Joseph Conrad, *Tales of Unrest*, "An Outpost of Progress" (1898: Harmondsworth, England, Penguin, 1977, repr. 1981), p.86. All other references, abbreviated TU, are to this edition.

<sup>8</sup>Joseph Conrad, *Typhoon and Other Stories*, "Amy Foster," (London: Heinemann, 1903), p. 136. All other references, abbreviated T, are to this edition.

<sup>9</sup>Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Robert Kimbrough (New York: Norton, 1988), pp. 9 - 10. All other references, abbreviated HD, are to this edition.

<sup>10</sup>The best example of such repetition on the part of this type of character can be found in the conversation of Stein in Chapter 20 of *Lord Jim*, when Marlow visits him to talk about Jim. There are no less than ten repetitions of this kind in the last part of this chapter. *Lord Jim* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1986), pp. 199 - 203. All other references, abbreviated LJ, are to this edition. For further discussion of repetition, see Chapter Five of this study.

<sup>11</sup>This was a common practice among the early German Romantics in particular, and later the French, who used such words as "unknown," "incomprehensible," "infinite," and "ideal," interchangeably as adjectives and nouns, often capitalized. See also Chapter Four of this study.

<sup>12</sup>This part of the story, in its allusion to man's primaeval state, closely resembles Stephen Crane's story "The Monster." Elsa Nettels has made a fine comparative study of these two stories in her article "'Amy Foster' and Stephen Crane's 'The Monster,'" *Conradiana*, 15, No. 3 (1983), 181 - 190.

<sup>13</sup>The French Romantics and Symbolists tended to refer to the "Ideal" (capitalized) through much of the Nineteenth Century; e.g. (Hugo, Baudelaire, even Flaubert) all with a similar but vague notion of its meaning as a spiritual, sentimental, and/or aesthetic absolute. For more details see Chapter Four of this study.

<sup>14</sup>Joseph Conrad, "Books," in *Joseph Conrad on Fiction*, ed. Walter F. Wright (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 80. All other references, abbreviated JCF, are to this edition.

<sup>15</sup>Fidelity, together with betrayal, is a central theme of the novels *Nostramo*, *Under Western Eyes*, *The Rescue*, an important episode of *Lord Jim* and the story "The Secret Sharer," though it is treated differently in each of these works. It also appears briefly in most of the other creative works. Conrad's fidelity is not specifically to people he knew in his past but to that sense of community of which he speaks.

<sup>16</sup>Examples of youthful innocence or provincial ignorance and simplicity appear in Marlow's view of himself in "Youth" as he looks back from maturity, Jim at the beginning of *Lord Jim*, and Alice in "A Smile of Fortune." See Chapters Three and Four of this study.

<sup>17</sup>In other stories ("Youth," "Falk," "A Smile of Fortune"), Conrad develops the role of the eyes and the visual as a thematic image. See Chapters Three and Four of this study.

<sup>18</sup>See Chapter Five of this study for full treatment of this aspect of Conrad's work. (Baudelaire, etc.).

<sup>19</sup>Joseph Conrad, *Last Essays* (London: Dent, 1926), pp. 5 and 14.

<sup>20</sup>Lawrence Graver, *Conrad's Short Fiction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1969), pp. 107 - 08.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

<sup>1</sup>Gertrude Himmelfarb, in *Victorian Minds*, writes of racist sentiments, for example, as found in "Buchan, Kipling and even Conrad," that they were "a reflection of a common attitude. They were descriptive not prescriptive; not an incitement to novel political action, but an attempt to express differences of culture and colour in terms that had been unquestioned for generations." (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. 260.

<sup>2</sup>Of the three, racism had not been recognized as such, except in its most violent manifestations. The interrelated colonialism and imperialism were only beginning to emerge in a negative light. Conrad's 'avant-garde' friend, R.B. Cunninghame Graham, condemned British imperialism, advocating home rule not only for the distant colonies, but also for Scotland and Ireland. (He was a Member of Parliament from 1886 to 1892, but was generally considered somewhat eccentric for his unusual, socialist-leaning views.) It can be argued that both colonialism and imperialism were explicitly supported by Kipling, whose advocacy of the subjection of colonial peoples by methodical violence and bloodshed, as in his stories "Stalky and Company" or "Soldiers Three," led Cunninghame Graham to regard him as "the prophet of a brutal Yahweh." *Jospeh Conrad's Letters to R.B. Cunninghame Graham* ed. C.T. Watts (Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>For more details on Conrad's narrative technique see Chapter Five.

<sup>4</sup>Note the emphasis on uncertainty in the word "perhaps," suggesting mysterious, hidden causes that arouse the reader's curiosity and set the atmosphere for later development.

<sup>5</sup>These two characters can also be taken as supporting the growing belief in Conrad's time, that an individual's or society's success increases in proportion to their level of corruption. This is related to the belief that human personality is a composite result of body chemistry. The concept reflects the influence of Darwinism which is also reflected in the other literature of the time, as in the novels of the American Theodore Dreiser: *Sister Carrie* (1900) and *The Financier* (1912).

<sup>6</sup> This passage, from the 1899 manuscript, is quoted in a footnote to HD, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup>As Jan Verleun points out, the Russian dressed in patched clothes and called a "harlequin" has generally been interpreted as a "demon," but is in fact a gullible, romantic, and "recklessly generous youth." See "Marlow and the Harlequin," *Conradiana*, 13, No. 3 (1981), 206.

<sup>8</sup>*British Imperialism: Gold, God, Glory* ed. Robin W. Winks (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Edward Said, "The Intellectual in the Post-Colonial World," *Salmagundi*, No. 70 - 71 (1986), 48.

<sup>10</sup>Joseph Conrad, *Last Essays*, "Geography and Explorers" (London: Dent, 1926), p. 25.

<sup>11</sup>Lawrence Graver, *Conrad's Short Fiction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press; 1969), p. 14.

<sup>12</sup>V.J. Emmett, Jr., "'An Outpost of Progress': Conrad, Zola, and Hobbes," *The Texas Review*, 2, No. 2 (1981), 5 - 9.

<sup>13</sup>Most critics, even when they take into account the last words of this passage, interpret Marlow literally and consider his viewpoint to be identical with Conrad's. Claude Rawson, in a two-part article on Swift and Conrad, compares and contrasts their attitudes to imperialism. Acknowledging that Swift is absolutely satirical, he opts for taking Conrad seriously in this passage because of Marlow's insistence on "an unselfish belief in the idea," which Rawson considers "analogous to a religious faith." Rawson misses the build-up of subtle details in the language and expression that point to the quietly ironic detachment of the narrator behind Marlow. See "Gulliver, Marlow and the Flat-nosed People: Colonial Oppression and Race in Satire and Fiction" (Part I), *Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters* 13, No. 3 (1983), 163.

<sup>14</sup>Joseph Conrad, *Nostromo* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1983), p. 100. All other references, abbreviated N, are to this edition.

<sup>15</sup>Joseph Conrad, *Notes on Life and Letters*, "Autocracy and War" (London: Dent & Sons, 1921, collected edition 1949), pp. 108 - 09.

<sup>16</sup>Joseph Conrad, letter to T.F. Unwin, July 22nd, 1896, Yale, quoted in Zdzislaw Najder, *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), notes to Chapter V, note 60, p. 527.

<sup>17</sup>Patrick Brantlinger, "'Heart of Darkness': Anti-imperialism, Racism, or Impressionism?" *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, 27, No. 4 (1985), 363 - 385. Brantlinger also indicates "the most obvious difficulty" in assessing Conrad's attitude: the narrative frame that "filters everything that is said not just through Marlow, but also through the anonymous primary narrator." And he asks: "even supposing that Marlow speaks directly for Conrad, does Conrad/Marlow agree with the values expressed by the primary narrator?" This narrative problem with Conrad is discussed fully in Chapter Five of this study.

<sup>18</sup>Joseph Conrad, letter to Aniela Zagorska, Dec. 25, 1899, quoted in Jocelyn Baines, *Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), p. 238.

<sup>19</sup>For critical discussions on Conrad's attitude to imperialism and colonialism, see especially Edward Said, "The Intellectual in the Post-Colonial World," *Salmagundi*, No. 70 - 71 (1986), 65 - 74; Claude Rawson, "Gulliver, Marlow and the Flat-nosed People: Colonial Oppression and Race in Satire and Fiction," *Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters* (Part I), 13, No. 2 (1983), 162 - 178, and (Part II), 13, No. 4 (1983), 282 - 299; Hunt Hawkins, "Conrad and Congolese Exploitation," *Conradiana*, 13 No. 2 (1981), 94 - 99; Robert D. Hamner, "Colony, Nationhood and Beyond: Third World Writers and Critics Contend with Joseph Conrad," *World Literature Written in English*, 23, No. 1 (1984), 108 - 116; Patrick Brantlinger, "'Heart of Darkness': Anti-imperialism, Racism, or Impressionism?" *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, 27, No. 4 (1985), 363-385. See also Robert D. Hamner, "Joseph Conrad and the Colonial World: A Selected Bibliography," *Conradiana*, 14, No. 3 (1982), 217 - 229.

<sup>20</sup>Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness.'" *The Massachusetts Review*, 18 (1977), 782 - 794; repr. in HD 251 - 262.

<sup>21</sup>Hunt Hawkins points out that even the black American journalist George Washington Williams "was shocked by the Africans," reporting in a letter of protest to Leopold II that "Cruelties of the most astounding character are practised by the

natives, such as burying slaves alive in the grave of a dead chief." Hunt Hawkins, "The Issue of Racism in 'Heart of Darkness,'" *Conradiana*, 14, No. 3 (1982), 166.

<sup>22</sup>Peter Nazareth, "Out of Darkness: Conrad and Other Third World Writers," *Conradiana*, 14, No. 3 (1982), 178.

<sup>23</sup>Joseph Conrad, "Youth" and "The End of the Tether" (1975: Penguin, repr. 1987), p. 28. All other references, abbreviated YET, are to this edition.

<sup>24</sup>Joseph Conrad, *Notes on Life and Letters*, "Autocracy and War" (London: Dent & Sons, 1921, collected edition 1949), p. 88.

<sup>25</sup>That Conrad came up against such doubts and conflicts and attempted to resolve them as he wrote is implied by C.P. Sarvan, "Racism and the 'Heart of Darkness,'" *The International Fiction Review*, 7 (1980), 6 - 10, repr. in HD 280 - 85; Wilson Harris, "The Frontier on which 'Heart of Darkness' stands," *Research in African Literatures*, 12, No. 1 (1981), 88 - 94; and to some extent Edward Said, "The Intellectual in the Post-Colonial World," *Salmagundi*, 70 - 71 (1986), 65 - 74.

<sup>26</sup>At this point Conrad's Polish background and its influence on his attitudes to nationalism and imperialism should be of particular interest to biographers and critics using the psychological approach.

<sup>27</sup>Joseph Conrad, *Last Essays*, "Geography and Explorers" (London: Dent, 1926), p. 31.

<sup>28</sup>Robert Hamner makes this point in "Colony, Nationhood and Beyond: Third World Writers and Critics Contend with Joseph Conrad," *World Literature Written in English*, 23, No. 1 (1984), 108 - 116. He cites D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke in *Developing Countries in English Fiction*, p. 47, as pointing out that "Conrad gives the Chinese clerk in 'Typhoon' more subtle consciousness and dignity than he allows the English sailor Jukes."

<sup>29</sup>Joseph Kolupke, "Elephants, Empires, and Blind Men: A Reading of the Figurative Language in Conrad's 'Typhoon,'" *Conradiana*, 20, No. 1 (1988), 71 - 85. Kolupke also discusses the Siamese flag scene, drawing attention to Conrad's word

play on the "white elephant" in the flag and its relationship to the British (Kipling) view of the "White man's burden."

<sup>30</sup>Eugene Redmond, "Racism, or Realism? Literary Apartheid or Poetic License? Conrad's burden in 'The Nigger of the *Narcissus*,'" written for the Robert Kimbrough edition (New York: Norton, 1979), p. 359.

<sup>31</sup>Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 159.

<sup>32</sup>Hunt Hawkins, "The Issue of Racism in 'Heart of Darkness,'" *Conradiana*, 14, No. 3 (1982), 163 - 171.

<sup>33</sup>Doreatha Drummond, "Joseph Conrad's Confrontation with Racism," Diss. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 1986. This is part of her main argument throughout the dissertation.

<sup>34</sup>These associations and tendencies have been well documented by scholars and critics in many fields. See notes 19, 20, 21 and 25 above.

<sup>35</sup>Jack I. Biles, "Its Proper Title: Some Observations on 'The Nigger of the *Narcissus*,'" *The Polish Review*, 20, Nos. 2 and 3 (1975), 186.

<sup>36</sup>Joseph Conrad, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, ed. Robert Kimbrough (New York: Norton, 1979), p. 21. All other references, abbreviated NN, are to this edition. Redmond's quotation appears on page 366.

<sup>37</sup>David Manikom, "True Lies/False Truths: Narrative Perspective and the Control of Ambiguity in 'The Nigger of the *Narcissus*,'" *Conradiana*, 18, No. 2 (1986), 105 - 118.

<sup>38</sup>"American ships were particularly noted for the harsh manner in which crews were treated." Footnote to page 5 of NN.

<sup>39</sup>A few critics recognize that pity is Allistoun's motive, but Donald T. Torchiana interprets Allistoun's pity as an example of narcissism, of which the captain is ashamed;" 'The Nigger of the *Narcissus*': Myth, Mirror, and Metropolis," *Wascana Review*, 2 (1967), 29 - 41, repr. in NN 275 - 287. Ian Watt, however, recognizes that Allistoun attains the fullest psychological understanding of James

Wait and that his decision to confine Wait to his cabin "is the most total act of sympathy" for him. See "Conrad Criticism and 'The Nigger of the *Narcissis*,'" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 12 (March 1958), 277 - 283, repr. in NN 239 - 258.

<sup>40</sup>*Joseph Conrad's Letters to R.B. Cunninghame Graham*, letter of Dec. 14, 1897, ed. C.T. Watts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 53. Watts considers Conrad's view of Singleton an example of "that 'anti-rational primitivism' (the view that a limitation of the individual's consciousness or reflective and ratiocinative abilities may best equip him for life) which operates in so many protean forms in literature of the last hundred years" (pp. 54 - 55).

<sup>41</sup>*Joseph Conrad's Letters to R.B. Cunninghame Graham*, letter of Jan. 31st, 1898, p. 70.

<sup>42</sup>This is one of the ways in which Conrad differs markedly from Kipling who also commemorates the discipline and comradeship of work, but does so in terms of specific groups (journalists, colonial civil servants, military companies of fishermen. The example that most approaches Conrad's tale is Kipling's "Captains Courageous"). In the process, Kipling is not averse to lavishing a sort of personal glory on individual characters, even in the most dubious of circumstances, as in his "Stalky and Company."

<sup>43</sup>Joseph Conrad, "To My Readers in America," NN 168.

<sup>44</sup>*Joseph Conrad's Letters to R.B. Cunninghame Graham*, letter of Oct. 31st, 1904, p. 157.

<sup>45</sup>This description of the city anticipates aspects of the metropolitan setting and related themes in *The Secret Agent*.

<sup>46</sup>Doreatha Drummond, on p. 7 of her dissertation (see note 33 above) believes Conrad did inherit such a sense of superiority from his Polish 'szlachta' background. This is to identify family and national pride with conceit and complacency, and to ignore the influence of Conrad's own experiences and the explicitly stated moral purpose behind his work.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

<sup>1</sup> Repairing a badly damaged house is thought unlucky. According to J.M. Gullick, *Malay Society in the Late 19th Century* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987), "It was normal practice simply to abandon an old house and leave it to fall down. The spirits, which would be outraged by disturbance, were indifferent to human neglect" p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> Gullick, *Malay Society in the Late 19th Century: The Malays* "had intermarried extensively with immigrant Arabs and Indian Muslims" (p. 5); "Islam came to South-East Asia in the Fifteenth Century"; "In a village community, the central focus of religious observance was the mosque (masjid)" (p. 277).

<sup>3</sup> Edward Said, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> Ronald J. Nelson, "Conrad's 'The Lagoon,'" *The Explicator*, 40, No. 1 (1981), 39 - 41.

<sup>5</sup> Norman Sherry speaks of the short period of time Conrad spent in this (Malay) part of the world and refers to Sir Hugh Clifford's criticisms of Conrad's presentation of Malay life, which Conrad defended in a statement that he took his material from "dull, wise books" including accounts by "serious traveller[s]." This statement from a letter of December 13th, 1898, is quoted in Sherry, *Conrad's Eastern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 139 - 40.

<sup>6</sup> Other complexities of Jim's character will be discussed in Chapter Four of this study. At this point I have concentrated on the racial/cultural aspect because it has not been given its full weight by critics in motivating Jim to desert the *Patna* and to let Brown escape.

<sup>7</sup> Eloise Knapp Hay, *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad: A Critical Study* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> Hay, pp. 100 and 107.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Conrad, *The Rescue* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1950, repr. 1985), p. 271. All other references, abbreviated R, are to this edition.

<sup>10</sup> *The Arden Shakespeare, King Henry IV (Part 1)*, ed. A.R. Humphreys (London: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 145-46.

<sup>11</sup> Gullick, "Malays blended Islamic and pagan elements of ritual" (p. 182), "Every Malay was a Muslim . . . a convert to Islam was said to become a Malay ('Masuk Melayu') though it was recognized that in Malaya there were Muslims who were not also Malays" (p. 272).

<sup>12</sup> Yusuf Idris in his novel, *Hadithat Sharaf* ("The Shame"), Cairo, 1978, demonstrates a part of the Arabs' code of honour. Fatma, Faradg's sister, has been caught in the maize field with Gharib. Like Matara, in "Karain," Faradg is bound to purge and regain his marred honour by killing both Fatma and her partner. He, unavoidably, must show his community that he does not tolerate the shame.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Under Western Eyes* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), pp. 68 - 69. All other references, abbreviated UWE, are to this edition. The cultural interest of this novel lies especially in the point of view of the characters and particularly of the narrator, and will be discussed in my last chapter on form and narration.

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Graver, *Conrad's Short Fiction*, p. 31. The Conrad estimate of "magazinish" is from a letter to Cunninghame Graham in April of 1898. See G. Jean-Aubry, *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters* (London: Heinemann, 1972), I, p. 234.

<sup>15</sup> Chaucer, "General prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales*, from Nevill Coghill and Christopher Tolkien, eds., *The Pardoner's Tale* (London: George G. Harrap and Co. Ltd., 1958, repr. 1961), pp. 61 - 62.

<sup>16</sup> Letter of Oct. 7, 1907, Jean-Aubry, II, p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> Joycelyn Baines, *Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), p. 262.

<sup>18</sup> As a point of interest, another English word close in meaning to 'gossip' or 'slander' is 'backbite.' Also, in my own language, Arabic, the image of eating is already built into an expression for gossiping: literally, to 'eat another's flesh.'

<sup>19</sup> Baines, p. 261n.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Twixt Land and Sea* (London: Penguin, 1978, repr. 1988), p. 54. All other references, abbreviated TLS, are to this edition.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Conrad, "Preface to Shorter Tales," *Last Essays*, p. 207

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Conrad, *An Outcast of the Islands* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: 1975, repr. 1986), p. 18. All other references, abbreviated OI, are to this edition.

<sup>23</sup> Calypso, the Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella are among the many motifs that appear fleetingly throughout "A Smile of Fortune." Cedric Watts argues convincingly that "A Smile of Fortune" takes its meaning and aesthetic worth from its fusion of numerous legends that "are beckoned by the tale, mock it and are mocked by it" because the narrative "preserves the ironic distance of the mundane." Cedric Watts, "The Narrative Enigma of Conrad's 'A Smile of Fortune,'" *Conradiana*, 17, No. 2 (1985), 131 - 136. The article is reprinted in Watts' *The Deceptive Text: An Introduction to Covert Plots* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1984), pp. 125 - 132.

<sup>24</sup> Frederick Karl, *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), p. 260.

<sup>25</sup> Baines, p. 375.

<sup>26</sup> Jean-Aubry, I, p.103, corroborates the story's autobiographical basis, recounting:

I feel certain that the adventure narrated in "A Smile of Fortune," connected with the cargo of potatoes, actually happened as described, on account of an odd question which Conrad asked me one day when I was talking to him about this story. "Do you think," he said to me, "that Jacobus had seen something?" [he refers to the ironic "moral discomfort of Jacobus's sleepy watchfulness" after the captain has embraced Alice] . . . When I confessed that for my part I could not decide, and, in my turn, asked him the same question, he answered, "I never knew."

<sup>27</sup> Baines, p. 375.

<sup>28</sup> "A Smile of Fortune" has proved especially interesting to psychoanalytic biographers. Bernard Meyer devotes an entire chapter to the story, suggesting that the captain-narrator's treatment of Alice is a fantasy reversal of Conrad's rejection by Eugenie Renouf in *Mauritius*. See his *Joseph Conrad: A Psychoanalytic Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), ch. iv, pp. 71 - 87.

<sup>29</sup> A closer look at the Nineteenth Century Decadent movement's reflection in Conrad is presented in Chapter Four of this study.

<sup>30</sup> Letter to Pinker, May, 1909 (Gordan Collection), quoted in Graver, pp. 149 and 212n.

<sup>31</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Almayer's Folly* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1976, repr. 1986), p. 28. All other references, abbreviated AF, are to this edition.

<sup>32</sup> Karl, p. 515.

<sup>33</sup> There are also other mentions of parrots in *Under Western Eyes*: "the world is but a place of many words and man appears a mere talking animal not much more wonderful than a parrot"; "as in the case of very accomplished parrots, one can't defend oneself from the suspicion that they really understand what they say" (UWE 55 and 56).

<sup>34</sup> Jim's narcissism and its link with his death -- fear and suicidal tendencies are the subject of an article by Giles Mitchell in *Conradiana*, 18, No. 3 (1986), 163 - 79.

<sup>35</sup> Baines, p. 375.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Victory* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1963, repr. 1987), p. 92. All other references, abbreviated V, are to this edition.

<sup>37</sup> In Pedro are combined Conrad's preoccupations with simian appearance and behaviour on the one hand (the descriptions of Yanko in "Amy Foster," Hermann in "Falk," Heemskirk in "Freya," Willems in *An Outcast of the Islands*), and the retarded on the other, of which the best example is Stevie in *The Secret Agent*. But the gentle, trusting, pliable and affectionate Stevie contrasts sharply with the

savage Pedro, trained to carry out the orders of the unscrupulous and morally degenerate Mr Jones.

<sup>38</sup> Arnold E. Davidson, in *Conrad's Endings: A Study of the Five Major Novels* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1984), pp. 87 - 101, believes that Heyst's tragedy is brought about in retribution for his inability to remain aloof and his increasing involvement with life. This would account for Davidson's not quite knowing what to make of Heyst's dying words: "Woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love -- and to put its trust in life" (V 326).

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Within the Tides* (London: Dent and Sons, 1915), p. 8. All other references abbreviated WT, are to this edition.

<sup>40</sup> Karl, p. 751.

<sup>41</sup> Juliet McLauchlan, "Conrad's Heart of Emptiness: The Planter of Malata," *Conradiana*, 18, No. 3 (1986), 180 - 92.

<sup>42</sup> Tony Tanner, "Butterflies and Beetles -- Conrad's Two Truths," *Chicago Review*, 16 (1963), 124.

<sup>43</sup> Richard C. Stevenson, "Stein's Prescription for 'How To Be' and the problem of assessing Lord Jim's career," *Conradiana*, 7 (1975), 236.

<sup>44</sup> Kipling does examine the effects on Europeans when they step beyond the boundaries of their own culture, and recognizes that they, too, are victims -- of the heat, of the hell that India appears to them, of the British Raj. Such is the case with Hummil in "At the End of the Passage." But as in this tale, in which Hummil is terrified by his isolation and hangs himself, Kipling implies that if the price of vision is madness and death, it is better to be blind to the truth. His cronies in India outlive the truth through their blindness, distractions and self deceptions. See also R.L. Stevenson, "The Beach of Falesa," in *The Works of Stevenson*, XVII, Swanston edition (London: Chatto and Windus, 1901), and "The Ebb-Tide" in the same volume, and Rudyard Kipling, "At the End of the Passage," in *Life's Handicap* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1987).

<sup>45</sup> Joseph Conrad, *A Set of Six* (London: Methuen, 1908, 6th ed., 1920), p. 240. All other references, abbreviated SS, are to this edition.

<sup>46</sup> J.H. Stape, "Conrad's 'The Duel': A Reconsideration," *The Conradian*, II No. 1 (1986), 42 - 46.

<sup>47</sup> Graver, p. 143.

<sup>48</sup> Stape, p. 42.

<sup>49</sup> Letter to Edward Garnett, August 21st, 1908, Jean-Aubry, II, p. 75.

<sup>50</sup> Letter to (Sir) Algernon Methuen, January 26th, 1908, Jean-Aubry, II, p. 66.

<sup>51</sup> Meyer, p. 197n.

<sup>52</sup> Stape, p. 43.

<sup>53</sup> Karl, p. 629.

<sup>54</sup> Winner speaks of Conrad's irony as attempting "to impose the artifact of moral culture upon the anarchistic facts of man's flaws and nature's indifference." *Culture and Irony: Studies in Joseph Conrad's Major Novels* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1988), p. 92. While insightful remarks such as this appear in the introduction and at the beginning of the chapters, the author concentrates increasingly on irony in the course of each chapter. He does not clearly illustrate how irony relates to culture, itself defined strictly in Matthew Arnold's terms which I believe are too narrow for Conrad's multi-faceted conception of culture as it appears in his works. Perhaps it is the title that does not properly reflect the main argument, and promises either more or other than what the author delivers.

<sup>55</sup> Graver, p. 134.

<sup>56</sup> Karl, p. 593.

<sup>57</sup> Graver, p. 134.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1963, repr. 1985), p. 116. All other references, abbreviated SA, are to this edition.

<sup>59</sup> Jacques Darras, *Joseph Conrad and the West: Signs of Empire* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 99.

<sup>60</sup> "All these people are not revolutionaries, -- they are shams." Letter to R.B. Cunninghame Graham, October 7th, 1907. "My object . . . was to hold up the worthlessness of certain individuals and the baseness of some others." Letter to Ambrose G. Barker, Sept, 1st, 1923. Jean-Aubry, II, pp. 60 and 322.

<sup>61</sup> Graver, p. 141.

<sup>62</sup> Reflection and action, detachment and involvement, are discussed in Chapters Four and Five of this study as part of the tension that animates Conrad's own writing.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

<sup>1</sup> There is an implicit interplay between "personal responsibility" and "existence shared with the rest of mankind." Responsibility and discipline may oppose the self-indulgence which a romantic impulse has encouraged in Conrad's emotions and sensibility. And when these correctives assert themselves they probably produce a rigorous feeling that stiffens and generates extravagant emotions and sentiment. The same can apply to the "solidarity," Conrad speaks of in the preface to "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*," that "knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts, to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, . . . which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity." But Conrad seems to acknowledge that the "feeling of fellowship with all creation" is only "latent" and "invincible," implying that solidarity is always threatened, while "knits" and "binds" signify a more direct and transitive action. He hopes that the "feeling of unavoidable solidarity," would be "awaken[ed] in the hearts of the beholders" (my ellipsis, JCF 161 and 163).

<sup>2</sup> Novalis, *Schriften*, ed. Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960 - 75), II, p.545. Translation from *Romanticism in*

*National Context*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich, "Romanticism in Germany," Dietrich Von Engelhardt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> S.T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), I, pp. 59 - 60. Coleridge adds: "it will be well, if I subject myself to no worse charge than that of singularity. . . . History and particular facts, lost all interest in my mind" (ch. I, p. 9); and "my endeavours [are] directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure . . . disbelief" (v. 2, ch. XIV, my ellipses).

<sup>4</sup> William Wordsworth, *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M.H. Abrams, Fifth edition (New York: Norton, 1986), II, p.159.

<sup>5</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), II, ch. XIV, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> All modern critics and biographers of Conrad make some mention of Conrad's place historically and thematically between 19th Century and 'modern' literary trends, recognizing that to see Conrad in his historical perspective "also involves," in Ian Watt's words, "some account of how his works stand in relation both to the multifarious literary currents of the late Nineteenth Century, and to what we are still calling the 'modern' movement in literature." *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, Preface, P. ix. In a letter to William Blackwood, 31st May 1902, Conrad writes "I am modern" and later in *The Mirror of the Sea* he says "in his own time a man is always very modern" (MS 87). Cedric Watts speaks of Conrad as an "intermediary between Romantic and Victorian traditions and the innovations of Modernism," *A Preface to Conrad* (London, Longman, 1982), p. 171. David Lodge says that "Modernist fiction is pioneered in England by James and Conrad," *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), p. 45. And Jacques Berthoud regards Conrad as "a reflective modernist writer largely in control of his medium," *Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Scott's *Ivanhoe* is a romance that deals with historical conflicts and loss. It treats the chaos, outlaws, anarchy, and extravagant medieval chivalry arising from the struggle between Saxons and Normans and the beginning of a new, more ordered society. But Scott realizes that there is much of the heroic and romantic in both cultures that would have to be sacrificed before the two peoples could fuse and form the English nation.

David Daiches in his article, "Scott's Achievement as a novelist" (1951), asserts that Scott's novels "might with justice be called 'anti-romantic' fiction. They attempt to show that heroic action, as the typical romantic writer would like to think of it, is, . . . neither heroic nor useful"; Scott "was a lover of the past combined with a believer in the present, and the mating of these incompatible characters produced that tension which accounted for his greatest novels." See *Walter Scott: Modern Judgements*, ed. by D.D. Devlin (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 33, 38, 143, 147, 149, and 161.

<sup>8</sup> Michael P. Jones, *Conrad's Heroism: A Paradise Lost*, "Culture and the Heroic self" (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985), pp. 1 - 43. Jones focuses on a comparison of Kipling's "Captains Courageous," Cooper's *The Sea Lions*, and Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*.

<sup>9</sup> In Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* the Mariner suffers intensely from pain, despair, perplexity, isolation and exile from human society till he at last beholds his native country; but he is not fully socially integrated:

Oh! dream of joy is this indeed  
The lighthouse top I see?  
Is this the hill? Is this the kirk?  
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbor bar,  
And I with sobs did pray --

. . .

And now, all in my own countree,  
I stood on the firm land!

. . .

O Wedding-Guest this soul hath been  
Alone on a wide wide sea:

So lonely 'twas, that God himself  
Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage feast,  
'Tis sweeter far to me,  
To walk together to the kirk  
With a goodly company! --

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,  
Whose beard with age is hoar,  
Is gone . . .  
(my ellipses)

<sup>10</sup> Jones, pp. 23 - 43. David Thorburn makes the comparison with Wordsworth in many places throughout his book, *Conrad's Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

<sup>11</sup> Ian Watt puts forward this general argument via numerous references to the cosmopolitan nature of Conrad's cultural background and to continental authors, demonstrating, for example, how "Conrad's basic conception of the novel was not of English origin," how "Romantic idealism (from German Romantic literature) . . . was the dominant cultural and literary force when Conrad grew up," and, more specifically, how certain works show the influence of continental literary movements. For example, "'Heart of Darkness' shares many of the characteristic preoccupations and themes of the French symbolists . . ."; *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1980), pp. 48, 323, 199.

<sup>12</sup> Letter to George T. Keating of Dec. 14th, 1922, In G. Jean-Aubry, II, p. 289. R.B. Cunninghame Graham in his preface to *Tales of Hearsay* speaks of Conrad as "a mind steeped in the modern literature of Europe, especially in that of France" (p. 13). John Glasworthy records that Conrad "was ever more at home with French literature than with English," "Reminiscences of Conrad" in *Castles in Spain* (London: Heinemann, 1927), p. 79. Ernest Dawson says that "French literature made a stronger appeal to Conrad than English," "Some recollections of Joseph Conrad," *Fortnightly Review*, 130 (1928), 208. And Conrad himself confesses in *A Personal Record* (p. 70 - 1) that at "ten years of age I had read much of Victor Hugo and other romantics. I had read in Polish and in French, history, voyages, novels; I knew 'Gil Blas' and 'Don Quixote' in abridged editions; I had read in early boyhood

Polish poets and some French poets." For a full detailed study on the French writers' influence on Conrad see Yves Hervouet's most recent book, *The French Face of Joseph Conrad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Hervouet devotes his book to three major French writers, Gustave Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant, Anatole France and mentions other French writers like Stendhal, Balzac, Stephane Mallarme, Hugo, Zola, Alphonse Daudet, Loti, Proust, Baudelaire, Paul Valery, Racine, Voltaire, Rousseau.

<sup>13</sup> Keats, for example, gave expression to views of art and life that, whether original or derivative, were felt deeply and lived fully. His romantic dedication to art is a means of knowing and shaping reality, and to feelings as the test of reality, of "Beauty" and "Truth" which are felt to be 'one.' See Keats' letter of October 22nd, 1817 to Benjamin Bailey, in *The Letters of John Keats, 1814 - 1821*, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), I, pp. 182 - 187. And see also Wordsworth's view of "feelings" in his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*: "for all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings"; "our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings"; and "feeling gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling."

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of the Romantic ideal and the blue flower of Novalis, see Ian Watt, p. 188.

<sup>15</sup> Words such as 'ideal,' 'universal,' 'absolute,' 'infinite,' 'unknown,' 'incomprehensible,' 'eternal,' and even 'mystical,' tended to be used interchangeably by the early German Romantics, e.g. in the *Schriften* of Novalis (where the ideal carried a religious overtone), in the "Fragments" of Friedrich Schlegel and in the *School for Aesthetics* of Jean-Paul Richter. See Kathleen Wheeler, *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> According to Margery Sabin, this kind of abstract terminology, especially as it occurs in *Les Contemplations*, distinguishes Hugo and French Romantic poetry from Wordsworth and the English Romantics. She cites Hugo's "Le Pont" in her

comparative study, *English Romanticism and the French Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 160 - 61. The move towards art for art's sake and the aesthetic ideal as a consolation against the void comes with Gautier and Baudelaire.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, "L'Idéal," in *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 21. The poem is a prime example of how the ideal and the abyss could be seen ambivalently as two sides of the same coin, not necessarily in opposition, sometimes even synonymous.

<sup>18</sup> Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 188.

<sup>19</sup> *Joseph Conrad's letters to R.B. Cunninghame Graham*, letter of Dec. 20th, 1897, p. 56.

<sup>20</sup> Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, "Le Gouffre," in *Oeuvres Complètes*, p. 172.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus. On Heroes, Hero-worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: Dent 1910, Orig. 1833 - 4), p. 123. This comparison is made by Torsten Pettersson in *Consciousness and Time: A Study in the Philosophy and Narrative Technique of Joseph Conrad*, *Acta Academiae Aboensis*, Vol. 61, No. 1, 1982, p. 24.

<sup>22</sup> The exotic exercises its appeal away from reality as much as towards an ideal. Says Irene L. Szyliowicz on exoticism: "The reality of the locale is often a matter of little concern; the 'exotic' is associated with escape -- usually from a bourgeois, conformist, and materialistic environment." *Pierre Loti and the Oriental Woman* (Houndmills and London, 1988), p. 35. The escapism inherent in this attitude often became a dominant component of exoticism and orientalism, and degenerated easily into no more than another aspect of romantic excess.

<sup>23</sup> Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, "L'Invitation au voyage," in *Oeuvres Complètes*, p. 51.

<sup>24</sup> Pettersson, p. 76.

<sup>25</sup> Edward W. Said is among the first to draw the attention of present-day literary critics and scholars to Oriental romantic exoticism as a part of the West's

traditional condescending and complacent attitude to the East, rendered in works of art and literature as an object, as 'them,' and as 'other.' See *Orientalism* (New York, Pantheon, 1978).

<sup>26</sup> Novalis' "Christendom or Europe" is a representation of a past, romantic ideal, which is a pattern for the future development of Europe. Novalis' envisagement is that the national rivalries in a Christian Europe are overcome, and the Christian Middle Ages: 'Kingdom of God' 'everlasting peace,' the 'golden age' are revived. "THOSE WERE fine, magnificent times," says Novalis, "When Europe was a Christian country, when one Christendom inhabited this civilized continent and one great common interest linked the most distant provinces of this vast spiritual empire." He desires a new ecumenical Christianity to counteract the egoism of the present by bringing faith again into accord with practice, and to bind men together (mainly emotionally) through religion which is the 'basis of civil society.' He yearns for an age when "Princes submitted their disputes to the father of Christendom" and they "willingly laid their crowns and their magnificence at his feet," but "No peace can be concluded among the disputing powers, for all peace is merely an illusion and an armistice . . . Blood will continue to stream over Europe till moved and calmed by sacred music. Only religion can reawaken Europe, make the people secure, and install Christendom." See Novalis, "Christendom or Europe" in *Romanticism*, ed. by John B. Halsted (New York and London: Harper Torchbooks, 1969), pp. 122 - 138, and see also *The Political Thought of the German Romantics*, ed. by H.S. Reiss (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1955), pp. 126 - 141.

<sup>27</sup> Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 44.

<sup>28</sup> *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M.H. Abrams, Fourth ed. (New York: Norton, 1979), I, p. 806.

<sup>29</sup> John Keats "Ode on a Grecian Urn," in *The Norton Anthology*, II, p. 822.

<sup>30</sup> Jacques Darras, p. 20

<sup>31</sup> Letter to Meldrum, of Jan. 7th, 1902, quoted in F. Karl, p. 523.

<sup>32</sup> Joseph Conrad, *The Mirror of the Sea*, (London: Methuen, 1915), p. 98.

All other references, abbreviated MS, are to this edition.

<sup>33</sup> Thorburn, p. 79

<sup>34</sup> "Youth" is nevertheless a most effective story, and I believe that the balanced tone of the narrative voice in "The Shadow-Line" bears out the presence of a more ironic and objective attitude hidden behind the effusions and sentimentalized reminiscences of Marlow.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Conrad, *The Shadow-Line*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 7. All other references, abbreviated SL, are to this edition.

<sup>36</sup> Joachim Du Bellay, "*Les Regrets*," LVI. ed. H.W. Lawton, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961), p. 68.

<sup>37</sup> Najder, p. 342.

<sup>38</sup> This complex, dual view of the sea acts as a reminder throughout Baudelaire's poetry that the ideal and the void are one and the same. For example, in "*Le Voyage*" the poet speaks of following the rhythm of the wave, "rocking our infinite upon the finite seas" and "plunging into the alluring reflection of the sky" *Les Fleurs du Mal*, pp. 122, 124. But in other places he refers to the sea as a bitter deep or bitter abyss ("*Gouffres amers*") as in "*L'albatros*" (pp. 9 - 10), and in "*L'homme et La Mer*" (p. 18), and "*Confiteor de l'Artiste*" (p. 43).

<sup>39</sup> "At other times, a flat calm, a great mirror  
of my despair."

These last words of the poem end with an exclamation mark in the original, not reproduced in Conrad's epigraph.

<sup>40</sup> Absolute transitions from one state to another take place in a moment. This may also recall Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner*, when the mariner describes the quietness of the ship and the ocean, and the sudden coming of darkness he penetrated in "one stride":

Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion,  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.

...  
 The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:  
 At one stride comes the dark;  
 With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,  
 Off shot the spectre-bark.

"The Shadow-Line," to some extent, echoes *The Ancient Mariner* more generally in the description of the sick crew, the calm ship and sea, intense loneliness, stillness, lifeless sea, infinite silence, the abysses of sky and sea, nothingness, still void, darkness, death, immobility, and infinite weariness.

<sup>41</sup> The young captain's command "flashed upon [him] . . . like a dim flash from a dark lantern" (SL 40, 44); "The mahogany table under the skylight shone in the twilight like a dark pool of water" (SL 52); "I leaned on the rail and turned my ear to the shadows of the night" (SL 74); "my command seemed to stand as motionless as a model ship set on the gleams and shadows of polished marble" (SL 76); "the stilled sea took on the polish of a steel plate in the calm" (SL 87); "The sparkle of the sea filled my eyes" (SL 91).

<sup>42</sup> "Gide," says Dallenback, "sometimes wrote in front of a mirror so as to get inspiration from talking and listening to his reflection":

"I am (Gide) writing on the small piece of furniture of Anna Shackleton's that was in my bedroom in the *rue de Commailles*. That's where I worked; I liked it because I could see myself writing in the double mirror of the desk above the block I was writing on. I looked at myself after each sentence; my reflexion spoke and listened to me, kept me company and sustained my enthusiasm."

See *The Journals of Andre Gide*, translated by J. O'Brien, 4 vols., (London, Secker and Warburg, 1947), I, p. 218. Gide's use of the mirror here can be compared with some of the Symbolists. One is of Monsieur Teste ("I am being, and seeing myself: seeing myself see myself, and so on"); and of La Jeune Parque ("And in my tender bonds suspended from my blood/ I saw myself seeing myself, sinuous . . ."). However, one of Valery's aphorisms better expresses the basis of Gide's narcissism -- not mere indulgence, but rather the attempt to overcome the eccentric movement

from self to self of a subject that is called into question: "A mirror in which you see yourself, which makes you want to talk to yourself -- this evokes and explains the strange text: *Dixit Dominus Domino meo* . . . it gives it a meaning." (P. Valéry, *Oeuvres*, Paris, Gallimard, Pleiade, 1960), II, p. 541. Quoted in Lucien Dallenback, *The Mirror in the Text* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989), p. 192 - 3, translated by Jeremy Whitely with Emma Hughs.

<sup>43</sup> The mirror image is also used in "The Secret Sharer" to describe the arrival of Leggatt, the disturbing double: "The shadowy, dark head, like mine, seemed to nod imperceptibly above the ghostly grey of my sleeping-suit. It was, in the night, as though I had been faced by my own reflection in the depths of a sombre and immense mirror" (TLS 89).

<sup>44</sup> Letter of July 14 1923, to Richard Curle, in Jean-Aubry, II, p. 316.

<sup>45</sup> Letter of August 28, 1908, *Letters from Joseph Conrad 1895 - 1924*, ed. by Edward Garnett (1928; repr., New York, 1962), p. 214.

<sup>46</sup> Letter to Sir Sidney Colvin, March 18th, 1917, in Jean-Aubry, II, p. 184.

<sup>47</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres Completes*, p. 18.

<sup>48</sup> Both Jones and Thorburn argue convincingly for a theory of Conrad's decline based on his inner conflict with romanticism and a gradual weakening of control over the romantic treatment of his material.

<sup>49</sup> An element of the supernatural for its own sake together with superficial narration partly accounts for the slightness and mediocre quality of another short story in *A Set of Six* -- "The Brute."

<sup>50</sup> Conrad alludes to Dominic Cervoni as the model for Nostromo in his preface to that novel (JCF 173). So do several critics, among them: Thomas Moser, *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1957), p. 181; Cedric Watts, *A Preface to Conrad* (Longman, N.Y., 1982), p. 20; and Baines, p. 37. Albert Guerard, in *Conrad the Novelist* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1969), devotes three pages to the portrayal of Dominic Cervoni in *The Mirror of the Sea* and as a model for the Dominic of *The Arrow of Gold*, pp. 7 - 9.

David Thorburn discusses the development of this character in all three works in relation to Conrad's romanticism, pp. 93 - 99, 107, 129 - 30, 141-42.

<sup>51</sup> Baines, p.375.

<sup>52</sup> Joseph Conrad, *A Personal Record*, p.72.

<sup>53</sup> Baines, p.18.

<sup>54</sup> George Ross Ridge, *The Hero in French Decadent Literature* (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 1961), preface, vii and p.2.

<sup>55</sup> "The decadent writers," says Jean Pierrot, "were to seek for escape from the boredom and banality of everyday life through exquisite refinements of sensation. Convinced that the material universe is nothing but an appearance, and that our consciousness can never apprehend anything but its own ideas or representations, they were to make of imagination a kind of higher power by means of which the world's reality could be transformed. They were to create secret, inner paradises for themselves, peopled with creatures of legend, where they could cultivate the dream." *The Decadent Imagination* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 10, 251, and 252, translated by Derek Coltman.

<sup>56</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (Edinburgh and London, 1909), I, pp. 32 and 33, translated by Anthony M. Ludovici. See also Nietzsche's polemic, *The Case of Wagner*, and Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *The Triumph of Time: A Study of the Victorian Concepts of Time, History, Progress, and Decadence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 66 - 93. Buckley devotes a whole chapter to the idea of decadence in the Victorian era and later.

<sup>57</sup> "Notes Nouvelles sur Edgar Poe" (1857), *Oeuvres de Edgar A. Poe*, translated by Charles Baudelaire, ed. Y.G. Le Dantec, *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* (Paris, 1940), p. 700. Quoted in Margery Sabin, *English Romanticism and the French Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 209 - 10.

<sup>58</sup> Sabin, p. 210.

<sup>59</sup> Jean-Aubry, I, p. 222.

<sup>60</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Chance* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1984), p. 336. All other references, abbreviated CH, are to this edition.

<sup>61</sup> Albert Guerard, *Conrad the Novelist*, p.14.

<sup>62</sup> This is not to discount the modern psychological interest of the double, the mirror and reflection, (an area of continuing concern to psychology from Freud to Lacan), as an important aspect of "The Secret Sharer" that offers a domain of interpretive possibilities still far from exhausted. My intention here is to point out the presence of a Romantic convention even in a relatively modern, 'unromantic' Conradian work of a 'pure,' uncluttered style; for in looking forward, the double in "The Secret Sharer" transforms some of the thematic functions of the double in early Romantic to late Nineteenth Century literature. The *Doppelgänger* or double appears, for instance, in numerous works of Jean-Paul Richter (*Hesperus*, *Titan*, *Die Fliegjahre*) and E.T.A. Hoffmann ("*Prinzessin Brambilla*," *Die Elixiere des Teufels*). The double is also a preoccupation of Heinrich Heine (*Romanzero*, *Reisebilder*). In English, a popular Victorian work that adopts the convention -- with moral and didactic overtones -- in the form of the dual personality is R.L. Stevenson's *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* is an example of its application to moral/aesthetic themes. It is also central to the poetic work of Poe. In Conrad it is closely related to the Baudelairian concept of the double or dual self through reflection and self-consciousness, and occasionally echoes some of the related Baudelairian preoccupations with the artist as actor and the interplay between dream and reality and between subjectivity and objectivity.

<sup>63</sup> Morton D. Zabel, ed., *The Portable Conrad*, rev. ed., F. Karl (Harmondsworth, England: 1969, repr. 1981), p.608.

<sup>64</sup> Albert Guerard, *Conrad the Novelist* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1969), pp.26 and 27.

<sup>65</sup> Cedric Watts, *A Preface to Conrad* (London: Longman, 1982), pp.133-134.

<sup>66</sup> Watts discusses this aspect of Conrad more fully in "Janiform Novels," *English*, No. 24 (1975), 40 - 49, "The Mirror - Tale," *Critical Quarterly*, No. 19 (1977), 25 - 37 and *The Deceptive Text: An Introduction to Covert Plots* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1984), pp.1 - 30.

<sup>67</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Ebb-Tide* (London: William Heinemann Press, 1894), p. 187.

<sup>68</sup> Stephen K. Land, *Conrad and the Paradox of Plot* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp.168 - 169.

<sup>69</sup> This echoes Nostromo's waking up from his fourteen hours' sleep at the end of chapter 7 of Part Three, *The Lighthouse*, in *Nostromo*; he "arose full length from his lair in the long grass" and "stood knee deep amongst the whispering undulations of the green blades with the lost air of a man just born into the world" (N 347). See also Chapter Three of this study.

<sup>70</sup> V. J. Emmett, Jr., in his article on "An Outpost of Progress" considers Conrad in this story to have much in common with both Hobbes and Zola. *The Texas Review*, 2, No.2 (1981), 5 - 9.

<sup>71</sup> Conradian narrators have the habit of applying the term "illusion" to ideals, thoughts, observations and feelings -- even love is termed merely 'the strongest of illusions' (as in "A Smile of Fortune" and "The Planter of Malata"). Max Beerbohm parodies this tendency in his tale "The Feast" with a mock-Conradian style:

In his upturned eyes . . . the stars were reflected, creating an illusion of themselves who are illusions. . . . within the hut the form of the white man, corpulent and pale, was covered with a mosquito-net that was itself illusory like everything else, only more so.

See Max Beerbohm, *A Christmas Garland*, "The Feast" (London: Heinemann, 1950), pp. 129 - 30.

<sup>72</sup> Baines, p. 190: "Conrad gives 'Karain' a welcome ironical twist by allowing an English well-wisher cynically to exorcise with a Jubilee six-penny piece the spirit

which is haunting Karain." And Graver, p.31: "Hollis decides to enjoy a joke at the native's expense."

<sup>73</sup> Letter to R.B. Cunninghame Graham of Jan. 31st, 1898, in Jean-Aubry, I, p.226.

<sup>74</sup> Wordsworth's moral-philosophical enquiry explicitly focuses on the observation of marginal characters: idiots, children, rural people and 'savage races'. Some of these figures undertake or have undergone some kind of journey. But instead of an outward movement, into the sphere of the exotic or into romance, Wordsworth returns these wanderers homeward and binds them to an English place. The narrator of "The Mad Mother" tells us that "She came far from over the main" and attests that she speaks "in the English tongue". In "Ruth" when the youth from Georgia is introduced, wearing a "gallant" casque of feathers that "nodded in the breeze," the narrator believes that "from Indian blood you [might] deem him sprung". "But no!" he asserts "he spake the English tongue./And bore a soldier's name." Leonard in "The Brothers" returns from Indian isles to his paternal home "With a determined purpose to resume/The life he had lived there." (lines 69-70). For journey, nostalgia and 'primitive' encounters in Wordsworth see also "The Thorn," "The Ruined Cottage," "Tintern Abbey," the "Immortality Ode," and "The Idiot Boy." A recent book by Alan Bewell, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp.57,62,71,72,79,120 - 121, discusses Wordsworth's tales of idiots, encounters with the 'primitive', Rousseau and the perception of the 'primitive'.

<sup>75</sup> *Joseph Conrad's letters to R.B. Cunninghame Graham*, letter of Dec. 14, 1897, p. 53. See also Chapter Two of this study.

<sup>76</sup> "-- *Hypocrite Lecteur -- mon semblable -- mon frere!*"  
 "Au Lecteur," "Les Fleurs du Mal," in *Oeuvres Completes*, p.6.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

<sup>1</sup> Werner Senn considers this alternation and balance between involvement and detachment to be the most significant aspect of form in Conrad's fiction. *Conrad's Narrative Voice: Stylistic Aspects of his Fiction* (Berne: Francae Verlag, 1980). Guerard touches upon this subject in speaking of Conrad's "technique of evocation and evasion" in *Conrad the Novelist*, p.59

<sup>2</sup> Veil and unveiling are key terms in such a major Romantic critical essay as Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry*.

<sup>3</sup> Distance and detachment, whether from the subject matter of his own life and personal experiences or as aesthetic distance from the work, have long been regarded as motivating Conrad's style and structure, especially his use of more than one narrative voice. F.R. Leavis speaks of Conrad's "capacity for detachment" *The Great Tradition* (1948; repr. London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), p.189; David Daiches indicates how Marlow allowed Conrad to gain a sense of perspective and distance -- *The Novel and the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), p.36. Albert Guerard sees "the interposed narrator or interposed reporting witness" as one of several "means of controlling the author's or narrator's distance from his subject," *Conrad the Novelist*, p.59. Werner Senn, on page 10 of *Conrad's Narrative Voice*, calls attention to the discussion of aesthetic distance in an article by Walter Ong, S.J., "From Mimesis to Irony: The distancing voice," in *The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 9 (Spring/Fall 1976), 1-24. Jakob Lothe states that the fiction of Conrad "Strongly supports the view of distance . . . which is a model category that denotes, essentially, the relation between the narrator and the characters and events he describes." He adds that Conrad's fiction exhibits "intricate modulations of distance -- from the detached, ironic stance of the authorial narrators of "An Outpost," *The Secret Agent* and *Nostromo* to the personal

narrative of *The Nigger*, "The Secret Sharer," *The Shadow-Line*, -- *Conrad's Narrative Method* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.12-13.

<sup>4</sup> Werner Senn, p.9.

<sup>5</sup> These two appearances of "our" can be considered as an introduction to the first person if we do not count the lone "we" that slips by in a parenthesis early in the first chapter: "Singleton, who . . . in the last forty-five years had lived (as we had calculated from his papers) no more than forty months ashore . . . sat unmoved . . ." (NN 3). The effects in the combination "our nigger" have been analysed in Chapter Two of this study.

<sup>6</sup> Several critics have argued against all or some of these apparent inconsistencies in voice. Vernon Young believes that Conrad's "narrator-perspective is awkwardly handled" and that many of these dialogues "are impossibly come by." "Trial by water: Joseph Conrad's 'The Nigger of the *Narcissus*,'" *Accent*, xii (Spring, 1952), 67 - 81, repr. in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*,"* ed. John A. Palmer (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), pp.25 - 39. Guerard, on the other hand, finds that the changes in point of view implied by these dialogues do not "violate" the reader's "larger sustained vision of the dramatized experience," but he believes "serious violation does occur . . . when we are given Wait's broken interior monologues." *Conrad the Novelist*, p.107. Another objector to "the gross violation of point of view" is Marvin Mudrick in "The Artist's Conscience and 'The Nigger of the *Narcissus*,'" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, xi, 288-297, repr. in Palmer, pp.69-77. Ian Watt refutes many of these arguments and observes that the shifting point of view in the story "enacts the varying aspects of its subject." "Conrad Criticism and 'The Nigger of the *Narcissus*,'" *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, xii, 257 - 283, repr. in Palmer, pp. 78 - 99. The tendency in recent years has been to argue in favour of these shifts, albeit with reservations, as in David Manikom's article, "True Lies/False Truths: Narrative perspective and the control of ambiguity in 'The Nigger of the *Narcissus*,'" *Conradiana*, 18, No.2 (1986), 105-118.

<sup>7</sup> Mudrick calls these interior monologues "illicit glimpses of the 'inside'" (See Palmer, P.73), to which Ian Watt answers: "hasn't the time come to ask whether Dr. Johnson's point about an earlier formal prescription -- the unities of time and place -- isn't relevant here?" (See Palmer, p.80).

<sup>8</sup> Werner Senn calls attention to this passage as an example of "sequences that employ the whole gamut of possibilities between direct and free indirect style, between fully mediated and apparently unmediated narration" p. 164 - 165. He gives a comprehensive and detailed analysis of each sentence and its function in a large passage of which my quotation is but a part.

<sup>9</sup> "The Shadow-Line," too, emphasizes solidarity, even using the same image of the "knot," but with the difference that it does not underscore the subversive elements within the crew to the same extent as "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*." "The little motionless knot of men stirred, with low murmurs of relief" (SL 120). The young captain-narrator "was not exactly a lonely figure" (SL 53). He acknowledges his dependence on Ransome and the rest of his dauntless crew. Their solidarity is never challenged by such disruptive influences in their midst as Wait and Donkin in "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*" or the crew's inertia and the second mate's nervous breakdown in "Typhoon." This absence of tension between communion and isolation further appears from the narrative form of "The Shadow-Line": from the vantage point of achieved maturity and appreciation of solidarity, the narrator indulgently looks back upon his youthful vacillations, and "the fellowship of seamen asserted itself" till they "passed under my (the captain's) eyes one after another" (SL 33).

<sup>10</sup> David Manikom "True Lies/False Truths: Narrative perspective and the control of ambiguity in 'The Nigger of the *Narcissus*,'" *Conradiana*, 18 No. 2 (1986), 110 and 114.

<sup>11</sup> Royal Roussel sees *Nostromo's* opening "revelation of the darkness" as a portentous symbol and concept that governs the rest of the novel, *The Metaphysics of Darkness* (Baltimore, 1971), pp. 109-31. Robert Penn Warren also remarks that

this opening is "the book's governing fable of man lost in the blankness of nature," *Joseph Conrad: A Critical Symposium*, ed. R.W. Stallman (E. Lansing, 1960), p.209.

<sup>12</sup> In spite of the fact that London was the world's largest and greatest city, the richest town in the world, the biggest port, the Imperial city -- the centre of civilization, and the heart of the world, a place of complex contrasts, light and darkness, Conrad in his "Author's Note" to *The Secret Agent* looked at London as a "monstrous town more populous than some continents and in its man-made might as if indifferent to heaven's frowns and smiles; a cruel devourer of the world's light . . . [dark] enough to bury five millions of lives" (JCF 196).

<sup>13</sup> Graver, p. 32.

<sup>14</sup> Bruce M. Johnson, "Conrad's 'Karain' and *Lord Jim*," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 24, No.1, (1963), 15.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce M. Johnson, 18 and 20.

<sup>16</sup> John Howard Weston, "'Youth': Conrad's irony and time's darkness," *Studies in Short Fiction*, 11 (1974), 404 and 405.

<sup>17</sup> Weston, 407 and 405.

<sup>18</sup> In "Falk: A Reminiscence," there is also the same bond between the narrator and his listeners: "Several of us, all more or less connected with the sea, . . . That flavour of salt-water which for so many of us had been the very water of life permeated our talk" (T 159).

<sup>19</sup> Nina Schwartz, "The Ideologies of Romanticism in 'Heart of Darkness,'" *New Orleans Review*, 13, No.1 (1986), 92.

<sup>20</sup> Wayne Booth fully develops the notion of the reliable and the unreliable narrator in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961; Penguin edition 1987), pp.158 - 159. The reliable narrator shares "the implied author's norms," the unreliable narrator does not. "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale." D.H. Lawrence's remark is frequently misquoted (if clarified) as "Never trust the teller, trust the tale" because the tale usually confirms the teller, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, [1924] (London: Heinemann, 1965), p.2; Frank

Kermode argues that "trusting the tale can have unforeseen consequences, as all readers of *Studies in Classic American Literature* ought to know," *Novel and Narrative* (University of Glasgow, 1972), p.15; Jeremy Hawthorn says that we should "trust the tale rather than the teller, but narrative transformations of extra-literary visions serve as links between tale and teller," *Joseph Conrad: Narrative Technique and Ideological Commitment* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990), xi.

<sup>21</sup> Frank Kermode, *The Art of Telling: Essays on Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p.140.

<sup>22</sup> L.J. Morrissey, "The Tellers in 'Heart of Darkness': Conrad's Chinese Boxes," *Conradiana*, 13, No.2 (1981), 141 - 148.

<sup>23</sup> Morrissey, 45.

<sup>24</sup> Morrissey (143) draws attention to the growing sense of separateness in the outer narrator as he listens to Marlow's tale and is so disturbed by it as to assert his ego: "I was awake. I listened, I listened . . ." (HD 30). This already separates him from the group.

<sup>25</sup> Ted E. Boyle, "Marlow's 'lie' in 'Heart of Darkness,'" *Studies in Short Fiction*, 1 (1964), 162. See also Kenneth A. Bruffee, "The Lesser Nightmare: Marlow's lie in 'Heart of Darkness,'" *MLQ*, 25 (1964), 322 - 329. Gerald B. Kauvar, "Marlow as Liar," *Studies in Short Fiction*, 5 No.3 (1968), 290 - 292. George E. Montag, "Marlow Tells the Truth: The Nature of Evil in 'Heart of Darkness,'" *Conradiana*, iii, No.2 (1971 - 72), 93 - 97. And Edwin Thumboo, "Some Plain Reading: Marlow's Lie in 'Heart of Darkness,'" *Literary Criterion*, 16, No.3 (1981), 12 - 22.

<sup>26</sup> Garrett Stewart, "Lying as Dying in 'Heart of Darkness,'" *PMLA*, 95 (May, 1980), 326 - 327.

<sup>27</sup> Jerome Meckier, "The Truth about Marlow," *Studies in Short Fiction*, 19, No.4 (1982), 376.

<sup>28</sup> Meckier, 377.

<sup>29</sup> James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), p.99.

<sup>30</sup> Clifford, p.99.

<sup>31</sup> Clifford, pp.99 and 112. Clifford makes interesting comparisons between aspects of Conrad's work and that of his compatriot, the anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski, who presented Conrad with a copy of his first book, *The Family Among the Australian Aborigines*, inscribed in Polish, and who wrote, simultaneously with his classic ethnography entitled *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, and *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*. "Both 'Heart of Darkness' and the *Diary*," says Clifford, "portray the crisis of an identity -- a struggle at the limits of Western civilisation against the threat of moral dissolution" (p.98).

<sup>32</sup> Peter Brooks, *Reading for the plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Knopf, 1984), pp. 259-60.

<sup>33</sup> Hay, p.157. Hay does appear to regard Marlow in this light. She quotes Marlow saying of the lie to his listeners "the heavens do not fall for such a trifle," and adds that "the heavens will fall because of the truth Marlow, along with the rest of the white race, has suppressed." However, Marlow is agonizingly aware that no one in the closed cultural world of Victorian Britain, including his listeners, can understand what he has experienced or gain from him the knowledge that he gained from his journey.

<sup>34</sup> Letter of 31st May, 1902 to William Blackwood, in *Joseph Conrad: Letters to William Blackwood and David S. Meldrum*, ed. William Blackburn (Durham, N.C., 1958), p.154.

<sup>35</sup> Meckier, 375.

<sup>36</sup> Morrissey, 148.

<sup>37</sup> Tony Tanner, "'Gnawed Bones' and 'artless tales' -- Eating and Narrative in Conrad." in *Joseph Conrad: A Commemoration*, ed. Norman Sherry (London: Macmillan, 1976), p.22.

<sup>38</sup> Tanner, p.32.

<sup>39</sup> Tanner, p.27 and 36.

<sup>40</sup> Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal*, in *Oeuvres Completes*, p.6.

<sup>41</sup> Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, p.203. Albert Guerard has suggested that "Typhoon" whose "preoccupations are nearly all on the surface, and in which the devil's share of the unconscious creation was very slight, . . . requires no elaborate interpreting," *Conrad the Novelist*, p.394. Baines says that this story "is one of Conrad's simplest important tales, and has none of the ambiguous moral and philosophical overtones with which 'Heart of Darkness' or *Lord Jim* reverberates," *Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography*, p.257. Graver, p.95, "what makes 'Typhoon' so memorable is less a matter of subject or theme than of style and narrative manner."

<sup>42</sup> John H. Wills, "Conrad's 'Typhoon': A Triumph of Organic Art," *The North Dakota Quarterly*, 30 (1962), 62 and 69.

<sup>43</sup> "Writing letters," says Graver, is "a perfect device for a story in which facts speak so insistently for themselves," *Conrad's Short Fiction*, p.98.

<sup>44</sup> Wills, 69. "The letters and spoken comments," about MacWhirr by the different characters (main and minor) in the story, "not only give balance" to the story "but set the entire storm within a ring of double-barrelled irony" -- MacWhirr as "an ass" (his father's term), and Solomon's remark "give me the dullest ass for a skipper before a rogue. There is a way to take a fool; but a rogue is smart and slippery" (T 18).

<sup>45</sup> Paul S. Bruss, "'Typhoon': The Initiation of Jukes," *Conradiana*, 5, No.2 (1973), 46.

<sup>46</sup> Jakob Lothe, *Conrad's Narrative Method* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.105 - 106.

<sup>47</sup> Conrad, through the use of ellipses, seems consciously to require the reader to work on the text and supply or figure out meanings; or fill in what is left out by the author or narrator. In this case the reader's task is like the author's, to discover non-linear significances, to read and find out clues to what is not narrated.

<sup>48</sup> Roy Pascal, "The Dual Voice: Free Indirect speech and its functioning in the Nineteenth Century European Novel" (Manchester, 1977), 74 - 75. Quoted in Werner Senn, *Conrad's Narrative Voice*, p.160.

<sup>49</sup> C.B. Cox, *Joseph Conrad: The Modern Imagination* (London: Dent, 1974), p.104

<sup>50</sup> Albert Guerard particularly shows how the narrator stands for a point of view limited not only in value and vision, but also in compassion, *Conrad the Novelist*, pp.231 - 53; Tony Tanner convincingly shows how Geneva itself, which is the novel's geographic symbol of the West, is depicted, like the teacher, as dreary, passionless, vacuously orderly, and insensible, "Nightmare and Complacency: Razumov and the Western Eye," *Critical Quarterly*, 4, No.3 (1962), 200; and Eloise Knapp Hay, concentrating on the scene of Razumov's confession to Miss Haldin, shows how "the reader's insight is intensified by the narrator's misconceptions or by the inadequacy of his judgment," *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad: A Critical Study* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963), p.297.

<sup>51</sup> *Under Western Eyes* is reiteratively preoccupied with bodily communication: looks, gestures, facial expression, eye-contact, hand, touch, posture, and movement besides verbal language. See Hawthorn, *Joseph Conrad: Narrative Technique and Ideological Commitment* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990), pp. 236-7.

<sup>52</sup> See Robert Secor, "The Function of the Narrator in *Under Western Eyes*," *Conradiana*, 3, No.1 (1970 - 71), 27 - 38.

<sup>53</sup> While writing *Under Western Eyes* Conrad suffered from an acute attack of gout and a complete breakdown in health. Jessie Conrad wrote to Meldrum:

Poor Conrad is very ill and Dr Hackney says it will be a long time before he is fit for anything requiring mental exertion. . . . There is the MS complete but uncorrected and his fierce refusal to let even I touch it. It lays on a table at the foot of his bed and he lives mixed up in the scenes and holds converse with characters.

(6 Feb, 1910), quoted in Baines, p.372.

54 Guerard, *Conrad the Novelist*, pp.251 - 53.

55 John Palmer, *Joseph Conrad's Fiction: A Study in Literary Growth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), p.131.

56 Frank Kermode, *Novel and Narrative* (University of Glasgow, 1972), p.27.

57 Guerard, p.242.

58 Avrom Fleishman observes that the 'artlessness' of the narrator is not a guarantee of factuality so much as a hint that the text is extremely artful; he sorts out the inter-relations between the various documentary sources the old man is supposed to be using, notes the hints of falsification and omission, and emphasizes the abnormal interest of the novel in the acts and arts of writing. "Speech and Writing in *Under Western Eyes*," in *Conrad: A Commemoration*, ed. Norman Sherry, (The Macmillan Press, 1976), pp.119 - 128.

59 Werner Senn, p.73, argues that in societies such as those depicted in *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*, "where secrecy and dissimulation are a universal condition of man, face-reading becomes an existential question, and the ability of finding out other people's secrets without betraying one's own assumes thematic significance." And in Frank Kermode's words, "the survival of secrecy in a narrative that pays a lot of attention to proprieties should be observed for the sake of clearness and effect." *The Art of Telling* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p.139 - 40.

60 Maureen Fries, "Feminism - Antifeminism in *Under Western Eyes*," *Conradiana*, 5 No.3 (1973), 62.

61 Tony Tanner affirms that, through the narrator, the "stronghold of Western civilization [not of Russia] is challenged and belittled throughout the book," "Nightmare and Complacency: Razumov and the Western Eye," *Critical Quarterly*, 4 No.3 (1964), 200.

62 Guerard, *Conrad the Novelist*, p.244.

## NOTES TO CONCLUSION

<sup>1</sup> *Joseph Conrad's Letters to R.B. Cunninghame Graham*, letter of Feb. 8, 1899, ed. C.T. Watts (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 116 - 17.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Aubry, I, p. 181.

<sup>3</sup> Karl, p.452n, recognizes how Conrad depended on certain romantic conventions and his "departure from melodrama and a debased romanticism. His reliance on passivity, inertness, immobility is one of [Conrad's] major achievements in reshaping the romantic sense of adventure."

<sup>4</sup> Albert Guerard, *Conrad the Novelist*, pp. 254 - 55. For more on Conrad's "abysses" and "voids," see, for example, Visnja Sepcic, "The Mirror of Despair: A Reading of Conrad's 'The Shadow-Line,'" *Studia Romanica et Anglica Zagrabiensia*, v. 41 - 2 (1976), 377 - 94. William Bysshe Stein, "The Eastern Matrix of Conrad's art," *Conradiana*, 1, No. 2 (1968b), 1 - 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Joseph Conrad: Letters to Blackwood and David Meldrum*, letter of 31st May, 1902, p.156.

<sup>6</sup> Hunt Hawkins, "The Issue of Racism in 'Heart of Darkness,'" *Conradiana*, 14, No. 3 (1982), 163 - 71, and Peter Nazareth, "Out of Darkness: Conrad and the Third World Writers," *Conradiana*, 14, No. 3 (1982), 173 - 87.

<sup>7</sup> C.P. Sarvan, "Racism and the 'Heart of Darkness,'" *The International Fiction Review*, 7 (1980), 6 - 10. Ian Watt convincingly argues, "the inconsistencies in Conrad's attitudes to colonial and racial problems must in general be understood in their historical context: and those in 'Heart of Darkness' are particularly influenced by the fact that it was written at a time when Britain had committed herself to stopping further French and German expansion in Africa, even at the risk of war." Conrad and Marlow do not stand for the position that "darkness is irresistible"; their attitude is to "enjoin us to defend ourselves in full knowledge of

the difficulties to which we have been blinded by the illusions of civilisation," *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 160 and 253.

<sup>8</sup> *Joseph Conrad on Fiction*, p. 160.

<sup>9</sup> *Joseph Conrad, Notes on Life and Letters*, preface, vi.

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