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SKEPTICISM AND TRAGEDY IN THE WORKS OF
JOSEPH CONRAD

by



FELIX MNTHALI

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Skepticism and Tragedy in the Works of Joseph Conrad" submitted by Felix Mnthali in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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- ABSTRACT -

Conrad speaks of "illusions" in one important sense. Illusions are man's life-long dreams. They are his personal truth. They are the origin and end of his noblest passions. Illusions are a kind of faith. In Conrad's works, man lives for his illusions which we come to accept as man's only truth, but we are also shown that such a truth is not necessarily the truth of all men. There are two sides to it - man's own side for whom the illusion is the "ultimate concern", and the side of all other observers to whom this ultimate concern will not cause a ripple even in a pond! The two sides to man's illusions define Conrad's skepticism to which more than a third of this thesis has been devoted. An analysis of the themes and dominant symbols of Lord Jim has shown how Conrad works out Jim's truth and in what ways this truth can be compared and contrasted with anyone else's truth. References are made to other works of Conrad, especially Heart of Darkness, Nostromo and Tales of Unrest. References are made to the writings of Soren Kierkegaard and to Franz Kafka's The Trial.

In the second chapter of the thesis, the tragic implications of Conrad's skepticism are examined. Illusions affirm and perpetuate the demands of life. But these demands can also be shown to be self-defeating and not worth the exertions with which they are met. Nevertheless, man as man strives to affirm life and to subject life's failures

to the scrutiny of his consciousness. The two sides of man's truth meet in a tragic union as life and consciousness. This union is indissoluble, uneasy, and unhappy. The tensions, paradoxes, and contradictions which such a union begets are the stuff, the matter, of Conrad's tragic vision. This thesis analyses the themes and dominant symbols of Victory in order to show how they embody Conrad's tragic vision and how such a vision is rooted in Conrad's skepticism. Use has been made, in this chapter, of Unamuno's work, Tragic Sense of Life.

The last chapter of the thesis concerns itself with an extension of Conrad's skepticism and Conrad's tragic vision into the social sphere. An analysis is made of the Symbolism of Heart of Darkness and of the main theme of Nostromo. What emerges is a view of civilisation which is essentially pessimistic. Heart of Darkness presents only a choice of nightmares. What also emerges is a pessimistic view of history. Nostromo centres history in the deeds of men who in turn define themselves in relation to the silver in Gould's mine. If silver be the pivot of history, can there ever be peace and justice in that God-forsaken Republic of Costaguana?

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INTRODUCTION

In the following thesis I will discuss Conrad's skepticism and its tragic implications. I will follow a thematic rather than structural analysis of five important works: Lord Jim, Tales of Unrest, Victory, Heart of Darkness and Nostromo. Conrad's themes tend to overlap and illuminate each other. This has enabled me to ignore sequence and concentrate on thematic affinities in the works I discuss. But themes come out not only in what the narrator says, but in the symbols and metaphors he throws in the right places. Each of the three chapters of the thesis discusses both theme and dominant symbols. In the third chapter, the discussion lingers on the dominant symbols of Heart of Darkness and catches up with the themes of Nostromo at the very end and in a running fashion. It is felt that Nostromo has come out too often in the early chapters of the thesis and that Heart of Darkness says pretty well most that is to be said about "sacred fires and profane rituals."

Conrad in Lord Jim says so much about the problem of "how to be" that I found it fair to look at what he really means. Conrad's skepticism shows man in his littleness of man reaching out for the infinite possibilities surrounding his ideal self. Such a man is Jim. He is heroic. He is also gripped by a certain vanity which puts the search for his ideal self above the needs of the people around him.

The problem of "how to be" is the problem of truth. It is the problem of whether one man's truth can become the truth by which all men live or must be. It is the problem of "illusions." "To follow the dream and again to follow the dream - usque ad finem", says Stein. Yet the dream is deadly. It is full of darkness. It is that which we redeem out of the destructive element - if we ever manage to do so!

Men have the tendency to hug their conceptions of right and wrong too closely. This is also at the heart of Lord Jim. But men being men must hug their conceptions of right and wrong. How else would their life have any meaning, any intensity? Jim sacrifices himself in Patusan. This is a choice. It is also an instance of how, as Dorothy van Ghent puts it, "the destiny each person carries within him, the destiny fully moulded in the unconscious will, lifts its blind head from the dark, drinks blood and speaks." The world of destinies is a closed world. One cannot "beat it". But one can, as Jim does, jump!

The profundity which I see in Conrad's works has persuaded me to compare his themes with the thoughts of some great writers such as Soren Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Unamuno, T.H. Huxley, Sigmund Freud.

The Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno has provided the basic dialectic for the second chapter of the thesis. For Unamuno the tragic sense of life is to be found in the conflict between reason, which cannot admit

of the immortality of the soul, (and, therefore, man's immortality), and faith which is a certain grasp of this uncertainty known as immortality. Man as man insists on relying on both faith and reason. Man has faith all round, faith in some immortality on which the mere touch of cold philosophy (read, "reason") confers absurdity.

Now this duality of faith and cold reason is central in Conrad's dialectic of illusions and in his tragic vision. In Victory, the pessimism of Axel Heyst represents reason. Heyst's rationality reaches what Unamuno would call "the rationalist dissolution" - the despair by rational man of ever seeing "salvation" in reason. Reason must come to terms with life lest man suffocate in the collision. Man is tragic because reason never comes to terms with life. Tragedy is the meeting-point between consciousness and life. Looked at in this manner, the victory in Victory is really what M.C. Bradbrook says it is, "the completest vindication of the values represented by Lena, the vitality, thrust, and energy springing from the very depths of degradation."

In the last chapter of the thesis I have attempted to show how man's faith in practice is degraded from its ideals. The sacred fire is the fire of civilisation and man's ideal conception of peace and justice in Costaguana and everywhere. The profane ritual is the reality which describes man's conception of his ideals. Nevertheless, man being man, there is no fear that he will ever give up the struggle!

CHAPTER I

"HOW TO BE": THE SURFACE AND INNER CRISIS OF MAN

Accordingly, he who turns against himself with the absolute standard will naturally not be able to live on in the blissful confidence that if he keeps the Commandments, and has never been convicted, and is regarded by a revivalistic clique as really a man of heart, in the confidence that he is a splendid fellow who, if he does not die too soon, will in the course of time become all too perfect for this world - on the contrary he will again and again discover guilt, and again will discover it within the total definition, as guilt. But in human nature the sense is deeply implanted that guilt demands punishment. How obvious it is then to hit upon something... (Soren Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript)

"How to be! Ach! How to be!

"We want in so many different ways to be ...

"Yes! Very funny this terrible thing is. A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns - nicht wahr? No! I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up. So if you ask me - how to be?...I will tell you! For that, too, there is only one way... And yet it is true - it is true. In the destructive element immerse ... (Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim)

Man as man is an audacity of life, undetermined and unfixed; he therefore requires confirmation, and he can naturally receive this as individual man, in that others and himself confirm him in his being - this - man. Again and again the Yes must be spoken to him, from the look of the confidant to the stirrings of his own heart, to liberate him from the dread of abandonment, which is a foretaste of death. (Martin Buber: The Way of Response)

It is certain my conviction gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it. (Epigraph to Lord Jim, taken from Novalis)

In the works of Joseph Conrad man's apocalyptic rendezvous with his ideal self is seldom insulated from

man's acquiescence in the mundane and the ordinary. Existence promises man infinite possibilities but withholds from him that infinitesimal opportunity which he needs to reach the desired self. Therefore, Jim leaps into the heart of darkness, "into an everlasting deep hole" (LJ 111)¹ and the leap as such becomes the organising principle of his life. The pattern of Lord Jim is what A. Grove Day has suggested it is, "one jump after another".² There seems to be a recognisable ethos behind such a pattern. For it is not only Jim who jumps. Not metaphorically, anyway. Conrad's important characters rarely deliberate on choices - and when they do, they never act according to their deliberations. They simply choose. This kind of choice is a leap into the darkness of the future. It is a leap by which man overcomes the Angst created for him by the infinite possibilities surrounding his ideal self.

With Joseph Conrad, then, we enter a universe existing beyond simple and clearly demonstrable categories of good and evil. Good and evil do, indeed, exist. But they are not to be seen neatly arranged on shelves outside the people who accomplish good or bad deeds. Good and evil, like the kingdom of God, are within man. They exist, not in the abstract, but in fact; not in the ringing words of sermons or proclamations, but in the deeds of men. Conrad's awareness of this point is the basis of the irony

behind the religious motif in Lord Jim, Heart of Darkness and Nostromo. In Lord Jim, we are told that Jim's father "possessed such certain knowledge of the Unknowable as made for the righteousness of people in cottages without disturbing the ease of mind of those whom an unerring Providence enables to live in mansions" (LJ 5). We are also told that the passengers on the "Patna" are "the unconscious pilgrims of an exacting belief" (LJ 15). Again and again, we are brought back to this motif of faith and to its inherent irony.

Faith in the sense in which it is shown in Lord Jim is something beyond institutions and dogma. It is what the theologian Paul Tillich has called "the state of ultimate concern."³ One immediately thinks of Stein's romanticism and Chester's realism. Faith in this sense is crucial to the problem of "how to be". One may well say that the problem of "how to be" is the search for the ultimate concern. We can well see why Conrad shows us Jim's father whose life has been spent in the service of his mossy grey church (LJ 5). We can well see why Conrad finds it necessary to let us know that the pilgrims on the "Patna" streamed aboard "urged by faith and the hope of Paradise" (LJ 14). The drama in the lives of the men and women of Lord Jim is the drama of a quest and the quest is, for Conrad, man's ultimate concern.

In Lord Jim, we are insistentlly reminded of sun-

shine and darkness, of truth and untruth, of substance and form, of echoes and sounds, of palpitating life and disembodied spirits. We are insistently reminded of axiomatic polarities in the natural world around us and in the moral world within us. Ultimate concerns have a way of evoking such polarities. In Lord Jim, we move through mists and darkness. We enter cavernous halls suggesting ghosts and goblins. There are suggestions of haunted houses in which sages expound the wisdom of Shakespeare. Men obey the call of the absolute and this call gives coherence to the intense and varied characters who crowd the stage. They are all animated by the problem of "how to be." They are called upon to ask themselves whether or not to embrace shadows and ghosts instead of saving their skin here and now. Love and hatred, skirmishes and peace treaties all lead to but one problem, "how to be".

If, for example, honour is all that counts in life, we have the faith, the ultimate concern of the French lieutenant. Marlow observes that this man "reminded you of one of those snuffy, quiet village priests into whose ears are poured the sins, the sufferings, the remorse of peasant generations, on whose faces the placid and simple expression is like a veil thrown over the mystery of pain and distress." (LJ 139)

If, however, we listen to Chester, we are told

that honour, like the certificate of which Jim is deprived at his inquiry, is a "bit of ass's skin" (LJ 161). Chester and his Teiresias, Holy-Terror Robinson, have their own ultimate concern. This concern is the scaling of dangerous reefs in search of guano, that golden fleece from which will flow the riches of Queensland (LJ 164-165). The appreciation of the value of guano is the appreciation of an advanced means of growing the fruits of the earth. Such a means is technology. Technology starts with the famous deed of Prometheus. He brings fire to man. It is significant that Chester's proposed contribution to Jim's search for an ideal self is the offer of a role in the exploitation of guano. Marlow's image of this role has all the attributes of a scene commonly associated with the punishment meted out to Prometheus by Zeus:⁴

I had a rapid vision of Jim perched on a shadowless rock, up to his knees in guano, with the screams of sea-birds in his ears, the incandescent ball of the sun above his head; the empty sky and the empty ocean all a-quiver, simmering together in the head as far as the eye could reach. (LJ 167)

Chester's offer is tantamount to asking Jim to defy his ghost, since one of Prometheus' choices is that of sheer defiance against the gods - whom he later joins!⁵ For Chester this defiance takes place when a man "sees things as they are" (LJ 162). A man sees things as they are, when he ceases to worry or make any fuss about his means

of survival. But Chester's offer to Jim demands a kind of self-punishment on Jim's part. It is the self-punishment of defying ethical categories and "getting on with the job." The defiance is familiar enough to readers of Camus' Myth of Sisyphus.⁶ Marlow rejects this kind of defiance though he later wishes he had let Jim accept Chester's offer (LJ 174). The offer remains too "phantasmal and extravagant" (LJ 174). But the time Lord Jim is published Conrad finds such a Promethean defiance illogical.⁷ It would appear to me that Conrad has a way of associating this Promethean role with guano. In Lord Jim, Chester and Robinson are obsessed with guano and with what guano stands for. It stands for wealth and also for the chance of these two men to find themselves as they search for it. In Nostromo, Charles Gould finds himself in his mine and the mine is the pivot of history in the Republic of Costaguana. Charles Gould is a veritable Prometheus, whose technology and power become the hope not only of South America, but of the whole world. But South America and the world are doomed to disappointment because they depend on Gould's mine, and that mine, alas, is situated in Costa - guana! One can make too much, perhaps, of Conrad's names. This one appears to me to link 'guano' to the faith of Charles Gould, which is a faith in technology and in "material interests."

To return to Lord Jim. There is yet another faith

here which deserves attention. It is that of the learned Stein and it has received applause from critics of divergent approaches, notably, Dorothy van Ghent, Albert Guerard, and Ted E. Boyle.⁸ Stein gives Marlow the famous lecture on the saving or creative power of "the destructive element" (LJ 213-216). Marlow tells us about Stein's involvement in the revolutions of 1848. He tells us of the death of Stein's wife, the Princess, and the loss of her brother, "poor Mahamed Bonso" (LJ 206-207). We see Stein overcoming his enemies and capturing the butterfly of his dreams (LJ 210-211). The butterfly first appears as a shadow on the face of one of Stein's dead enemies (LJ 210). Stein has followed his dream usque ad finem. He has overcome his enemies with the same zest with which he collects butterflies (LJ 206). Stein does not, however, give us a rational picture of his inner crisis during all these adventures. He gives us only a glimpse, and the glimpse does not rationally reconstruct his inner crisis since it only reconstructs the effect of the inner crisis. I refer to what Stein says he felt after capturing his butterfly:

"When I got up I shook like a leaf with excitement, and 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 210)

If we now go to Jim himself, we will be over-

whelmed by the problem of reflection. Jim is simple and yet he really complicates things for Marlow by being so simple (LI 46). He suffers from what Kierkegaard calls "reflexive sorrow."⁹ This is what magnifies his guilt. The intensity of his guilt is in direct proportion to the intensity of his sorrow - and the sorrow itself is for what has been lost, an opportunity! We can regard this loss as the loss of innocence. The end of innocence is the beginning of a faith. Innocence, opportunity, ideal self, identity - these are the central themes in Conrad, not just duty or fidelity.

Jim, then, is a man who feels guilty, and this by Stein's own admission, is what gives Jim's existence its poignant intensity. It is what makes Jim romantic (LJ 216). Jim is a great Hamlet and a Christ. He has these two roles which Stein, as I will soon show, is trying to appropriate in tranquillity.

We do not see in Stein's life any reflexive sorrow. Stein does not show us his inner crisis. He dazzles us with his adventures and his learning but he is not shown suffering inwardly. Stein does not act differently from Captain Brierly or Chester or even Holy-Terror Robinson. Indeed, he is much closer to Bob Stanton who dies trying to rescue a lady's maid from a sinking ship (LJ 149-150). The major difference would be that Stein might die trying to rescue a butterfly instead of a lady's maid. After all,

in his youthful days of campaigns and revolutions he annexes all the butterflies he can get hold of (LJ 206). The butterfly of his dream is discovered in the hour of battle (LJ 210). Thinking a little about Heart of Darkness, we can say that in Stein we have one possibility of what Kurtz might have become. Kurtz is swallowed up by the destructive element, it seems to me, because he begins by seeing good and evil in abstract terms and writing about them in abstract terms. Stein, on the other hand, has lived as if good and evil were to be found nowhere else but in what he does. The reflection and the tenebrous dialectics come after, not before, the immersion into the destructive element. It is because of this that Stein's lecture has its impact not on Jim, whose destiny provokes it, but on Marlow and on us, to whom Jim becomes a question and an enigma.

Stein quotes and paraphrases Hamlet. He concludes that man is not a masterpiece (LJ 208). The fact that man wants all the space around him, says Stein, shows that he has come where he is not wanted (LJ 208). Behind this vehement assault on Renaissance humanism seems to me to be some disappointing experiences which Stein does not care to reveal, although he confesses to Marlow that he let many opportunities escape and lost many dreams that had come his way (LJ 217). On the surface, then, it would seem that there is nothing in Stein's life to justify his association

with Hamlet. He seems to lack Hamlet's Angst. Stein's lecture is, in deed, the wisdom he has acquired from existence. It is neither the mask of a successful adventurer nor the platitudes of a Polonius. What we have is an intensely personal experience being cramped into the language of rationality so as to be meaningful objectively, not subjectively. The result is unsatisfactory, for to fully grasp and appropriate such an experience, we have to live it. It succeeds only in so far as it throws an indirect and partial question, not answer, to the central problem posed by Jim, which is the problem of "how to be".

Stein's dream is mirrored in butterflies. Butterflies themselves are not the dream but they are the image of the dream. Ted. E. Boyle maintains that in Christian iconography the butterfly stands for the resurrection of Christ.¹⁰ The butterfly grows from larvas through chrysalis to imago. What we then have is the very essence of art in the sense in which Plato conceived of it, imago, or picture. In the Christian tradition referred to by Boyle¹¹, man moves from birth (larva) through death (chrysalis - descent into hell) and resurrection (or rebirth).

Ted E. Boyle rightly sees these stages as corresponding to Jim's career.¹² The correspondence is neatly worked out in that Jim himself is never lectured to by Stein. Jim's career corresponds to Stein's wisdom on the dream because Jim submits himself, finally, to a

destruction whose saving power can only be seen by a man of faith.

The stages on life's way which a butterfly's life-cycle symbolises seem to be missing from Stein's own career. That is because Stein leaves an important element of this career undisclosed. Stein does not show us his inner agonies. He does not describe his Angst. In that sense, his lecture merely hints at numerous possibilities which leave Marlow dissatisfied. Conrad attempts to indirectly communicate man's dream in the way we find Soren Kierkegaard attempting to show Abraham's Agnst before Abraham sets out to Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son, Isaac.¹³ In the final analysis, we can only know that the Angst was there, but we cannot know what it is. Stein's lecture does not correspond to its exemplum. It does not correspond to Stein's life which, like Brierly's, Chester's, or that of the French lieutenant, must throw a searching light on "how to be".

For a while, Marlow is impressed by Stein's romanticism (LJ 216). But only for a while. Marlow has, in fact, already shown his dissatisfaction with Stein's lecture by dismissing it as "crepuscular" (LJ 215). It seems to me that this dimness is inevitable since Stein does not (and cannot!) present to us the internal framework of his career. He cannot rationally convey to us the dimensions and configuration of his inner crisis. Marlow seems to

say that we shall never know such a crisis. He surrounds it with "an abyss full of flames":

His life had begun in sacrifice, in enthusiasm for generous ideas; he had travelled very far, on various ways, on strage paths, and whatever he followed it had been without faltering, and therefore without shame and without regret. In so far he was right. That was the way, no doubt. Yet for all that, the great plain on which men wander amongst graves and pitfalls remained very desolate under the impalpable poesy of its crepuscular light, overshadowed in the centre, circled with a bright edge as if surrounded by an abyss fully of flames. (LJ 215)

The core of Stein's existence is beyond anyone's reach. This might seem to question Stein's contribution to the problem of "how to be". But the contribution is still valid. It lays emphasis on the fact that the ultimate centre of any ultimate concern is unknowable. Perhaps the Conrad who created Stein is, indeed, a neo-platonist as one of his earliest critics maintained.¹⁴ But then, again, Conrad may be bringing into the debate on "how to be" some of his characteristic Schopenhauerean pessimism, a pessimism which dominates his letters to his uncle Bobrowski, to Marguerite Poradowska and to Cunninghame Graham.¹⁵ In this pessimistic vein we can see him saying that we shall never know what makes men move as they do, although their movements are a manifestation of something ultimately uncontrollable.

We may return to the image of Stein's dream. Stein collects butterflies - and he also collects beetles (LJ

203-204). The beetles are said by Marlow to be "horrible miniature monsters, looking malevolent in death and immobility" (LJ 203). In aesthetic, not entomological terms this collection is a gathering of contradictions, of the beautiful and the ugly. Art would appear to provide a clue to Stein's lecture in much the same way as it provides a clue to the character of Charles Gould in Nostromo and of Kurtz in Heart of Darkness. Stein insists that man must be saved by the destructive element while he strives for his dream. I have already shown how the butterfly of Stein's dream is caught in a destructive moment, in the hour of battle - as a shadow on the face of a dead enemy (LJ 210). Now I point out that Stein also collects beetles and that the sum-total of his collection is a fusion of contradictions. I maintain, therefore, that by the "destructive element" we are to understand the stuff, the deadly matter of life through which man must wade in order to realise his dream. What carries man through to the end is, of course, the dream:

That was the way. To follow the dream, and again to follow the dream - and so - ewig - usque ad finem. ... The whisper of his conviction seemed to open before me a vast and uncertain expanse... (LJ 214-215)

Following the dream in this manner implies an intense absorption, a kind of monomania, which Marlow observes in Stein:

I was very anxious, but I respected the intense, almost passionate, absorption with which he looked at a butterfly, as though on the bronze sheen of these frail wings,

in the white tracings, in the gorgeous markings, he could see other things, an image of something as perishable and defying destruction as these delicate and lifeless tissues displaying a splendour unmarred by death. (LJ 207)

Stein is presented as a man in the act of worshipping the visible symbol of his dream. This symbol suggests a fusion or ultimate merger of contradictions. The butterfly is perishable and yet its splendour defies destruction. Stein, of course, sees in the butterfly, in these lifeless tissues which defy destruction, something that neither Marlow nor anyone else can clearly see.

Earlier on in this chapter I referred to the dream of Charles Gould in Nostromo. The symbol of Gould's dream is what he refers to as "material interests." Material interests stand for wealth - the wealth within the Republic of Costaguana, the symbol of "the might within the land", to use Conrad's phrase from Heart of Darkness (YTO 47). Material interests are meant to include stones and minerals in general besides the Gould Concession. Gradually, as the dream of Charles Gould takes on a recognisable image, material interests come to be more and more described by rocks, statues, a broken vase, and mines in general. A stone is cold and lifeless, but in Charles Gould it elicits the same tenderness and passion as if it were human. We see the motif of faith uniting this man with the world of minerals:

Mines had acquired for him a dramatic interest. He studied their peculiarities from a personal point of view, too, as one would study the varied characters of men. He visited them as one goes with curiosity to call upon remarkable persons. ... Abandoned workings had for him strong fascination. Their desolation appealed to him like the sight of human misery, whose causes are varied and profound. (Nmo 59)

Conrad makes the point of showing the development of Gould's faith in material interests by presenting a picture of Gould's courtship which is a premonition of the precedence which material interests will take over his wife. When his father dies, Charles Gould brings the news of this death to his fiancée, Emilia. When the latter condoles with him on this loss, Charles Gould appears to be more interested in the heavy marble vase which he observes in the house.

She was too startled to say anything; he was contemplating with a penetrating and motionless stare the cracked marble urn as though he had resolved to fix its shape forever in his memory. ... He caught hold of her hand, raised it to his lips, and at that she dropped her parasol to pat him on the cheek, murmured "Poor boy", and began to dry her eyes under the downward curve of her hat-brim, very small in her simple, white frock, almost like a child crying in the degraded grandeur of the noble hall, while he stood by her, again perfectly motionless in the contemplation of the marble urn. (Nmo 62)

In a moment like this, where emotions well up because of the finality and hopelessness wrought by death, Charles is perfectly motionless in the contemplation of material interests, a dead phenomenon which elicits in him all the profound emotions elicited in others by the blooming,

decay and disappearance of life.

Earlier on, I also referred to the dream of Kurtz in Heart of Darkness. That dream may also be gauged only indirectly and imperfectly. I now suggest that Kurtz's dream is mirrored in the painting which Marlow observes in the hut of the brickmaker at the Central Station:

"I rose. Then I noticed a small sketch in oils, on a panel, representing a woman, draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch. The background was sombre - almost black. The movement of the woman was stately, and the effect of the torchlight on the face was sinister." (YTO 79)

In this painting can be seen contradictions yoked together in much the same way as those in the images of the dreams of Stein and Charles Gould. Here, a blindfolded woman carries light into the darkness. That gives us a glimpse of the dream of a well-meaning "emissary of science, of pity" who brings the light into the heart of Africa only to cast a sinister effect on that part of the world. His dream is, nevertheless, a kind of faith. By extension, the dream is the faith of a Europe fiercely engaged in the enlightenment, assault, and looting of Africa. It is the dream, the faith of civilization. "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz..." (YTO 117) Of this civilization, later.

Dreams and the images of dreams. I will later expand these concepts by showing them to be what Conrad calls illusions. For the moment let me say that it was necessary

to look at the dreams of Stein, Gould and Kurtz because dreams, or as they are collectively referred to by Stein, "the dream", must be a crucial ingredient in the discussion of "how to be". The time has therefore come to string together what "the dream" stands for in Lord Jim and elsewhere. The dream is that which elicits man's ultimate attention. It is that which for every man in his own manner confers significance, meaning or substance on existence. The problem of "how to be", then, becomes one of realising and comprehending the dream within the destructive element. The dream is man's ultimate concern. It is faith. "How to be" is how to sustain one's faith through the "destructive element" based on cosmic necessity.

The question then arises of whether anyone's faith is capable of dealing with anyone else's faith. In Conrad's works, the answer is yet another question, but by posing such a question we see the complexity and depth of every ultimate concern. Kurtz, Gould and even Stein cannot successfully answer the problem of "how to be" as it is posed by Jim's career. In Jim's career, contradictions are recognized between the search for the ideal self and the failure attending that search.

These are the contradictions which make their impact felt in Captain Frierly's career. Here is a man who seems to have followed his dream usque ad finem but whose self-complacency is shaken by Jim's problem. He commits suicide.

His suicide is painstakingly shown to be inexplicable (LJ 60-61). Yet Marlow's conjecture sufficiently links Brierly's suicide to Jim's trial and shows that for the first time in his life Brierly questions his own faith, whatever it is:

The sting of life could do no more to his complacent soul than the scratch of a pin to the smooth face of a rock. This was enviable. As I look at him flanking on one side the unassuming pale-faced magistrate who presided at the inquiry, his self-satisfaction presented to me and to the world a surface as hard as granite. He committed suicide very soon after.

No wonder Jim's case bored him, and while I thought with something akin to fear of the immensity of his contempt for the young man under examination, he was probably holding silent enquiry into his own case. The verdict must have been of unmitigated guilt, and he took the secret of the evidence with him in that leap into the sea. (LJ 58)

Montague Brierly, then, seems to have recognised the problem of guilt and in that sense stands closer to Jim than the characters I have discussed so far. His is a more dramatic model of "how to be" than that of, say, Stein. But then, in leaping into the sea Brierly is only substantiating Stein's lecture. "In the destructive element immerse" (LJ 214). The hint is given that Stein's lecture covers more than it says. The sea is vast. It can only keep one up usque ad finem if one takes it for granted that going under is also staying up, that is, that suicide can be part of the pattern of following one's dream, of keeping the faith.

It would then appear that diverse as they are in their dreams, all the paradigms of "how to be" throw an indirect light on Jim's problem. Their lives may be shrouded in mystery as far as their ultimate concerns go, they still pose questions which probe Jim's problem further than the reader would otherwise go.

Stein, Chester, and the French lieutenant avoid any direct or rational presentation of their dreams. They do not reveal their inwardness. They are called upon to illuminate the inner crisis of man and yet they show us only their involvement in man's outer or surface crisis. One would almost think that they have existed like psychic forces in an amoral universe, much in the same way as Nietzsche sees the Greek Gods in his work The Birth of Tragedy:

Whoever approaches the Olympians with a different religion in his heart, seeking moral elevation, sanctity, spirituality, loving-kindness, will presently be forced to turn away from them in ill-humoured disappointment. Nothing in these deities reminds us of asceticism, high intellect or duty: we are confronted by a luxuriant, triumphant existence, which defies the good and the bad indifferently.¹⁶

But Conrad's models of "how to be" do not resemble Nietzsche's gods. They may appear not to bother about their inner crisis but this is only a mask. They do not talk about their inner problems and dreams because these are seen indirectly in the images of what they strive for. Conrad's men either immerse themselves in the destructive element as

Stein advises them to do, or like Marlow in Heart of Darkness, have "peeped over the edge" of the destructive element (YTO 151).

A typical example of the man who seems to have peeped over the edge of the destructive element is the French lieutenant. He wears the mask of a man who wants none of this discussion of "how to be". Yet with his mask of wanting to remain on the surface of things, he makes an important contribution to this discussion. I have earlier shown that he is chiselled in the mould of a village priest (LJ 139). But this priest is one who on purpose avoids questions concerned with inwardness, guilt and expiation. He has a faith as hard as granite beneath the mask of mere efficiency.

The French lieutenant bases his faith on honour, on "the eye of others" (LJ 147). He seems to know what he is talking about. He has moved in all parts of the world where he seems to have really immersed himself in the destructive element. Marlow observes the wounds he has suffered.

This was absolutely the first gesture I saw him make. It gave me the opportunity to 'note' a starred scar on the back of his hand - effect of a gunshot clearly; and, as if my sight had been made more acute by this discovery, I perceived also the seam of an old wound, beginning a little below the temple and going out of sight under the short grey hair at the side of his head - the grace of a spear or the cut of a sabre. (LJ 140)

Marlow shows a certain obtuseness in perceiving the maturity of such a man without also perceiving that such a man has stood on the brink of the precipice of the destructive element and found it to be inscrutable. Such a man remains or appears to remain on the surface because he is aware of the demands of every dream, of the exactions of faith.

Marlow observes the maturity and calmness of the man:

Time had passed indeed: it had overtaken him and gone ahead. It had left him hopelessly behind with a few poor gifts: the iron-grey hair, the heavy fatigue of the tanned face, two scars, a pair of tarnished shoulder-straps; one of those steady, reliable men who are the raw material of great reputations, one of those uncounted lives that are buried without drums and trumpets under the foundations of monumental successes.
(LJ 143-144)

This maturity and calmness differs from that of say,

Singleton in The Nigger of the 'Narcissus' and Captain

McWhirr in Typhoon. There is no "blind mental fog" (Vy 92)

in the French lieutenant. There is a far-reaching experience concealed behind the mask of sticking to surface realities.

For a while even Marlow seems to see this experience and receives the impression of having been given "professional opinion" on Jim's case:

S'est enfié avec les autres, had said the lieutenant. And suddenly I began to admire the discrimination of the man. He had made out the point at once: he did get hold of the only thing I cared about. I felt as though I were taking professional opinion on the case. His imperturbable and mature calmness was that of an expert in possession

of the facts, and to whom one's perplexities are mere child's play. (LJ 145-146)

As Marlow listens eagerly to what the French lieutenant has to add on the matter, he is given the wisdom that all men are born cowards and that what saves us is "the eye of others" (LJ 146-147). This would appear to go directly against Jim's lifelong battle against cowardice and Marlow dismisses the lieutenant's position on "how to be" as the fear of being found out (LJ 148-149). But Marlow cannot see that the French lieutenant has hinted at the possibility of Jim not being good enough for this earth. The French lieutenant sees this possibility and refuses to philosophise on what Jim should do. In a way, the French lieutenant seems to be recoiling with horror at the thought which Brierly articulates to Marlow during the inquiry into the "Patna" affair. It is a thought which repeats Stein's Weltanschauung of immersion into the destructive element. After persuading Marlow to arrange for Jim's disappearance from the scene of the inquiry and being told that Jim wants to face everything, Brierly says in exasperation:

Well, then, let him creep twenty feet underground and stay there! By heavens! I would. (LJ 66)

I maintain that it is this possibility of total disappearance from the surface of the earth for any man who does truly feel guilty which the French lieutenant, from his wide experience, recognises by preferring to stay on the surface

of things. He tells Marlow:

'Allow me... I contended that one may get on knowing very well that one's courage does not come of itself (ne vient pas tout seul). There's nothing much in that to get upset about. One truth the more ought not to make life impossible... But the honour - the honour, monsieur!... The honour ... that is real - that is! And what life may be worth when!.. he got on his feet with a ponderous impetuosity, as a startled ox might scramble up from the grass... when the honour is gone - ah ca! par exemple - I can offer no opinion - because - monsieur - I know nothing of it.' (LJ 148)

This man is very similar to Jim. For him honour is what it is for Jim, the great opportunity, the only one worth living for, the ideal self. It is not accidental that he is shown rising up in the way of "a ponderous ox." Jim is seen as "a charging bull" on the very first page of Lord Jim. But the lieutenant now has experience to look back on, while Jim is still striving for his opportunity. The lieutenant, being wiser than Jim, and in this case, wiser than Marlow, finds that the loss of honour is too terrible to be glibly discussed. He therefore makes a seemingly bland observation:

'And so that poor young man ran away along with the others,' he said with grave tranquillity. (LJ 145)

The irony in the French lieutenant's "grave tranquillity" is against Marlow. For Marlow so far has failed to see what the Frenchman sees clearly, that is, that Jim's problem defies the usual surface observations and that it can ultimately be solved by Jim alone.

By appearing to be competent only in the intricacies of the surface crises confronting man, the French lieutenant leaves Marlow believing that he does not know of the abyss into which Jim has fallen. Marlow seems "taken in" by what to him appears to be the French lieutenant's over-emphasis on unimportant things:

In some extraordinary way, without any marked change in his inert attitude and in the placid expression of his face, he managed to convey the idea of profound disgust. I - you know - when it comes to eating without my glass of wine - I am nowhere! (LJ 141)

This again is an attempt on the part of the French lieutenant to keep clear of the abyss which he knows must be tormenting Jim. He therefore sticks to efficiency, to the recalling of the work on hand and how it was performed. In Heart of Darkness, Marlow bitterly complains about rivets because they mean efficiency, work, and a defence against the onslaught of darkness:

"What I really wanted was rivets, by heaven! Rivets. To get on with the work - to stop the hole... and rivets were what really Mr. Kurtz wanted, if he had only known it." (YTO 83-84)

Rivets, to stop the hole, to get on with the work, to make sense out of the surface phenomena, efficiently and humbly, because the darkness is coming and because the heart of darkness is "altogether too dark" (YTO 162). In Lord Jim, the French lieutenant sees this point. He knows that the surface crisis of man is what man can more easily

manage than his inner crisis. He distinguishes what is possible from what is not:

'One has done one's possible. It was a delicate position.' (LJ 141)

That is why he expresses a profound admiration for the port authorities who clear away the "Patna" and its passengers in "twenty-five minutes" (LJ 142). This is one aspect of the "Patna" affair which the French lieutenant will discuss ad infinitum because it has visible dimensions. The superficial 'how' of things - efficiency, organisation, facts and figures, are well within the competence of objective analysis - and the French lieutenant prefers to remain within this area. He will not touch the problems of guilt, remorse, expiation or the inner "why" of things.

To come to grips with this inner "why" of things, Marlow must still consult other contributions on "how to be". For in one sense, this is not Jim's problem at all. It is Marlow's. Jim appears to know what he needs - an opportunity. His problem is to get hold of the exact location and dimensions of that opportunity. He can well distinguish between the surface crisis of the "Patna" affair and the problems raised by the inner why of that affair:

The facts these men were so eager to know had been visible, tangible, open to the senses, occupying their place in space and time, and requiring for their existence a fourteen-hundred-ton steamer and twenty-seven minutes by the watch; they made a whole that had features, shades of expression, a complicated aspect that could be remembered by the eye, and something else

besides, something invisible, a directing spirit of perdition that dwelt within, like a malevolent soul in a detestable body. He was anxious to make this clear. This had not been a common affair...
(LJ 30-31)

Jim clearly distinguishes two aspects of the inquiry. There are the facts and figures that can be discussed rationally because they constitute the superficial "how" of things and there is the ultimate "why" which no one can answer. It is the "spirit of perdition" working "like a malevolent soul in a detestable body". In the end he will exercise this spirit of perdition with his own life. That is the extent of his romanticism. It is the point he will reach in following his dream.

If, then, the French lieutenant is helpful only in emphasising that Jim's real problem is beyond anyone's solution, who is Marlow to turn to? He tries the learned Stein whom we discussed earlier on in this chapter. But the core of Stein's career, its ultimate "why" seems to be beyond anyone's reach. It is, as Marlow observes, "overshadowed in the centre, circled with a bright edge as if surrounded by an abyss full of flames" (LJ 215). All the same, Stein's lecture seems to me to sum up the most central theme in Lord Jim:

'Yes! Very funny this terrible thing is. A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns. ... No! I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the

exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up. So if you ask me - how to be?... I will tell you! For that, too, there is only one way. ... And yet it is true - it is true. In the destructive element immerse. ... To follow the dream, and again to follow the dream - and so, ewig - usque ad finem. ...' (LT 214-215)

Stein does not, like the French lieutenant, restrict himself to the discussion and control of surface phenomena. He discusses the dream and man's need to follow the dream right into the destructive element. He even attempts to influence Jim's career by heaving him over into Patusan, a place as remote, says Marlow, as "a star of the fifth magnitude" (LJ 218; 229). For Stein, the dream and only the dream is real. But although Stein dares, from so much experience, to delve into the paradox of man's predicament vis-a-vis the destructive element, he does not deal with Jim's problem directly. His philosophy and his sending of Jim to Patusan do not directly answer the ultimate "why" behind Jim's wanderings. Stein, like the French lieutenant, makes his contribution to the problem of "how to be" only indirectly. It is an important contribution, but it works indirectly. In the end, Marlow is still searching for an answer. He will, as we shall see, search for it in vain although he has meanwhile consulted other "sages" besides Stein, and we will discuss them a little later.

Stein paraphrases Hamlet (LJ 208-216). But from what he tells us of his own career, Stein himself has had no

time to ask himself whether it is nobler in mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. He has lived his life to the full, "without faltering, without shame and therefore without regret" (LJ 215). Stein himself has had no time to be a Hamlet. He understands the problems besetting Hamlet after he has lived his active life and can recollect his successes and failures in tranquillity. The real Hamlet at this point is Jim and Stein says things that will apply to Jim's career without either Jim or Marlow knowing it. Without Stein himself knowing it.

Stein uses paradox. For him man is saved by being destroyed. Paradoxes are familiar enough as they abound in the teachings of Christ and the supreme paradox of all time is that of Christ's death on the Cross. Stein, therefore, would appear to be in the role of a Christ when he resorts to the use of paradox in his philosophy. But Stein's life does not show us the agony and the failures that Christ undergoes. The exemplum of Stein's lecture is therefore Jim. Jim has the failures, the suffering, the death of a Christ. This again happens without either Jim or Marlow seeing it as fitting Stein's lecture. Without Stein himself knowing it.

Jim, then, is the Hamlet, the Christ, whom Stein's lecture is describing. Stein is attempting to explain his own dream, his own subjectivity, his own romanticism. We end up seeing the problem faced by Jim in a new light. That

is because it is Jim's suffering that we see, not Stein's. Stein shows only that his romanticism as such, his subjectivity, cannot be communicated in abstract terms. It has to be lived - and Jim is living it.

We return, then, to the pattern of Lord Jim, which, as I said earlier, has been well described as "one jump after another".¹⁷ This pattern suggests as again we observed earlier that for Conrad's characters, deliberations on choices are superseded by choice itself which is a commitment towards an ideal self.¹⁸ This commitment is the end of one phase of anxiety. It is the commitment which succeeds man's loss of innocence.

At this point, I will go again to Nostromo to illustrate what is happening in Lord Jim. In Nostromo, Charles Gould has an unshakeable belief in the power of material interests to bring peace and justice to Costaguana. This faith is so strong that it produces a "taciturn eloquence" in Gould. His wife detects in him an "almost voiceless attitude...toward material things" (Nmo 59). Gould himself voices his faith in the clearest of words and in the characteristic mode of an investor who has confidence in his enterprise:

"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 the 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." (Nmo 84 - italics added)

A better justice never comes. Not only that, Conrad links Gould's faith to a basic attachment, not articulated by Gould, to rocks and minerals. The faith, the dream is also a love-affair! Sure enough, Charles Gould dreams of peace and justice in Costaguana, but the peace and justice are being expected from Gould's real love, minerals. Martin Decoud seems to see this point when he ridicules Gould's hopes and fears as attempts to make basic human needs part of some fairy tale (Nmo 214-215). Dr. Monygham, a realist who seems to speak from the sort of experience I associated with the French lieutenant in Lord Jim, also shows that the faith of Charles Gould is an illusion:

"No!" interrupted the doctor, "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." (Nmo 511)

This, then, is the objective side of Gould's dream. But Gould cannot see it. For it is the essence of faith not to be bothered by any objective insights into whatever it is that is being believed. Charles Gould has a noble faith

but it is also shown to be an illusion.

There is a dual aspect to faith. In Nostromo and especially in Lord Jim, Conrad accepts man's dreams, which are also man's faith. But he also carefully reminds us that these dreams are illusions. They contend with other illusions in a world where man continually creates himself in his own image. Well may Stein advise us to submit ourselves to the destructive element. There is no reason, however, why this plunge into the abyss should be any better than say, the French lieutenant's vision of a world which begins and ends with honour. Stein cannot, for example, tell us why his veneration of butterflies is any better dream than Chester's faith in guano. In the end, Jim cannot tell us why lost honour must be paid for by death. Bob Stanton cannot really tell us why one must risk one's life for a lady's maid who clings to a sinking ship. Marlow, the man who parades before us all these paradigms of "how to be" cannot himself tell us which one is better than the rest. Even after following Jim's agonising career so closely, Marlow, as I will show later, refuses to judge Jim.

I suspect that Conrad in Lord Jim and elsewhere is troubled by the problem of values. I suspect that he is positing a certain "transvaluation of values" in the Nietzschean manner but that he has a forbidding insight into what might follow if man loses all his present dreams,

which are only illusions. Nietzsche, as we know, was bold enough to present the possibility of a world without such illusions. In Thus Spake Zarathustra he chides the traditional notions of morality in this manner:

And even if one have all the virtues, there is still one thing needful: to send the virtues to sleep at the right time. That they may not quarrel with one another, the good females! And about thee, thou unhappy one!¹⁹

To send the virtues to sleep at the right time. In Lord Jim, it is Marlow who is confronted by this problem, for it is Marlow who consults Stein, Chester, the French lieutenant, Brierly. It is he who ruminates over Bob Stanton, over the crew of the "Patna" and over the faith of its passengers. It is he who is searching.

It is Marlow who consults Chester, and Chester speaks both for himself and for Holy-Terror Robinson. Chester uses Robinson's faith as an example of "seeing things exactly as they are" (LJ 162). Robinson is, therefore, a model within a model, a paradigm within a paradigm, of "how to be." Robinson is a model to Chester and Chester participates in this debate with all the intensity and conviction that we have seen in Stein and the French lieutenant. Robinson is accused of cannibalism when he is the only one found alive after going ashore with six companions. In Robinson's story is reiterated the theme of betrayal which starts with the "Patna" affair and links up Jim with both Robinson and Chester:

'The story goes that a boat of Her Majesty's ship "Wolverine" found him kneeling on the kelp, naked as the day he was born, and chanting some psalm-tune or other; light snow was falling at the time. He waited till the boat was an oar's length from the shore, and then up and away. They chased him for an hour up and down the boulders, till a marine flung a stone that took him behind the ear providentially and knocked him senseless. Alone? Of course. ... Three weeks afterwards he was as well as ever. He didn't allow any fuss that was made on shore to upset him; he just shut his lips tight, and let people screech. It was bad enough to have lost his ship, and all he was worth besides, without paying attention to the hard names they called him. That's the man for me.' (LJ 162-163)

It was hard enough to have lost his ship without paying attention to the hard names they called him. This, in my view, is the kernel of Robinson's contribution to the debate on "how to be". Robinson, who is accused of not just betraying his fellow men but of literally "chewing them up", shows a psychological resilience that is the direct opposite of Jim's. Jim, after all, has at this point only betrayed mankind by jumping into a boat when he should have tried to rescue his passengers. Robinson's resilience has a callous note to it. He is concerned about the loss of his ship but will not say a word about the charges of cannibalism. In his incarnation as the archetypal pirate, callous and adventurous to a fault, Robinson would appear to be the very antithesis of our sensitive Jim. On closer examination, however, Robinson is a possibility of Jim, a "heightened" projection of certain aspects of Jim's hopes and fears.

Jim dreams of adventures, Robinson meets them. Jim betrays mankind to save his skin, Robinson eats mankind to save his skin. Jim meets his death in the hour of his opportunity, Robinson meets him along the Walpole Reefs, following "the best chance he ever came across in his life" (LJ 162). Early in Lord Jim we have a glimpse of Jim's day-dreams:

He saw himself saving people from sinking ships, cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through a surf with a line; or as a lonely castaway, barefooted and half-naked, walking on uncovered reefs in search of shell-fish to stave off starvation. He confronted savages on tropical shores, quelled mutinies on the high seas, and in a small boat upon the ocean kept up the hearts of despairing men - always an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a hero in a book. (LJ 6)

These are Jim's adventures from "light literature". Their realisation is, of course, betrayal after betrayal, one jump after another. One does not think of all of Jim's betrayals as callous. But the last betrayal seems to me to be callous - looked at from a certain angle only, an angle that I will later discuss.

In the hour of his death Jim sends to left and right of Doramin's people, "an unflinching glance" (LJ 416). This unflinching glance is an affirmation of his vindicated honour. But it is also a consideration of Jim's ideal self which does not take into account the doomsday which is to befall Doramin's people when they will have no young blood to lead them in the wars against Tunku Allang and other

marauding enemies. The unflinching glance is a betrayal. It is callous. Jim also betrays the girl who loves him, Jewel. He is callous. I maintain that Jim is a younger version of Captain Robinson, the cannibalistic adventurer. But only in one respect, that is, in the sense in which we objectively lay bare the implications of Jim's faith.

It was hard enough for Captain Robinson to have lost his ship without paying attention to the hard names they called him. I suggest that there is yet a deeper possibility than just psychological resilience which Robinson is meant to symbolise. It is the possibility of moral resilience. I mean by this an attitude of defiance to the world of finite causes and moral considerations.

To Marlow, Robinson becomes "the Ancient" (LJ 165). This would link Robinson with the Nestor of Greek antiquity. It would endow him with the wisdom of old age. Conrad respects and yet questions this wisdom. Then again there is the defiance of Prometheus against the gods, an affair already mentioned elsewhere in this chapter.²⁰ Robinson's kind of defiance would appear to say that the best way of confronting the darkness of this earth, the darkness around man, is for man to defy his consciousness of good and evil. In Heart of Darkness, Marlow makes a sardonic critique of Roman imperialism, and by projection, of modern imperialism as well. The critique comes back to this point of defying one's consciousness of good and evil:

"They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a large scale, and men going at it blind - as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness." (YTO 50 - italics added)

This also would take us far into the Central Station where Kurtz has painted a blind-folded woman carrying a lighted torch (YTO 79). What I am trying to emphasise is that in Robinson Conrad poses the possibility of man not living "sub aeternitatis specie". In Conrad's ethos, that is impossible. Robinson must dash his frail life searching for guano. Marlow thinks again of the "adventurous duo", Robinson and Chester:

He was really taking too much to heart an empty formality which to Chester's rigorous criticism seemed unworthy the notice of a man who could see things as they were. An empty formality; a piece of parchment. Well, well. As to the inaccessible guano deposit, that was another story altogether. One could intelligibly break one's heart over that. (IJ 173)

Marlow is here contrasting Jim's dream with that of Chester. Both are weighed and found wanting - from Marlow's point of view. For Marlow, Chester's way of seeing things exactly as they are becomes seeing things only from a romantic point of view. This is already the way Jim is seeing things although he is concerned with guilt and expiation and Chester is concerned with the exploitation of guano, which is a manipulation of surface phenomena, an involvement in man's surface crisis. But romanticism gives this crisis

the stature of Jim's problem. From one angle, romanticism is seeing things exactly as they are not. It is the elevation of madness or monomania to the level of a religion. Chester and Robinson concentrate on what their "hands and feet in the water", to use Stein's phrase, can achieve. This form of romanticism, unlike that of Jim, puts man's trust in his ability to be himself, to achieve his ideal self, in mastering the chaos around him while ignoring or defying the chaos within him. That is why the best chance that, in Chester's view, Captain Robinson will ever have is not that of regaining his honour (cannibalism is more frightening than deserting a ship!) but of making money from the inaccessible guano deposits of Walpole Reef (LJ 162).

In physical appearance, Captain Robinson reminds us of old Singleton in The Nigger of the "Narcissus", who with "spectacles and venerable white beard ... resembled a learned and savage patriarch, the incarnation of barbarian wisdom serene in the blasphemous turmoil of the world" (NN 6). Singleton is a Conradian saint. He stands "with his face to the light and his back to the darkness" (NN 24). In Lord Jim, Conrad respects and accepts the wisdom attached to Robinson's age. He accepts and respects it but does not spare any effort in showing that such wisdom could also be an illusion. Robinson has little to say when Chester introduces him to Marlow. Instead of those few words which make Singleton such a powerful figure in The Nigger of the

"Narcissus", Robinson does not say anything. He does, however, oblige Marlow with an insane laughter, "he - he - he! ... he - he - he!" (LJ 165)

On the positive side, Robinson also suggests Teiresias, the greatest of all mythological seers.²¹ He has the age and the "life-in-death" appearance associated with that seer:

An emaciated patriarch in a suit of white drill, a solah topi with a green-lined rim on a head trembling with age, joined us after crossing the street in a trotting shuffle, and stood propped with both hands on the handle of an umbrella. A white beard with amber streaks hung lumpily down to his waist. He blinked his creased eyelids at me, in a bewildered way. 'How do you do? how do you do?' he piped, amiably, and tottered. 'A little deaf,' said Chester aside. (LJ 163)

The Teiresias of mythology keeps the truth about both femininity and masculinity.²² He knows the past, the present and the future.²³ He functions as seer both on earth and in the underworld.²⁴ There is an overwhelming universality about him - in space and time.

The Teiresias of Sophocles, for example, guards the truth which Oedipus unlocks at his own peril, although being Oedipus he cannot but unlock this truth. Captain Robinson also unlocks the truth for Chester. It is the truth of seeing things exactly as they are. Marlow says that Chester leads Robinson to Walpole Reef. I see the situation the other way around. Chester is inspired by what

he thinks Robinson stands for, that is, "seeing things exactly as they are" (LJ 162). Robinson's inspiration (and money!) leads Chester to the perils of a shipwreck on a dangerous reef (LJ 176). Perhaps Captain Robinson sees no need, as Stein does, to abstract and teach a world-view from his experiences. He sees no need to enlarge on the pros and cons of cannibalism in times of perils. That is why although he might seem to stand for defiance against man's inner gods, as I said earlier, he still suggests the Teiresias of mythology. He guards the truth. What truth?

It is not the truth of the inaccessible guano as such. It is the truth of an inner voice urging man to see things exactly as they are. In the long poem by Robert Browning, The Ring and the Book, Guido Franceschini murders his wife and her parents because he suspects that she has had a love-affair with a priest named Caponsacchi. During the trial, Guido argues that he murdered his wife and her parents in obedience to the voice of conscience. He claims:

...a voice beyond the law enters my
heart, Quis est pro Domino?²⁵

Who is for the Lord? Everyone who thinks that he is. That is the central paradox which Conrad seems to lay out in Lord Jim. In Browning's poem, the murderer claims that he has a conscience to pacify. So, indeed, he has, but he is still a murderer although he claims that in his act he saw conscience as

The God's-gift to mankind,
 impulse to quench
 The antagonistic spark of hell
 and tread
 Satan and all his malice into
 dust,
 Declare to the world the one law,
 right is right.²⁶

I find it helpful to look outside Conrad from time to time in order to sharpen the features of what I am trying to say. The point I am stressing now dominates Heart of Darkness and explains Marlow's ambivalence towards Kurtz. But I must defer that complicated novella to a later chapter.²⁷

Robinson, then, does not guard the truth of the inaccessible guano as such. He guards the truth. What truth? Here again, I will look outside Conrad to illustrate my point. In Melville's Moby Dick, one side of Captain Ahab's monomania is just what I have termed it, monomania, a kind of madness, with a method in it, too. But from Ahab's point of view, the madness, if it be madness at all, has a divinity to it. It is a divine madness, for Ahab like Guido Franceschini is being asked by a voice, Quis est pro Domino? He accepts his call. He submits himself to what Stein in Lord Jim calls "the destructive element." This still does not absolve him from the fact that he may have involved the crew of the "Pequod" in a futile chase against an innocent animal. When Captain Ahab first reveals his intentions to his crew, Ishmael observes that he shouts "with a terrific, loud, animal sob, like that of a heart-stricken moose."²⁸ This is

a deep-seated, passionate aspiration to an ideal self. It is also a heart-rending call to a saga of death, destruction, and futility.

This paradox attached to faith has also been poignantly presented in Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling.²⁹ In this work the story of Abraham and Isaac is used to show how a man makes "a teleological suspension of the ethical."³⁰ Kierkegaard tells us that "the ethical expression for what Abraham did is, that he would murder Isaac; the religious expression is, that he would sacrifice Isaac..."³¹ I will attempt to show, a little later, that Marlow's final reflections on Jim revolve around this very paradox.

At the level of ordinary ethical standards, man looks for moderation and universality.³² At the level of faith, man himself supersedes universal conventions because his yardstick then becomes, to quote again from Robert Browning, "a voice beyond the law."³³ If we use Conrad's own terms, we can say illusions are values held beyond ethical considerations and that illusions grow into the stature of personal truth. They become Jim's truth or Chester's truth. They define a man's ideal self. If, therefore, to the destructive element we must submit ourselves, no place is more suitable for this than the Walpole Reef where Chester and Robinson go, no death more glorious than Jim's death in Patusan. At the same time, as man enters the destructive element he upholds the paradox with which this

chapter opened. He is reaching out for the ideal while at the same time acquiescing in the mundane and the ordinary.

As man soars towards the ideal he discovers that it is painful - for it is the truth, as both Oedipus and Jim discover. What does one do with the truth? What does one do with the discovery that one has disobeyed the gods - through no fault of one's own - and that being guilty of such a sin has branched out into patricide and incest? What does one do after living on the flesh of one's colleagues as Holy-Terror Robinson has or deserting one's ship in a moment of panic as Jim does?

The wisdom from Sophocles would appear to be that one has to live with such a truth. The wisdom from Joseph Conrad would appear to be that men usually refuse to live with such a truth. When, like Chester, they profess to "see things exactly as they are", they are merely emphasising the fact that their dream or illusion urges them to look danger or cannibalism in the face without worrying about the inner consequences of such acts. When, like Jim, they wander over the surface of the earth looking for an opportunity, they are, in fact, hoping to regain a lost innocence. They even believe that old age in its wisdom can find a remedy against the pain of truth. Marlow allows us to see how Jim is mistaken in hoping that from the wisdom of old age he will find something to spare him from the pain of truth:

He was there before me, believing that age and wisdom can find a remedy against the pain of truth, giving me a glimpse of himself as a young fellow in a scrape that is the very devil of a scrape, the sort of scrape greybeards wag at solemnly while they hide a smile. And he had been deliberating, on death - confound him! He had found that to meditate about because he thought he had saved his life, while all its glamour had gone with the ship in the night. (LJ 129)

The pain of truth, here, is the disappearance of innocence. Jim has to live with such a loss. For that too there is only one remedy ... into the destructive element immerse (LJ 212-214).

The pain of truth is what multiplies man's illusions. First, there is the illusion of the ideal self. Jim is identified with this illusion very early in the novel, that is, before he jumps. Then come the illusions associated with remorse and expiation. An inner crisis has been reached and it is the crisis of transition from innocence to guilt. The chaos which ensues within man is that of attempting to either receive a new innocence or reassert the earlier one. Soren Kierkegaard sees an "eternal consciousness" at the heart of things. This is the absolute who is the God of Abraham in Fear and Trembling and, in the context of this discussion, it is the absolute tossing Conrad's Jim from the "Patna" to his death in Patusan. Says Kierkegaard:

If there were no eternal consciousness in a man, if at the foundation of all there

lay only a wildly seething power which writhing with obscure passions produced everything that is great and everything that is insignificant, if a bottomless void never satiated lay hidden beneath all - what then would life be but despair? If such were the case, if there were no sacred bond which united mankind ... how empty then and comfortless life would be!³⁴

This is yet another contribution to the debate on "how to be" - taken from outside Lord Jim. It explains what Chester, Robinson, Stein, Bob Stanton and Jim himself have in common. They all affirm that there is, or ought to be a criterion in life, a criterion by which what is worth pursuing is separated from what is not. They all have in common the acceptance and affirmation of a criterion. Yet they all go their own way in defining that criterion. Each one has his own.

Marlow tells us that Jim's opportunity had come to him "veiled like an eastern bride" (LJ 416). The opportunity is veiled, to begin with, because Jim discovers it only at that time. The opportunity is veiled, secondly and, in my view, more fundamentally because it is Jim's opportunity, not Marlow's or Chester's or anyone else's opportunity. It is not Stein's. It is not, God forbid, that of the French lieutenant or Gentleman Brown. It is Jim's opportunity. It is also his truth. That is why it is "veiled like an Eastern bride", for it is intended only for him, the bridegroom (LJ 243-244).

Conrad, like Kierkegaard, accepts the fact that men live for some truth. But he questions whether such a truth can be objectively valid for all men. Chester's truth is not Jim's truth. But both Chester and Jim have the truth. It is the truth, the faith of defining themselves by their ideals. This is the only objective aspect of faith or illusions, that is, that men have faith. In Kierkegaard's Weltanschauung to have faith is to exist.³⁵ For Conrad to have faith is also to exist. It is to have illusions or as Stein tells Marlow, it is to be romantic (LJ 216).

Jim's opportunity is "veiled like an Eastern bride" because it is intended only for him, the bridegroom. It is not intended for Doramin or Bamb'Itam, let alone for Jewel. These people see no opportunity here. They see only betrayal, cowardice and desertion. The opportunity is intended only for Jim. It is his truth.

When I say that it is Jim's truth, I am only pointing out that considered objectively, that is, as a standard for all men, it is no truth at all. There is no earthly reason why the loss of honour should irrevocably alter a man's view of himself in the way that say, the loss of a maiden's purity irrevocably alters the maiden's view of herself. But for Jim it does.

Marlow refuses to make a clear-cut judgement of Jim. He will not guide us in our desire to send Jim to heaven in a chariot of fire. All Marlow really says is that

he does not know whether Jim deserves this canonization or whether he must be regarded as irrevocably damned. We return to the fusion of the apocalyptic and the mundane which I mentioned at the opening of this chapter. As far as Jim himself is concerned, he has met his opportunity. He has realised his ideal self. But for all other people, that realisation is an illusion. What we have is a situation Kierkegaard would describe as "subjectivity" or "inwardness". Jim has made a movement towards his ideal self and the movement is one that only he, Jim himself, can fully comprehend and appreciate. We return to the central concern of this thesis. Conrad's skepticism is a realisation that what men like Jim die for is, for all other men, an illusion. But this illusion is necessary. It is our only truth.³⁶

This dialectic of illusions lies behind Marlow's last reflections on Jim. After he has related the circumstances of Jim's death, Marlow attempts to make sense out of the whole situation. This is how he sees Jim:

He passes away under a cloud, inscrutable at heart, forgotten, unforgiven, and excessively romantic. Not in the wildest days of his boyish visions could he have seen the alluring shape of such an extraordinary success! For it may very well be that in the short moment of his last proud and unflinching glance, he had beheld the face of that opportunity which, like an Eastern bride, had come veiled to his side.

But we can see him, an obscure conqueror of fame, tearing himself out of the arms of a jealous love at the sign, at the call of his exalted egoism. He goes away from a living woman to celebrate his pitiless wedding

with a shadowy ideal of conduct. Is he satisfied - quite, now, I wonder? We ought to know. He is one of us... Now he is no more, there are days when the reality of his existence comes to me with an immense, with an overwhelming force; and yet upon my honour, there are moments, too, when he passes from my eyes like a disembodied spirit astray amongst the passions of this earth, ready to surrender himself faithfully to the claim of his own world of shades. Who knows? He is gone... (LJ 416)

Who knows? Sometimes he haunts Marlow with an immense, overwhelming force. Sometimes he haunts him only as a shadow, a disembodied spirit! Besides insisting that death in Patusan is Jim's truth and not ours (unless we appropriate it by living it!), Marlow has carefully put side by side polarities which can have, for all men individually, equal validity as pursuits worth living for. The debate on "how to be" remains indecisive. It is left to Jim's judgement. Jim's will has been decisive. It is the final arbiter.

The juxtaposition of contradictory claims in Marlow's assessment of Jim is worth considering. There is the alluring shape of Jim's opportunity which is contrasted with Jewel, the living woman whom Jim gives up for his exalted call. The closing pages of Lord Jim echo the theme of the opening pages. Jim has obeyed a call and the call has the same simplicity and the same force as that of the pilgrims whom he betrayed on the "Patna":

They streamed aboard over three gangways, they streamed in urged by faith and the hope of paradise... without a word, a murmur, or a look back... At the call of an idea they had left their forests, their

clearings, the protection of their rulers,
 their prosperity, their poverty, the
 surroundings of their youth and the graves
 of their fathers..... They came covered
 with dust...the lean old men pressing
 forward without hope of return...the
 unconscious pilgrims of an exacting belief.
 (LJ 14-15)

The exacting belief is their truth. It is all they have to live by. It is all they have to live for. In this are they so many replicas of Jim. His opportunity is his light in a dim and misty world. It is also what matters above Jewel herself and everything else in this world of the living. In the early pages of Lord Jim, the exalted and the mundane are placed side by side just as in Marlow's last reflections on Jim. Soon after introducing the pilgrims, Conrad jolts our senses by bringing in the insensitive and repulsive German skipper who says to no one in particular in referring to the pilgrims, "look at dese cattle" (LJ 15). Towards the end of Marlow's reflections on Jim come the immortal butterflies of Stein and the "soundless, inert life" being led by Jewel in Stein's house (LJ 417). Then there is the more agonising juxtaposition of the aged Stein and the undying symbol of his dream:

Stein has aged greatly of late. He feels it himself, and says often that he is 'preparing to leave all this; preparing to leave...' while he waves his hand sadly at his butterflies. (LJ 417)

Conrad maintains the weighing process to the end. Although the last word in Lord Jim is "butterflies", enough happens to make us aware that butterflies are discovered in the hour

of peril and that the peril, the destructive element, is just as much a part of life as the butterfly, the dream, the illusion. The illusion is, indeed, our only truth. We immerse ourselves into the destructive element, we "venture all", to use Kierkegaard's phrase³⁷, in order to realise our illusion. It is our ideal self.

Some critics have seen in Marlow's views (and in Conrad's) an unequivocal exaltation or canonization of Jim.³⁸ I have tried to indicate the inescapable ambiguity with which Marlow leaves us. I have tried to show that the "dialectics of illusions" (my own term) as it is laid out in Lord Jim and in all of Conrad's works, precludes such an exaltation. Heroism as Conrad presents it can only be an "incomplete heroism."³⁹

Jim's truth, then, is ambiguous if we consider both Jim's view of his choice and other people's views. There is a strong testimony against Jim's canonisation. Tamb'Itam believes that Jim has succumbed to cowardice - and, after all, Jim will not fight. He tells his men to return to their homes, thereby increasing their "utter insecurity" (LJ 410,412). Jewel thinks that Jim has been unfaithful to her - and, after all, he does callously leave her in the lurch for a rendezvous with a shadowy ideal of conduct (LJ 34, 412, 416). The accusations are true, and yet they are also unfair as Stein keeps reminding Jewel (LJ 350). Jim has united the necessity within him to a chance nobody else can perceive, thereby creating his fate, his destiny.

In his book, The Concept of Dread, Soren Kierkegaard contends that man listens to the ambiguous messages of oracles and prophets because he sees in them a way of overcoming his Angst.⁴⁰ In Greek mythology, sacrifices are offered and commands are carried out which lead to tragic consequences. In such cases, as in Lord Jim, the truth shows only "an alluring shape" and the face behind such a shape appears to the hero in his own image, in the image that he constructs. In his work, The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche puzzles over a line that is the very essence of oracular ambiguity:

Whatever exists is both just and unjust,
and equally justified in both.⁴¹

In such a world, the pattern of the leap in Jim's life is extremely important. Conrad has put the leap not only in Jim's life, but also in Stein's philosophy. It is to be found in Bob Stanton's bravery and in Captain Brierly's suicide. The French lieutenant, like Marlow in Heart of Darkness, sticks to the edge of a precipice. He will not discuss the leap and the abyss. He knows the "terrible beauty" that they imply, if I may use a phrase from William Butler Yeats.⁴² Stein and Marlow heave Jim over the wall of Patusan and Marlow continually reminds us that Jim has leapt from the "Patna" to Patusan. At the moment of his supreme sacrifice, Jim again leaps. He falls forward, after sending a proud and unflinching glance to the bystanders.

Jim's supreme sacrifice is to be seen in the context of this pattern of the leap into the destructive element.

It is in this context that Marlow insists on weaving contradictions in his final comments on Jim. What remains is an expiation surrounded by so much ambiguity that we are left to wonder if Jim has been able to reassert his innocence or vindicate his good intentions in walking calmly to his death. Jim's act of supreme sacrifice has salvaged his ideal self without regard to what is to follow to the people of Patusan, who had been so closely linked with this new image of Jim to begin with. Marlow's reflections sustain the lingering fear that once more Jim has deserted a community under his care. The desertion on the "Patna" can be attributed to a cowardice born of dread or Angst. In that case, it would seem more forgivable than the Patusan desertion. Looking back on the "Patna" affair, Jim can say, "I had jumped...it seems" (LJ 111). He cannot say the same thing about the Patusan desertion. That is the sense in which we are to understand Marlow's reference to Jim as going away from a living woman in order to fulfill "a shadowy ideal of conduct" (LJ 416).

I will again make a foray into themes outside Lord Jim, themes so similar to those in Lord Jim that one would think one was discussing one and the same work. In T.S. Eliot's play, Murder in the Cathedral, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Beckett, is beset by four groups of temptations, represented on the stage by four tempters.⁴³ The temptations "escalate" in intensity and attraction from

youthful sensuality to martyrdom and canonization. Now in Lord Jim the debate on "how to be" starts with the outright desertion of duty by the crew of the "Patna" and their hatred of Jim for being "a half-hearted shirker" (LJ 121). It then moves on until it reaches the learned paradoxes of Stein. The contributions escalate in intensity and seriousness - until we reach Jim's final act of sacrifice. Then the question still remains, - and it is in Marlow's final reflections on Jim, "Is this really the last word on the problem of "how to be?"

In Murder in the Cathedral, the question becomes, "Is Beckett's martyrdom holy? Has he not, perhaps, succumbed to the vanity of an ideal self that glitters with halos and with the veneration of posterity?" Thomas himself sees this problem and tries to clear the paradox when he preaches a Christmas sermon during his alienation from the king.⁴⁴ He has already looked at his problem and formulated it in this way:

The last temptation is the greatest treason,
To do the right deed for the wrong reason.⁴⁵

From reading this play, I came to appreciate Marlow's final reflections on Jim. I came to appreciate especially Marlow's reference to Jim's sacrifice as a form of "exalted egoism". For what Marlow is trying to come to grips with is the problem of expiation. Is expiation as such possible, or is it just another illusion which soothes and consoles the sacrificial victim but has no meaning to the rest of mankind?

Jim's sacrifice is his expiation not only for causing the death of his friend Dain Waris, but just for being Jim, for being the young man who dreams of saving lives and achieves only the desertion and destruction of his fellow man. The act of expiation implies guilt and Jim carries his guilt on his shoulders and seeks to get rid of it by his own death:

'He came! He came!' was running from lip to lip, making a murmur to which he moved. 'He hath taken it upon his own head,' a voice said aloud. He heard this and turned to the crowd. 'Yes. Upon my head.' A few people recoiled. (LJ 415)

Well may these people recoil. In the ethos which comes out of the works of Joseph Conrad, expiation as such is impossible. Men only achieve the illusion of expiation. When they achieve this illusion, it becomes their truth.

Such a truth is that of Karain in Tales of Unrest. The surface world dominated by Karain is a dazzling "tour de force" of statesmanship and heroism (TU 4-5). The inner world of Karain is something else again. What we later learn of Karain's history shows us that he is busily waiting for the second coming of innocence. It is this busy waiting that Conrad presents in a brutally ironic manner. But the brutal irony is as much against Karain as it is against mankind in general. The illusions of Karain are shown in the end to be typically human.

Karain and his friend Pata Matara set out to find the latter's sister who has disgraced her village by

marrying a much-hated Dutchman instead of one of the noble suitors she is supposed to marry as a custom. Karain and Pata Matara brave all kinds of hardships in pursuing this girl and her Dutchman all over Indo-China. During this pursuit Karain falls in love with his idealised version of this girl. When he and his friend finally locate the Dutchman and the girl Pata Matara undertakes to kill his sister while Karain agrees to shoot the Dutchman. At the crucial moment, in a typical Conradian scene of betrayal, Karain does not shoot the Dutchman. He shoots his friend, Pata Matara.

Then begins the problem of Karain's attempt to live with his guilt. He too contributes to the debate on "how to be". Karain's guilt personifies itself as his friend's ghost, a sort of Caesar visiting Brutus, or Banquo disturbing Macbeth's feast! Karain is helped by an old man, a serene and pious pilgrim who by words of compassion, wisdom and prayer wards him from the shade of the dead. This does not satisfy Karain who begs the old man for a charm that will make him safe. The old man's response seems to return us to the dialectics of illusions. The old man's smile seems to question the intrinsic worth of such a charm:

I begged him for a charm that would make me safe. For a long time he refused; but at last, with a sigh and a smile, he gave me one. Doubtless he could command a spirit stronger than the unrest of my dead

friend, and again I had peace... (TU 42 - italics added).

Karain is here mistaking his own faith for the old man's ability to command a spirit greater than that of his dead friend. The old man is wise. He appears to know that man will not rest until he is assured of his ability to live with the truth. The assurance is always there. In Karain's case it is a questionable charm, later to be replaced by a Jubilee Sixpence worn like a medallion!

It is not surprising, then, that Karain's old man, like Holy-Terror Robinson in Lord Jim, has also been cast in the mould of the Teiresias of mythology. He, too, guards the truth. When we first meet him in Karain's closest entourage, he seems "weary, not with age, but with the possession of a burdensome secret of existence" (TU 5). When the old man dies, Pata Matara's ghost returns. Karain stands in need of another protector, another talisman against the pain of truth. The youngest and most playful of his white friends is ready with such a talisman. It is a portrait of Queen Victoria on the Jubilee Sixpence (TU 49). The young man who gives this talisman to Karain likens it to the medallions worn by Italian peasants (TU 50). Religious objects, after all, are also charms and amulets, which like lovers' keepsakes, protect mankind from the pain of loneliness:

There were there a couple of reels of cotton,
a packet of needles, a bit of silk ribbon,

dark blue; a cabinet photograph, at which Hollis stole a glance before laying it on the table face downwards. A girl's portrait, I could see. There were, amongst a lot of various small objects, a bunch of flowers, a narrow white glove with many buttons, a slim packet of letters carefully tied up. Amulets of white men! Charms and Talismans! Charms that keep them straight, that drive them crooked, that have all 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 48).

We are back again to the dialectics of illusions.

There is mockery in Hollis's speech as he hints to Karain that the white man has found his consolation in things like the Jubilee Sixpence:

"This is the image of the Great Queen, and the most powerful thing the white men know," he said solemnly. (TU 49)

Karain's ghost departs. The terror of guilt disappears. Karain returns to his subjects and to his dazzling court, fortified beyond his wildest hopes. That a Jubilee Sixpence has been able to do this for him, that it has been able to take the place of the religious old man, is Conrad's irony at its best. But the matter goes deeper than that. Illusions such as Karain's are authentic as faith, as ultimate concern, as subjective values. They are indifferent and even false by themselves, that is, when they are divorced from the faith which man attached to them. Karain's story shows that anyone or anything will do to enable man to live with himself. For man seeks life, not the truth

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as such:

He left us, and seemed straightaway to step into the glorious splendour of his stage, to wrap himself in the illusion of unavoidable success. For a moment he stood erect, one foot over the gangway, one hand on the hilt of his kriss, in a martial pose; and relieved from the fear of outer darkness, he held his head high; he swept a serene look over his conquered foothold on the earth. The boats far off took up the cry of greetings; a great clamour rolled on the water; the hills echoed it, and seemed to toss back at him the words invoking long life and victories. (TU 52)

Karain has found his peace. It is based on a Jubilee Sixpence tied around his neck like the medallions worn by Italian peasants. Intrinsicly, a Jubilee Sixpence is a thing of little worth. It cannot be equated with the expiation demanded by a friend's ghost. But that does not matter. Karain has found his peace. He has received anew his pacified conscience. He does not want the truth as such. He wants the truth that leads to peace, to long life. He wants faith. He wants to live with himself. He wants consolation. He had laid the ghost of the friend he murdered, much in the same way that Marlow in Heart of Darkness lays the ghost of Kurtz's gifts with a lie (YTO 115). This is one of the central themes in the works of Joseph Conrad. It informs his skepticism. For the majority of mankind, peace and long life mean an existence pacified by a lie. The lie is truth, transformed into faith.

Staying for a while within Heart of Darkness,

one cannot help taking note of Marlow's lies. Like the cosmic spectacle in the frame of that tale, Marlow's lies give a wider dimension, social and psychological, to what the first narrator calls "one of Marlow's inconclusive experiences" (YTO 51). It will be noticed that I speak of Marlow's "lies" whereas other critics have concentrated on Marlow's "lie", the one to the Intended at the end of the tale.⁴⁶ First of all, let us note that Marlow tells not one, but three lies. He lets the brickmaker at the Central Station believe in his influence among the powerful people in Europe (YTO 81-83). This is qualified by Marlow's digression on a Scotch sailmaker who would offer to fight anyone who disagreed with him about the presence of people on Mars - people who, in the Scotsman's belief, walk on all fours (YTO 81-82). Back in the sepulchral city, Marlow is visited by a spectacled man from the Company's offices. The man wants certain documents, meaning everything Kurtz wrote about the Congo. Marlow offers him "the report on the 'Suppression of Savage Customs,' with the postscriptum torn off" (YTO 153, my italics).

What I am trying to emphasise here is that the concentration of critical prowess only on the lie to the Intended blurs the dimensions of the whole lying situation in Heart of Darkness. Marlow does not feel he has compromised his integrity by such lies. True enough he says quite early that he hates and detests lies (YTO

82). But after his lie to Kurtz's Intended, he says sardonically, "The heavens do not fall for such a trifle" (YTO 162).

I content that Marlow is not regarding his lies as just "white lies". On the contrary, he sees in them "a taint of death, a flavour of mortality" (YTO 162). But this flavour of mortality is what people want in order to live. There is here a direct link between Marlow's lies and "the sepulchral city" which I will discuss in a later chapter.⁴⁷ What I want to emphasise here is that part of the wisdom which Marlow has gained from his "inconclusive experiences" is that lies are necessary for life. Man needs them in order to live. Kurtz's Intended does not beg Marlow to tell her the truth. She wants something to live with. Marlow would be a brute to inflict on her those terrible words, "The horror! the horror!" He is a wise man and senses what is really being asked for here:

'To the very end,' I said shakily. 'I heard his very last words.' ...I stopped in a fright.

'Repeat them,' she murmured in a heart-broken tone. 'I want - I want - something - something - to live with.' ...

'His last word - to live with', she insisted. 'Don't you understand I loved him - I loved him - I lived him!'

I pulled myself together and spoke slowly.

'The last word he pronounced was - your name.' (YTO 161)

Marlow is wise. This girl does not care about any knowledge of Kurtz. She wants something to live with.

Conrad closes Karain's story on a similar note and in a similar setting. In Karain's story the ending is a question on what constitutes "truth". The story does not end in a sepulchral city. It ends in the "brooding gloom" of London. It is here that the narrator meets Jackson, one of the white men who years before witnessed Karain's "salvation". Jackson professes to be overwhelmed by the truth of London. He is overwhelmed by the reality of carriages and policemen, cobbled streets and assaulting noises:

"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 55)

The reality of London is truth. Compared to Karain's story, it remains an illusion. This dialectic of illusions animates Conrad's irony. The narrator of Karain also relishes a good joke against himself. He says of Jackson, who, after all, has put his finger on Conrad's view of the story, "I think that, decidedly, he had been too long away from home." In Heart of Darkness, Marlow sees the truth of Europe from two angles. Europe in Africa has let loose its long-damned propensity to devastate and loot, to celebrate its nothingness in unspeakable rites. "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz..." (YTO 117). In "the sepulchral city" and in the "brooding gloom" of

London, Europe lives with itself. It has its own talisman of paved streets, butcher's shops, and law-enforcing policemen (YTO 116). It has civilization, one of the central illusions of history.

In the ethos which we have been examining, man moves from one illusion into another. Man is tragic because he erects one illusion into an eternal law. Man being man, this is inevitable. He needs a faith. He needs something to live with. He needs something to live for. It is his only truth even though considered among the laws and needs of all mankind for all time, such a truth is a temporary formula in the attempts towards solving the great problem of "how to be".

In the Tales of Unrest is to be found "The Lagoon", one of the best known of Conrad's short stories.⁴⁸ In this story Arsat betrays his brother for the girl Diamelen. When we meet Arsat, Diamelen is dying. While she lived, she had become a talisman powerful enough to enable Arsat to live with the truth of having deserted his brother in the hour of peril. Now Diamelen is dead. She dies within the night in which we meet Arsat. She, too, has proved to have been only an illusion. The terror of loneliness descends on Arsat:

Arsat had not moved. He stood lonely in the searching sunshine; and he looked beyond the great light of a cloudless day into the darkness of a world of illusions. (TU 204)

Arsat vows to avenge the death of his brother. But that truth will only be a consolation. It cannot bring back either his brother or his wife.

Skepticism in the works of Joseph Conrad is the tension between subjective truth and objective truth, between illusion and reality, between faith and the intrinsic worth of the object of faith, between man's personal truth and the truth of things around him, between the saving power of the destructive element and the indifference of that element.

This tension is most profoundly developed in Lord Jim, to which we now return. Jim has submitted himself to the destructive element. He has followed his dream - usque ad finem! But Marlow has many reservations on Jim's expiation. These reservations, as I said earlier, leave us with a sense of ambiguity. Jim himself seems convinced that in Patusan he has received the clean slate for which he has lived. His fast glance to the left and right of Doramin's people is proud and unflinching. But Marlow is not so sure about this expiation. He is not so sure that Jim has relieved himself of the fatuity of one jump after another, of one desertion after another. Marlow says that the crowd at Doramin's house moves closer to Jim out of curiosity (LJ 414-415). When Jim declares that he has taken Dain Waris' death upon himself, "a few people recoiled" (LJ 415).

It would appear that the people are curious and find themselves recoiling at what Jim is trying to do because they are not convinced that anything he can do will expiate the death of his friend. They recoil at Jim's presumption to present himself before Doramin in a moment like this.

But Jim is not here concerned only with the death of his friend. He feels himself guilty of a whole pattern of existence. His guilt is subjective guilt. Jim is not, fundamentally, what he should be, ergo, he is guilty. The ambiguity of such a guilt does not surround the "Patna" affair which, as the enquiry discovers, is plain enough. It surrounds the fundamental "why" of Jim's career which the enquiry is not qualified to probe:

The examination of the only man able and willing to face it was beating futilely round the well-known fact, and the play of questions upon it was as instructive as the tapping with a hammer on an iron box, were the object to find out what's inside. However, an official enquiry could not be any other thing. Its object was not the fundamental why, but the superficial how, of this affair. (LJ 56).

In Under Western Eyes, for example, Razumov betrays Haldin in a moment of panic, in the hour of dread. But the betrayal itself is not ambiguous. Razumov is unambiguously guilty. His consequent confession and physical punishment are a real atonement. His later rehabilitation into the affection of Sophia Antonovna and the other

revolutionaries settles his career. But Jim's case seems different. The death of Dain Waris is due to the treachery of Gentleman Brown and Jim's magnanimity - although this magnanimity is elicited by Brown's hint of knowledge of Jim's past!

Jim is not, fundamentally, what he should be, ergo, he is guilty. To look at Jim's problem in this way is to state that something is absurd, something is arbitrary not only around Jim's destiny, but in the whole cosmos in which Jim moves. It seems as if Jim will always be in the wrong, whatever step he takes. For it is not this act or that act on which his guilt depends. It is the very fact of being Jim, a man in search of his ideal self, that makes him guilty. Guilt becomes an ambiguous relationship to one's destiny, to one's ideal self.

If we look for a moment at Kafka's novel, The Trial, we will notice how inevitable the guilt of Joseph K. seems. In Joseph K.'s universe, everything is not necessarily true but necessary. In Conrad's language we would say that illusions are not necessarily true but necessary. That is the sense in which they are the truth. In The Trial, a discussion takes place between a priest and Joseph K. The priest discusses a parable in which a doorkeeper keeps a man waiting for admittance into "the Law" for all his life. When the man is nearing the end of his days and his hearing is failing, the doorkeeper

shuts the door and tells the man who has been waiting all his life:

No one but you could gain admittance through this door, since this door was intended for you. I am now going to shut it.⁴⁹

The door would have been shut had the man gone away earlier. It would have been shut had he not come. This man will never get through that door - whatever he does. But the waiting has become an issue because he chooses to wait. That is the illusion of the ideal self - and it is necessary. That is the sense in which it is man's only truth.

Joseph K. suggests that in the parable given by the priest it becomes necessary to accept everything the doorkeeper says as true. The priest makes an explanation:

"No" said the priest, "it is not necessary to accept everything as true, one must only accept it as necessary."

"A melancholy conclusion", said K. "It turns lying into a universal principle."^{49a}

Yes, it is a melancholy conclusion, indeed.

Whatever K. does, he is guilty. The doorkeeper is his conscience, and whatever the conscience says is not necessarily true, but necessary. It is necessary because K. sees himself against the background of his ideal self, against the background of his innocence which comes to an end on the day of his arrest. That is why The Trial

moves along two levels - that of daily, logically ordered existence and that of the dream - sensation. The daily world which is no more was Joseph K.'s innocence, the new world of dreams is the destructive element from which he strives to regain his ideal self.

I dwell on The Trial because I see a striking resemblance between Jim's guilt and that of Joseph K. In The Trial, Joseph K.'s guilt depends as much on his own ideal world as on the law courts with which he is dealing. For suppose Joseph K. had accepted his guilt or ignored his arrest altogether. There would have been no trial. The trial depends on K.'s wish to vindicate himself, to gain his ideal self. But K. cannot ignore his arrest or accept his guilt any more than Jim can decide to fight or run away from Doramin's anger. Guilt, subjective guilt, depends on illusions, but the illusions are absolutely necessary. As Robert Penn Warren has said, they "are our only truth."⁵⁰

In his "magnum opus", Concluding Unscientific Postscript, the Danish thinker Soren Kierkegaard sees guilt as "the decisive expression for an existential pathos".⁵⁹ The consciousness of guilt is necessary for an individual concerned with his eternal happiness. The eternal happiness Kierkegaard speaks of is what I have been referring to as man's ideal self. In Conrad's terminology it would be the illusion of the ideal self.

Guilt in this sense is not the admission of responsibility for just one or two or, indeed, any number of mistakes. It is the understanding that against the background of the ideal self, one is not what one should be:

One guilt is enough...and with that the exister who along with this is related to an eternal happiness is forever caught. For human justice pronounces a life sentence only for the third offence but eternity pronounces sentence the first time forever. ...Call this recollection of guilt a fetter, and say that it is never taken off the prisoner, and you indicate only the one side of it, for the thought most closely associated with the fetter is deprivation of freedom, but the remembrance of guilt is at the same time a burden which is to be dragged from place to place in time; rather therefore call the eternal remembrance of guilt a harness, and say that the man never gets out of harness.⁵²

Kierkegaard seems to me to be penetrating the heart of something akin to Marlow's skepticism in Lord Jim. He seems to be questioning the intrinsic worth of any visible expiation. For guilt as he sees it is something infinite and any melodramatic death in Patusan is only finite. But that is not to say that as far as Jim himself is concerned the expiation is invalid. On the contrary, it is well done. The point is that for us outsiders, it will remain as Marlow leaves it, an ambiguity. I referred to Kierkegaard because he entertains the same doubts about expiation that Marlow seems to have about the efficacy of Jim's death. Both men would say that it is

human for a man like Jim to seek punishment, but they would question the possibility of this punishment bringing us an essentially new Jim. Kierkegaard calls guilt only that which is seen as a totality and which, therefore, cannot be satisfied by any expiation.⁵³ He notes, however, that "in human nature the sense is deeply implanted that guilt demands punishment."⁵⁴ In his own way, Marlow makes a similar observation with regard to Jim. He insists that in going to Patusan Jim is fulfilling a destiny and not controlling his future. In Jim the sense is deeply imbedded that guilt demands punishment. Marlow is referring to this deeply-rooted human feeling when he ruminates over Jim's career after Jim has left for Patusan:

A clean slate did he say? As if the initial word of each our destiny were not graven in imperishable characters upon the face of a rock. (LJ 186)

I have so far stuck to a thematic analysis of the works I have referred to. The time has now come to show how an analysis of Lord Jim is related to the dominant symbols in that work. I see these symbols as building up an overwhelming circularity. This circularity appears to say something about "the dialectics of illusions" on which so much time has been spent.

The symbols in Lord Jim continually merge and exchange functions. The moon, standing for paleness, often takes over the functions of the sun and shoots at us with the brilliance of the sun's rays. A charging

bull - and this is Jim on the first page of the novel - is also the symbol of sensitivity and inwardness. Jim is described as "a charging bull" (LJ 3). The French lieutenant at one point - and it is at the point that he declares his faith in honour - gets on his feet "with a ponderous impetuosity, as a startled ox might scramble up from the grass..." (LJ 148). In the hour of Jim's death, Doramin lowers "his big forehead like an ox under a yoke" as he makes an effort to rise and shoot Jim (LJ 415). The image of the bull unites Jim with Doramin and the French lieutenant. Honour for these people is not the same thing. One of them, at least, prefers to peep over the edge of the precipice. Yet they have one thing in common. They are bulls charging against the enemy - and the enemy is that which deprives them of their ideal self.

Everyone's dream in Lord Jim is actuality itself. Black is white and darkness is also light. Darkness is as much the source of an inner crisis as is light. Destiny is free will and fate is choice. Opportunity, that great desideratum for which Jim lives, is commitment. Jim moves from place to place trying to run away from his loss of innocence, and yet his movement is patterned after a leap, after a sudden arrival at an unwilling destiny.⁵⁵ Jim's movement is romantic. It is an illusion - and yet, "it is true, it is true," to

use Stein's words (LJ 214). Jim finds and does not find the clean slate he wants. Jim erects and defends a social order in Patusan. He is a veritable Prometheus who gives man fire and with the fire, the hope with which man forgets his doom. But all these achievements vanish into thin air at the mere touch of Gentleman Brown. These achievements are shown to be an illusion and yet, but for them, Jim, as Stein rightly forecasts, would cease to be romantic. He would cease to exist. (LJ 217).

In Lord Jim, the continual tension between truth and illusion is mirrored in the continual interplay between light and darkness, between palpitating life and disembodied spirits. Corresponding to this tension is the one between dream and actuality which also prevades the novel. The ultimate effect is the recurrence of mists all over the novel. At times Jim himself is represented by these mists, at times he becomes the light that rends the mists. But only for a while. This makes him an enigma.

The moon is given great prominence in Lord Jim. It is a prominence surpassed only by that of mists. I suggest that there is a great structural and symbolic significance to such a prominence. Marlow attempts to give us this significance:

There is something haunting in the light of the moon; it has all the dispassionateness of a disembodied soul, and something of its

inconceivable mystery. It is to our sunshine, which - say what you like - is all we have to live by, what the echo is to the sound: misleading and confusing whether the note of mocking or sad. It robs all forms of matter - which, after all, is our domain - of their substance, and gives a sinister reality to shadows alone. (LJ 246)

The sinister reality which Marlow speaks of would appear to be the dream. Jim's career is a choice of the moon as opposed to the sunshine, of the echo as opposed to the sound. But then Marlow also notes that the world of matter is our domain and that substance is to be found only in this. As far as Jim himself is concerned, however, substance is to be found in the shadows of his dream; passion is to be found in a disembodied soul. In a word, sunshine is to be found in the light of the moon!

In Patusan, Jim appears to have controlled the surface crisis of man. He appears to have mastered his fate, even if temporarily. Patusan would then be associated with sunshine. It would be differently illuminated from the world of the "Patna" affair, which is a world of darkness; temporarily dominated by the absence of the moon. But when the skipper of the "Patna" disappears in a gharry to the ends of the earth, we do not have darkness, we have sunshine. On the other hand, Patusan itself is associated with the darkness of the moon, an association which also suggests fecundity.

But the fecundity is not allowed to triumph as an earthly phenomenon. It is associated with a ghost, a disembodied spirit rising between two peaks:

On the third day after the full, the moon, as seen from an open space in front of Jim's house...rose exactly behind these hills, its diffused light at first throwing the two masses into intensely black relief, and then the nearly perfect disc, glowing ruddily, appeared, gliding upwards between the sides of the chasm, till it floated away above the summits, as if escaping from a yawning grave in a gentle triumph.
(LJ 220=221)

This rising moon is the most powerful feature of Patusan. It is not a fortuitous achievement by an author bent on creating a scenic view for the setting of his tale. Conrad is no fortuitous symbolist. The rising moon in Patusan represents the climax of appearances which the moon has been making in Lord Jim. What does this important appearance mean?

The moon emerges as a ghost, a disembodied spirit, and yet it rises triumphantly from a yawning grave. This gentle triumph has its own "ruddy glow" just as Jim's death is preceded by a proud and unflinching glance. Yet another way of look at this rising moon is that it really represents man's triumph over his Angst. This Angst is caused by the two peaks or polarities of perpetual light and perpetual darkness, ideal self and Jim's fatuity of one jump after another. Truth scars into eternity from the yawning grave of the destructive

element. It soars above irreconcilable claims on man. It may very well be that with this powerful image of Patusan the debate on "how to be" come to its end, an inconclusive end. Marlow may be suggesting that ultimately we ought to question everything even as we accept everything. Illusion is truth and truth illusion.

Patusan has its own Styx, its own river of the dead (LJ 312). This would make Jim a Ulysses, Aeneas, or even Sisyphus. He would be in Patusan to visit the dead and to reappear in the glory of his last unflinching glance. But Marlow does not allow us to have a complete image of this stature of Jim. Instead he emphasises the limitless intensity of both light and darkness in Jim's character:

He appealed to all sides at once - to the side turned perpetually to the light of day, and to that side of us which, like the other hemisphere of the moon, exists stealthily in perpetual darkness, with only a fearful ashy light falling at times on the edge. (LJ 93)

I suggest that we see in Lord Jim, as in Heart of Darkness, an inversion of associations, a circularity of types which makes the debate on "how to be" all the more lively and complex. What are we to expect from Jim? Perpetual light or perpetual darkness? In the end they would appear to me to merge. Perpetual light becomes one aspect of perpetual darkness. If Jim's expiation be regarded as perpetual light - and Jim himself sees it in no other

terms - it has, nevertheless, demolished the social structure which Jim had established for the good of his fellow man. It has become perpetual darkness!

The preceding discussion should show that I regard the Patusan part of Lord Jim as an essential part of the tale. It makes its impact chiefly by the reverberations of its symbols. Things hang together because the dominant symbols hang together. Patusan is a carefully constructed universe in which man attempts to witness the second coming of his innocence. Patusan is the sphere of the spirit - a theme which explains the unusual comings and goings of disembodied spirits in the novel. Patusan shows the position of an artist who is deeply aware of the problems posed by his premise, whether such a premise be man's "total immersion" into the destructive element or man's commitment to honour because of "the eye of others". Patusan is not a world of boyish adventures but a universe which mirrors man's attempts to live with himself and as a member of society.

The ingress into Patusan is given mythical dimensions in much the same way that the setting of Nostromo is circumscribed and given depth by the myth of haunted treasure at the opening of the tale. Jim is taken part of the way to Patusan in Stein's brigantine. The Captain of this brigantine uses words suggesting meanings which he never intended but which, nevertheless,

express the general truth of the situation as it will later develop. This is yet one more important use of Shakespearean language and technique on the part of Conrad. It does not seem to have been discussed at all in Adam Gillon's recent article on the subject.⁵⁶

When Jim starts for Patusan, he forgets a revolver, but takes with him three books, one of them a half-crown complete Shakespeare (LJ 273). Then on the brigantine rules a captain who seems to Marlow to be "of a careworn temperament" (LJ 238). The captain tells Marlow that he will carry Jim to the mouth of the river, "but will never ascend" (LJ 238). He also mentions that he would not for anything accept to stay in Patusan although Mr. Cornelius had "propitiated many offertories" for him to stay (LJ 239). The trade in Patusan had become "a snare and ashes in the mouth" because his ship had been fired upon by "irresponsive parties" (LJ 239). The ship ran the danger of being "perishable beyond the act of man" (LJ 239). The people of Patusan had become "a cage of beasts made ravenous by long impenitence" (LJ 239). Patusan is "situated internally" and Jim is already "in the similitude of a corpse" being "like the body of one deported" (LJ 240). The captain, like Marlow, ends on a unit of contradictions: "Plenty too much enough of Patusan" (LJ 239).

This detonation and reverberation of images

of death, of religious ritual, and of Hades itself in the captain's talk leave a lasting impression on Marlow. He sees the hand of the captain "raised as if for a downward thrust. 'Absit omen'" (LJ 241). This "triumphant entry" of Jim into Patusan should not be seen in isolation. It reiterates the themes we discussed earlier in this chapter. We now take Jim into Hades and expect a resurrection! We return to the motif of faith with which the discussion in this chapter began. Faith is the state of ultimate concern - and what can be more ultimate than the gentle triumph of a resurrection from a yawning grave or a ship and crew being perishable beyond the act of man? We are still with the universe of exacting beliefs, rectors and parish priests, sheikhs and pilgrimages. There is a circular movement, in Conrad's vision, along which man, in his littleness of man, reaches out towards the infinite. Hence the significance of the ring in Lord Jim.

The ring unites the Scotsman Alexander M^oNeal with the Queen of Patusan (LJ 205). It is a bond of unity, a pledge of faith between East and West. M^oNeal leaves this pledge of good faith to Stein, the Austrian, whom he introduces to the Queen and the Rajah as his son (LJ 206). Stein, the Austrian, succeeds to the friends of M^oNeal the Scotsman. Stein is in turn succeeded by Jim, an Englishman. The ring is a token of friendship.

a pledge of good faith between man and man, a bond of unity between the races. It unites the Europeans of the West with Doramin's kingdom in the East. It unites in friendship Jim and Dain Waris. So far, then, the ring is the light of day. It is the perpetual sunshine in Jim's destiny.

But with thering Tamb'Itam carries the message from Jim to Dain Waris that Gentleman Brown should be given a free passage out of Patusan (LJ 396). Gentleman Brown scatters death and destruction. The ring separates friend from friend, East from West. The ring has become the darkness of the night. When Doramin stonily looks at Jim who presents himself unarmed, the ring becomes the catalyst in his decision to shoot Jim:

People remarked that the ring which he had dropped on his lap fell and rolled against the foot of the white man, and that poor Jim glanced down at the talisman that had opened for him the door of fame, love, and success within the wall of forests fringed with white foam, within the coast that under the western sun looks like the very stronghold of the night. Doramin, struggling to keep his feet, made with his two supporters a swaying, tottering group; his little eyes stared with an expression of mad pain, of rage, with a ferocious glitter, which the bystanders noticed; and then, while Jim stood stiffened and with bared head in the light of torches, looking him straight in the face, he clung heavily with his left arm round the neck of a bowed youth, and lifting deliberately his right, shot his son's friend through the chest. (LJ 415-416)

The ring had introduced Jim to the warm friendship of

the people of Patusan. The ring now takes him away from this friendship. The ring stands for the circularity of human actions. The ring should be seen in the same light as the recurrent phrase "one of us". One of us is a European who has acted cowardly before a crowd of natives in the "Patna" affair. He should, to use Brierly's words, "creep twenty feet underground and stay there." (LJ 66). One of us reaches out for the infinite possibilities surrounding his ideal self but does not satisfy Marlow that he has really done so (LT 216). One of us is only human. This also is the circularity of human actions.

My attempt to link the themes discussed earlier is based on the belief that Conrad is first and foremost an imagistic artist. Symbols are central to Conrad's fictional world and Conrad has even seen fit to say so in the clearest of terms. He does not make a fortuitous use of symbols. He plants them wisely and meaningfully:

A work that aspires, however humbly, to the condition of art should carry its justification in every line. And 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 every aspect. 57

A work of art should carry its justification in every line. This thesis accepts that Lord Jim carries such a justification. The recurrence of motifs in Lord Jim is quietly integrated into the significance of the

dominant symbols. This recurrence of motifs stresses the major themes in the novel. Several chapters of Lord Jim are linked by the apparent differences between dream and actuality, while others are united by their discussion of cowardice. All of them "zero in", as it were, on the central theme of "how to be". There is, for example, a chapter, Chapter XIV, which begins with the personal problems of Marlow's mate. This man goes "quite distracted with rage and jealousy" if he does not receive a letter from his wife (LJ 156). This is an instance of "how to be" which is followed up by Marlow's discussion of the significance of a crime as a breach with the community (LJ 157). This discussion is given a dramatic immediacy by Jim's courage before the court of enquiry, which follows soon after. It then reaches the heights of legend and myth in Chester and Robinson's quest for guano and then returns to Marlow's reflections:

A clean slate, did he say? As if the
initial word of each our destiny were
not graven in imperishable characters
upon the face of a rock. (LJ 186)

Chapters XIX, XX and XXI are again introduced by Marlow and they also "escalate" the debate on "how to be." There is the problem of heroism and its relation to passion. After Marlow has spoken of the intensity of life, he shows us two possibilities surrounding such a life. We are back to the disembodied spirits discussed earlier:

To fling away your daily bread so as to get your hands free for a grapple with a ghost may be an act of prosaic heroism. Men had done it before (though we who have lived know full well that it is not the haunted soul but the hungry body that makes an outcast), and men who had eaten and meant to eat everyday had applauded the creditable folly. He was indeed unfortunate, for all his recklessness could not carry him out from under the shadow. There was always a doubt of his courage. (LJ 197).

We are then shown how the contradictions in the phrase "prosaic heroism" are reconciled, just as later Marlow attempts to reconcile the contradictions in the significance of the phrase "exalted egoism". History comes into the picture when Marlow relates the history of Patusan:

The seventeenth-century traders went there for pepper, because the passion for pepper seemed to burn like a flame of love in the breast of Dutch and English adventurers about the time of James the First. Where wouldn't they go for pepper! For a bag of pepper they would cut each other's throats without hesitation, and would forswear their souls, of which they were so careful otherwise: the bizarre obstinacy of that desire made them defy death in a thousand shapes... it made them heroic... (LJ 226)

We are back to the motif of faith with which the discussion in this thesis opened. The Dutch and English adventurers mentioned by Marlow stand for a kind of faith, of which pepper is only a mirror. They are the Chesters and Robinsons of the seventeenth-century. In their own way, they stand for what Jim stands for. The

paradox we began with remains. Man's apocalyptic rendezvous with his ideal self is bound up with man's involvement in the mundane and the ordinary matter of existence. The cycle has to be broken. Marlow does not break it, neither does Conrad. But something is posited with which man can very well live. The epigraph to Lord Jim is taken from Novalis: "It is certain that my conviction gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it." This is similar to what Martin Buber has called "confirmation";

Man as man is an audacity of life, undetermined and unfixed; he therefore requires confirmation, and he can naturally receive this as individual man, in that others and himself confirm him in his being - this - man. Again and again the Yes must be spoken to him, from the look of the confidant to the stirrings of his own heart, to liberate him from the dread of abandonment, which is a foretaste of death. ⁵⁸

I have attempted to discuss Conrad's dialectic of illusions. This has involved following the motif of faith which runs through Lord Jim. It has involved examining various approaches to the central theme of "how to be", that is, looking at man's inner and outer crisis. I find that Conrad's skepticism accepts man's faith but also shows that looked at as a standard for all men such a faith is an illusion. The only sense in which faith is our only truth is that in which it is

seen as man's ultimate concern - the ground and end of his individual existence. There have been extensive forays to works besides Lord Jim and outside Conrad. The next chapter will attempt to deal with the tragic implications of Conrad's skepticism. The discussion will be based on Victory.

CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDATIONS OF A TRAGIC VISION:

CONSCIOUSNESS VERSUS LIFE

His resentment was not against the girl, but against life itself - that commonest of snares in which he felt himself caught, seeing clearly the plot of plots and unconsolated by the lucidity of mind. (Joseph Conrad: Victory)

"I think, therefore I am", can only mean "I think, therefore I am a thinker"; this being of the "I am", which is deduced from "I think", is merely a knowing; this being is knowledge but not life. And the primary reality is not that I think, but that I live, for those also live who do not think. Although this living may not be a real living. God! what contradictions when we seek to join in wedlock life and reason! (Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo: Tragic Sense of Life)

The workman of today works every day in his life at the same tasks, and this fate is no less absurd. But it is tragic only at the rare moments when it becomes conscious. Sisyphus, proletarian of the gods, powerless and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: it is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn. (Albert Camus: The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays)

At the heart of Conrad's tragic vision is the realisation that whatever consciousness illuminates, whether of individual life as in Victory, or of civilization as in Heart of Darkness, or of history itself as in Nostromo, life threatens to swallow and absorb into itself; and that whatever life creates and reverses, consciousness shows to be foolish and illusory. While Axel Heyst smokes his cheroot like that indolent volcano so many miles away, the efforts of his consciousness are being submerged into the surrounding vegetation. The Tropical Belt Coal Company, that remnant of Heyst's days of "hard facts", has succumbed to "unnatural physics", the physics of evaporation before liquidation. In Heart of Darkness, the forces of life have successfully encroached upon the efforts of men's minds and produced "a wanton smash-up".

The wanton smash-up is a menace to civilisation. It is the lava within the volcanoes featured in Victory. It is the deluge feared by Heyst, a deluge that is neither in Africa where Heart of Darkness has its setting, nor in Samburan, that enchanted island of Conrad's East, but in the hearts of men who are the origin and end of civilisation. In Nostromo, a foul sky will only clear with the coming of the storm. But the coming of the storm means the gathering of yet another foul sky. It means the coming of the age of the permanent revolution.

For history is tragic, not rational. We cannot accept the dawn of hope to be found in Don Jose Avellanos' book, Fifty Years of Misrule. Rather should our guide be young Martin Decoud's judgement on Costaguana:

'There is a curse of futility upon our character: Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, chivalry and materialism, high-sounding sentiments and a supine morality, violent efforts for an idea and a sullen acquiescence in every form of corruption....'
(Nmo 171)

Set against the imposing fact of modern imperialism, the dichotomy noted by Martin Decoud is the underlying dialectic of history in Nostromo. Men will revolt and aspire towards a new social order. The new order will also be fraught with contradictions that point towards yet another revolution. History in Nostromo is a dramatization of the age of the permanent revolution. It is the enactment of ever-recurring phenomena, not so much because of the "curse of futility" mentioned by Decoud, as because man, being man, insists on controlling life with his consciousness and of subordinating consciousness to the perpetuation and enrichment of life. Whatever those worthy citizens of Costaguana "see" and construct from "seeing" will always be at war with the life-forces, the impulses that they do not, and cannot, articulate.

In Heart of Darkness, this eternal war between life and consciousness is not resolved, or rather it is

resolved by a counterfeit stratagem. Life would appear to defeat consciousness both in the rioting vegetation of Africa and in the contra-rational doings of colonialism. But the defeat is not acknowledged, and Marlow chooses a pyrrhic victory, a victory won at the cost of Marlow's integrity. It is a victory sealed by self-immolation. The Marlow who has "seen" Kurtz, gives over his vision to the cause of consciousness, the cause of civilization, by denying Kurtz's Intended the knowledge of Kurtz. The eternal war is not really resolved, for in Heart of Darkness the resolution would mean that civilization embraces the fullness of life - and civilization cannot do this without annihilating itself. Civilization is tragic because it is a lie. It presents a world under the full control of consciousness while the real world simmers in the background like the lava of volcanoes.

In Victory, this simmering war between consciousness and life leads to a resolution of purification by fire, showing that for a man in the mould of Axel Heyst, a mould tempered by the blistering consciousness of the elder Heyst, the victory of life over consciousness can only be won through self-immolation. It is also a pyrrhic victory. As Kingsley Widmer has aptly said, the victory in Victory is

the victory of evil over evil ending in the provocative but pyrrhic virtues of a homeopathic art in which the malady and the medicine are identical.²

Purification by fire cannot be a decisive victory in favour of life. Purification by fire, as presented by Conrad, is, like death on the Cross, the consummation of failure. It is the victory of an illusion, a subjective victory. It comes to Heyst, much in the way in which salvation comes to Jim, "veiled like an Eastern bride", for it is intended only for him. While taking this view, I am still in agreement with Miss Bradbrook's position which I quoted in the introduction to this thesis. We should, indeed, see Victory as "the completest vindication of the values represented by Lena, the vitality, thrust and energy springing from the very depths of degradation."³ The point is that this vindication of Lena's values is accomplished by an unnecessary death and leads to an unnecessary self-immolation. The vindication is there, so is the victory. But it cannot be explained in any other terms except those of inwardness or subjectivity, the very terms with which I attempted to explain Jim's truth and his death in Patusan.

Victory is a controversial work and I need to take a stand on the controversy before completing the assertion that in Victory we see Conrad's tragic vision in its clearest outlines. That the work is controversial can be seen from the gulf which separates its praise by F. R. Leavis and its condemnation by Albert Guerard - two diametrically opposed assessments by the most out-

standing admirers of the art of Joseph Conrad. Leavis sees Victory "among those of Conrad's works which deserve to be current as representing his claim to classical standing."⁴

Albert Guerard, who makes "energised language" the first and last consideration worth observing about a novel, casts doubts on "individual critical and especially professorial responses to Victory."⁵ Guerard has a definite and irrevocable response to this book:

To argue with Leavis about seriousness of theme or with Zabel about parabolic movements or with Stallman and others about secret symbolic intent is to postpone the essential considerations: the quality of the fictional imagination at work, and the quality of the prose. These qualities are such as to make other forms of analysis irrelevant. The time has come to drop Victory from the Conrad canon. ...On no theoretical or pragmatic basis can a novel containing this language, with all that it implies of blurred understanding, be defended as deserving "classical standing".⁶

My own position here is that "the quality of the fictional imagination at work" is more than sustained a) in the clear characterisation of Heyst, Lena, Schomberg and the "evil trio", b) in the dominant symbols out of which c) a clearly defined, serious and consistent theme emerges. The "blurred understanding" of which critic Guerard complains so much belongs neither to Joseph Conrad nor to the other critics whom Guerard accuses of

admiring a theme "pleasing...to the adolescent mind".⁷

Flaws in the language of Victory abound, but our interest in them recedes into the background as we observe the tragic dimensions of a life patterned after the strict tenets of pure rationality, in this case, after the tenets of Schopenhauerian pessimism. These tragic dimensions of the life of Axel Heyst are what really matter in Victory. The book is designed not to prove that Heyst is wrong but to show that he really has no choice. He is condemned to embrace what his rationality shows him to be absurd. Condemned is the word. The forces propelling Heyst to Morrison, to the Tropical Belt Coal Company and finally to Lena are forces within Heyst. They are built into him, side by side with his lucid consciousness. This dual legacy is what constitutes Heyst's problem. He "sees" life all too clearly and sees that it is absurd. On the other hand, life seizes him in spite of what he sees.

It is on this point that any discussion of Victory is bound to condemn or admire the book. For if the forces acting on Heyst are not recognized as being inherent in him, if they are not recognized as being second nature to him, but as passing attitudes, then most of what goes on when the evil trio arrives on Samburan becomes gratuitous melodrama.

We are then confronted by the sort of dis-

crepancy to be found in an otherwise excellent study of Victory by Murray Krieger.⁸ In this study, dominant symbols are analysed and key passages are quoted at the very opening of the discussion.⁹ One begins to see the sense in which this work deserves "classical standing" and how Conrad takes his place up there with Dostoevsky, Andre Gide, Malraux, Thomas Mann, Kafka, Camus and D. H. Lawrence. But Krieger involves himself in a quagmire by assuming that Victory is "all too clearly designed to prove Heyst wrong".¹⁰ There are two props for this assumption: Heyst's lack of presence of mind to disarm 'plain Mr. Jones' as well as Heyst's outburst before he sets fire to himself and to Lena's remains:

'Ah, Davidson, woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love - and to put its trust in life.'
(Vy 410)¹¹

These are shaky props to the assumption that Victory is designed to prove Heyst wrong. Heyst, being Heyst, can neither disarm Mr. Jones nor learn to put his trust in life. That is the whole point about an important part of the book being devoted to Heyst's life before meeting both Morrison and Lena.¹² That, indeed, is the whole point of our being introduced to the philosophical lucubrations of the elder Heyst. We are being shown how that motherless "tabula rasa" called Axel is being shaped by "the pitiless cold blasts of (his) father's

analysis" (VY 92). Conrad is clearly preoccupied by the tragic possibilities of a childhood patterned after the tenets of pure rationality, in this case, the rationality of Schopenhauerian pessimism. It is a lonely and dry childhood. The loneliness of it all brings to mind an eight-year-old boy spending whole days devouring books in the companionship of a dying, melancholy father, a despairing revolutionary consummating his despair by burning his manuscripts.¹³ This loneliness the boy Joseph Conrad experienced, although in Victory it comes out as the suffering that existence metes out to a recalcitrant angel, to a lucid intellectual in whom intellect has imprisoned feelings, and feelings, in the context of Victory, represent life.

Heyst is his father's son and Conrad is showing us the tragic implications of such a descent. He is showing us that Heyst can neither disarm Mr. Jones nor learn to love while he is still the Heyst we know. That is the reason for Heyst's emphasis on being his father's son who finds himself caught in human illusions "like the silliest fish of them all" (Vy 174). The reverse of Heyst's upbringing would be "a blessed, warm mental fog" such as that given to Captain McWhirr in Typhoon (Vy 92). There is no reason to believe that Conrad cherishes such a fog any more than he does the pure rationality of Axel Heyst.

The McWhirrs of this world are also part of the tragedy of life. Comfort and success they may have, but it is the comfort of the mindless and the success of blind faith. If we assume that Victory is designed to prove Heyst wrong, we are saying, in effect, that Conrad is asking us to put blind faith in life, to be like Captain McWhirr, to have "the obviousness of a lump of clay" (Typ 16). We are accepting that "the perfection of nature", to use Swift's happy phrase describing the Houyhnhnms, is to be found in men like McWhirr, Singleton or Mitchell. We need only a cursory analysis of these characters to see that Conrad is as dissatisfied with a blind mental fog as he is with a lucid, excruciating consciousness. The dissatisfaction is Conrad's radical skepticism and the denouement of this dissatisfaction constitutes his tragic vision. It seems to me, then, that critic Murray Krieger is castigating something that Conrad is not saying and would never dream of asserting:

It is a retreat from the tragic to the sentimentally ethical that asks for blind faith in life and love and for the comforting cinematic outburst, "together we can lick the world, baby". For so they could have Heyst and Lena, had Heyst seen his errors and found the courage to be resolute before it was, perchance, too late.¹⁴

The point is that Heyst is brought up not to be able to see his errors and so never to find courage before it is too late. With a different upbringing,

perhaps, Heyst would see his errors. But then, with a different upbringing Heyst's second nature goes outside the novel, and Victory as we have it ceases to be. Heyst and Lena are doomed from the day the elder Heyst takes it into his head to initiate his son into his Weltanschauung of "disillusion and regret...at that plastic and impressionable age" (Vy 91). No, Krieger, baby, Heyst and Lena can never, never, lick the world. They have this strange legacy of consciousness from Heyst, the father, which is not unlike the legacy inherited by Charles and Emilia from Gould, the father, in Nostromo. In both cases it is a destructive legacy. In the one case it can only be destroyed by fire, for fire purifies all, as good old Davidson notes (Vy 410) and in the other case, well, life goes on it its terrible silvery ways, for has not the committment to silver become love?

If we assume that Victory is designed to prove Heyst wrong, then Conrad comes through as counselling blind faith in the absurdities he has shown in Heart of Darkness, in Nostromo, in Under Western Eyes, as well as in all his other works. He comes through as saying that we should have blind faith in the searing cacophony of the Zangiaco orchestra (Vy 68-69), in the malicious calumnies of Schomberg whose "ambition was to feed [mankind] at a profitable price, and his delight was to talk of it behind its back" (Vy 27). Victory is not

designed to prove Heyst wrong. The world of Victory is, indeed, a bad dog that will bite you if you give it a chance (Vy 57). It is a world in which Morrison, the philanthropist, is persecuted by Portuguese officials (Vy 14) and in which Lena becomes the victim not only of the streets of London but of the Zangiacomo ensemble and the middle-aged passions of the hotel-keeper Schomberg (Vy 78-86). Conrad is not asking mankind to have faith and trust in such a world - and Heyst is right in rejecting it. If we assume that the book is designed to prove him wrong, we are really assuming that Conrad is not rebelling against a world dominated by the contingency of evil as represented by Jones, Ricardo, and Pedro. To accept such a world blindly is to emasculate the vision of a skeptic and to give an ethical direction to a world that Conrad saw as indifferent and even hostile to man's well-being.

In an elegant autobiographical essay written three years before the publication of Victory, Conrad says:

The ethical view of the universe involves us at last in so many cruel and absurd contradictions, where the last vestiges of faith, hope, charity, and even of reason itself, seem ready to perish, that I have come to suspect that the aim of creation cannot be ethical at all. I would fondly believe that its object is purely spectacular; a spectacle for awe, love, adoration or hate, if you like, but in this view - and in this view alone - never for despair.¹⁵

Whatever faith we must put in such a spectacle can be expressed in the Latin aphorism, "Haud quieta movere". The indolent volcano of Samburan shall be allowed to smoke in peace lest its lava destroy the surrounding works of man - just as Heyst shall sit on the verandah of his bungalow and smoke his cheroot in peace lest his sympathies bring him to Lena. He should never have involved himself in the affairs of Morrison lest the latter return to England and die. He should never have subjected himself to the harsh sounds of the Zangiaco orchestra lest he meet Lena, another victim of the Great Joke of existence. He should never have done anything lest he involve himself in so many contradictions. But Heyst being what he is, a human being, he has done, and must do all these things. In him are the forces of life which lead him to affirm, to have faith in what his consciousness finds absurd.

I am saying, in other words, that Axel Heyst is condemned to affirm a condition of existence which the lucidity of his mind has shown him to be absurd. Yes, condemned. How else would we explain passages such as the following, with all these suggestions of the myth of Sisyphus, with Jove above and the world of shades below:

I've said to the Earth that bore me:
 'I am I and you are a shadow'. And,
 by Jove, it is so! But it appears

that such words cannot be uttered with impunity. Here I am on a Shadow inhabited by Shades. How helpless a man is against the Shades! How is one to intimidate, persuade, resist, assert oneself against them? I have lost all belief in realities. ... (Vy 350, italics added).

It appears that any defiance against the shades cannot be uttered with impunity. Sisyphus found that out, as did Prometheus. In Camus' version of the myth, the fate of the hero is surmounted by scorn:

The workman of today works every day in his life at the same tasks, and this fate is no less absurd. But it is tragic only at the rare moments when it becomes conscious. Sisyphus, proletarian of the gods, powerless and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: It is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn.¹⁶

In Conrad's skepticism, even scorn is valueless against the indifference of the universe. Yet in Victory, we find that Heyst treats his involvement in the Tropical Belt Coal Company with scorn (Vy 203). This attitude is part of his heritage from a father who in his last book "claimed for mankind that right to absolute moral and intellectual liberty of which he no longer believed them worthy" (Vy 91). But this heritage is complicated by something else which is not to be found in the radical skepticism of the man Conrad. "No decent feeling was ever spurned by Heyst" (Vy 18). This reverence for

decent feelings is part of Heyst's in-built reverence for life. It will struggle with what he sees and the struggle is Conrad's tragic vision. An irrational universe, within and without man, guided by irrational and amoral forces beckons rational and moral man to involve himself in it and find consolation in this involvement.

Man shall submit himself to what Stein in Lord Jim calls "the destructive element" (LJ 214). Man will inevitably attempt to give meaning to this destructive element. A purely rational meaning such as that of Axel Heyst is as unsatisfactory as a purely irrational one such as that of the evil trio of Victory. Life and consciousness are yoked in a perpetual struggle for the mastery of the universe. They are incompatible partners whose union is, nonetheless, indissoluble. Life begets and breeds illusions; consciousness pulverises them. It is for life that illusions are perpetuated; it is to render life intolerable that consciousness unmask illusions. Conrad can make us understand both the passion of Schomberg for Lena and the malaise which keeps Heyst so close and yet so far away from her. This is how we are to understand Schomberg's passion:

For every age is fed on illusions, lest men should renounce life early and the human race come to an end (Vy 94).

Now let us look at the dilemma of a man who has renounced

illusions, that is, who has renounced life itself.

His resentment was not against the girl, but against life itself - that commonest of snares, in which he felt himself caught, seeing clearly the plot of plots and unconsolated by the lucidity of his mind. (Vy 215).

Axel Heyst's malaise is not his lack of consolation from reason or from what Conrad calls "lucidity of mind", but his very ability to see clearly that life is "the commonest of snares", a "plot of plots". Axel Heyst's malaise is this lucidity of mind which leads to an "infernal mistrust of all life" (Vy 406). This mistrust of life persists in Heyst until he confesses to Davidson that he had never learned to love or to put his trust in life (Vy 410). But as I have emphasized earlier, such a knowledge must be denied Heyst in order to show us how the rationalist content of man is fraught with tragic consequences - consequences as absurd as the universe he has accurately diagnosed. Even when Lena dies for him, Heyst cannot express love:

Heyst bent low over her, cursing his fastidious soul, which even at that moment kept the true cry of love from his lips in its infernal mistrust of all life. He dared not touch her... (Vy 406).

Consciousness has here reached its outrageous dimensions. However, life persists to be itself, to be life, a concoction of illusions and disillusionments, against the logical deficiencies which a man like Heyst sees clearly.

In Victory Conrad has carefully sustained a tragic sense of existence in which reason or pure rationality is pitted against the truth of the human condition. In Conrad's view, then, reason is not even truth. Truth is a paradox. It is this. Man is condemned to seek sustenance, spiritual and moral sustenance, from that which reason shows him to be absurd. Heyst cannot explain why he finds himself involved with this absurd world. He recognises, nevertheless, that he is involved. Meeting Lena is like meeting Morrison. It is a confrontation with this absurd factory in which the wages are paid in counterfeit money (Vy 196). Conrad is at pains to show us how the two meetings are, in essence, similar:

Heyst laid down his half-smoked cigar and compressed his lips. Then he got up. It was the same sort of impulse which years ago had made his cross the sandy street of the abominable town of Delli in the island of Timor and accost Morrison, practically a stranger to him then, a man in trouble, expressively harassed, dejected, lonely. It was the same impulse. But he did not recognize it. (Vy 71-72).

Heyst cannot really explain why he helps Morrison. Lena suggests that he did it for fun (Vy 199). But then Lena is confused by Heyst's attitude. She cannot understand him (Vy 204). Neither can Heyst. He cannot explain why he, "a man of universal scorn and unbelief," should be called upon to help a victim of the great joke of existence (Vy 198 - 199). Heyst has no rational

explanations for his "decent feelings". He has no reason to act as if the great joke of existence had a teleological cause. I am saying here that with all his Schopenhauerian pessimism, Heyst does not leave the world well alone. He is involved. He rescues Morrison and Lena from persecution. He saves even Jones, Ricardo and Pedro from thirst (Vy 229-30). There are Biblical overtones in this scene. Axel Heyst becomes a Moses, with a corresponding lack of faith, striking water out of a rock to quench the thirst of those journeying to a promised land:

Meantime Heyst, as if he had forgotten the boat, started kicking hard at a large brass tap projecting above the planks...but the tap was set fast.

"Hurry up!" Heyst yelled to the Chinaman, who was running with the crowbar in his hand.

Heyst snatched it from him, and, obtaining a leverage against the string-piece, wrung the stiff tap round with a mighty jerk.

"I hope that pipe hasn't got choked!" he muttered to himself anxiously.

It hadn't; but it did not yield a strong gush. The sound of a thin stream, partly breaking on the gunwale of the boat and partly splashing alongside, became at once audible. It was greeted by a cry of inarticulate and savage joy. Heyst knelt on the string-piece and peered down. The man who had spoken was already holding his open mouth under the bright trickle. ... Then some obstruction in the pipe gave way, and a sudden thick jet broke on his face. (Vy 229).

Heyst, then, is a saviour who regards his mission as absurd. He is a recalcitrant angel of mercy, an unwilling missionary who ends up witnessing his faith on a pyre of love. (Vy 410). For as Davidson, that eminently

sensible man, says, "fire purifies everything" (Vy 410). Heyst's mission into this world, into this factory in which the wages are paid in counterfeit money, is basically at variance with his consciousness. In him can be seen that contradiction which Unamuno finds existing between the heart that says 'yes' and the head that says 'no'.¹⁷

The contradiction within Heyst is not a question of character. It is the elemental stuff of his being. He has been made that way by being born in sympathy with life and being raised to see that this sympathy is not founded on reason. The prelude to his involvement in Lena's life is a certain sympathy with the miserable life led by members of the Zangiacomo ensemble:

Their crimson sashes gave a factitious touch of gaiety to the smoky atmosphere of the concert-hall; and Heyst felt a sudden pity for these beings, exploited, hopeless, devoid of charm and grace, whose fate of cheerless dependence invested their coarse and joyless features with a touch of pathos. (Vy 70)

Morrison and Lena appeal to Heyst primarily because they are human beings in difficulty. This humane feeling of Heyst lies smouldering in him like the lava of a volcano. Indeed, it is what leads the narrator of Victory to comment on Heyst's rescue of Lena in these words:

Those dreamy spectators of the world's agitation are terrible once the desire to act gets hold of them. They lower their heads and charge a wall with an amazing serenity which nothing but an indisciplined imagination can give.
(Vy 77)

There is something of Morrison in Axel Heyst. We can see in him those aspects of "a barrister who has thrown his wig to the dogs" (Vy 11). In spite of what Heyst sees, and he sees pretty much what his father says there is in the world, he is moved by forces he does not, and cannot rationally articulate. He is moved by his basic humanity, and it is as an act of faith to this humanity that he sets himself and Lena's remains to fire (Vy 410-11). There are things in life to which every human being must pay homage - life and death. Consciousness struggles to insulate man from these things. It shows him that they are absurd. Life subordinates him to these absurdities. Indeed, life and death are the most important faces "brooding over the universe", to use Marlow's favorite phrase, and true knowledge of mankind must come to terms with these forces. At one point, Morrison addresses Heyst in a language of eschatology. In this language, the last things in existence are suggested:

"You have been some years now in the islands, Heyst. You know us all; you have seen how we live. Now you shall have the opportunity to see how some of us end..." (Vy 14)

In the light of what he know later in Victory, this

becomes an appeal to Heyst, unknown to Morrison but implied by the author, to abandon the summits of consciousness and experience, so that in experiencing he might accept the human condition with all its absurdities. The irony here is that these absurdities are also within Heyst. How else would we explain his fascination with the Zangiaco orchestra? Not only is his sensitivity violated here, his very sense of proportion, his consciousness, is held in thrall by life:

He remained, astonished at himself for remaining, since nothing could have been more repulsive to his tastes, more painful to his senses, and, so to speak, more contrary to his genius, than this rude exhibition of vigour. The Zangiaco band was not making music; it was simply murthering silence with a vulgar, ferocious energy. One felt as if witnessing a deed of violence... (Vy 68).

We have in this episode, that "fascination of the abomination" which Marlow refers to in Heart of Darkness (YTO 50). It is the fascination of what is basically "contra-rational", to use Unamuno's word.¹⁸ What is contra-rational is, indeed life. It grips Heyst. His father's philosophy is not proven wrong. It is only shown to be powerless in the face of what confronts the living man, "the man of flesh and bones", as Unamuno has called him.¹⁹ Heyst does not accept life; he is seized by it. When Lena asks him to try to love her, we are told:

All his defences were broken now. Life had him fairly by the throat. (Vy 221)

A little later we are told that "all his cherished negations were falling off him one by one" (Vy 222).

Conrad's characterisation of Axel Heyst is consistent with the skepticism that we find in his letters. In these letters, the universe is an irrational spectacle unconcerned with man's ethical problems. The recurrent image of the world is that of a machine. The characterization of Heyst is that of a man who has seen the machine and "found it out", so to speak, but who, nevertheless, must try to give it a rational significance because the tendency to do so is within him. Let us look at Heyst in one of his reflexive moments:

Heyst meditated in simple terms on the mystery of his actions; and he answered himself with the honest reflection:

"There must be a lot of the original Adam in me, after all."

He reflected, too, with the sense of making a discovery, that this primeval ancestor is not easily suppressed. The oldest voice in the world is just the one that never ceases to speak. If anybody could have silenced its imperative echoes, it should have been Heyst's father, with his contemptuous, inflexible negation of all effort; but apparently he could not. There was in the son a lot of that first ancestor who, as soon as he could uplift his muddy frame from the celestial mould, started inspecting and naming the animals of that paradise which he was soon to lose.

Action - the first thought, or perhaps the first impulse, on earth! The barbed hook, baited with the illusion of progress, to bring out of the lightless void the shoals of unnumbered generations!

"And I, the son of my father, have been caught too, like the silliest fish of them all," Heyst said to himself.

He suffered. He was hurt by the sight of his own life, which ought to have been a masterpiece of aloofness. (Vy 173-74)

In this passage we see that the world really ought to be left well alone but that man, being man, insists on being involved in its absurdities. He has the illusion of progress. He constructs a Tropical Belt Coal Company and he rescues Lena. Man, being man, cannot be "a masterpiece of aloofness". The contradiction is within him. This is the most significant difference between the Weltanschauung of Victory and that of the pessimist who writes to Cunninghame Graham. In Victory the universe is indifferent and even hostile yet man is compelled by something within man to come to terms with it. In the letters of the early Conrad, the universe is indifferent and even hostile. It is to be left well alone:

I feel it ought to embroider but it goes on knitting. You come and say: 'This is alright, it's only a question of the right kind of oil. Let us use this, for instance, celestial oil and the machine will embroider a most beautiful design in purple and gold! Will it? Alas, no! You cannot by any special lubrication make embroidery with a knitting machine. And the most withering thought is that the infamous thing has made itself; made itself without thought, without conscience, without foresight, without eyes, without heart. It is a tragic accident and it has happened. You can't interfere with it. The last drop of bitterness is in the suspicion that you can't even smash it...it is what it is - and it is indestructible.²⁰

This letter is addressed to a socialist, an aristocratic

reformer called Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham. The letter is written during the early stages of Conrad's friendship with Graham - a lifelong friendship, as witness the eloquent eulogy Graham wrote after Conrad's funeral.²¹ I am bringing in this biographical detail to show the extent of Conrad's skepticism - a skepticism that expressed itself so freely to a man who held opposite views. "You can't interfere with it..." The socialist ethos, in whatever manifestation is an open challenge to this indifferent universe. It is man's attempt to mould the irrational into an ethical framework in which the universe serves man rather than vice-versa. Yet Conrad looks at man's attempts with grave doubts. In Lord Jim, Chester and Holy Terror Robinson are dashed against the Walpole Reefs by a hurricane, never to reappear with their means of progress - guano, (LJ 161-174). But they could not be Chester and Robinson without offering themselves up to this destructive element:

Action - the first thought, or perhaps
the first impulse on earth! The barbed
hook, baited with the illusion of pro-
gress, to bring out of the lightless
void, the shoals of unnumbered gen-
erations! (Vy 174)

Again referring to Lord Jim we can say that the consciousness of Heyst is what unmasks the foolishness of men like Chester. It "unmasks the foolishness" which is to say, it seeks to divest faith of its power, the power

to perpetuate life in spite of the contradictions that life possesses. The Conrad who created Chester and Axel Heyst is the same man who wrote to Cunninghame Graham:

The last drop of bitterness is in the suspicion that you can't even smash it... it is what it is - and it is indestructible.²²

Oh, no, that is not the last drop in bitterness. The last drop of bitterness is in what Conrad the novelist has done with Axel Heyst, Martin Decoud, Charles Gould, Kurtz, Razumov, Gaspar Ruiz and others. He has given, or rather built into them, illusions, and he has given them consciousness to unmask those illusions. Like Prometheus of old Conrad has given his men fire and has given them hope to allow them to forget their doom.

Axel Heyst complains that much against his father's teaching, he has found himself caught in the illusion of progress "like the silliest fish of them all" (Vy 174). He has moved all over the archipelago of the East Indies promoting the Tropical Belt Coal Company as a great "stride forward" (Vy 6). The narrator adds that the stride forward is "in the general organization of the universe, apparently" (Vy 6). Conrad always speaks not of progress but of the illusion of progress. It is for this illusion that human life becomes an expendable commodity in Heart of Darkness and Nostromo.

But the illusion of progress is also the persistence of life in the face of man's awareness of life's shortcomings. Axel Heyst is indisputably aware of this illusion of progress. He is disgusted by his involvement in the Tropical Belt Coal Company. It is this awareness which strives to insulate him from part of his basic humanity- his impulses of generosity and sympathy with suffering human beings.

In Victory, then, Conrad affirms something. He affirms the dual heritage of man and the contradictions which this heritage creates. Man sees an absurd universe. Yet he also finds that this absurd universe is within him. He is a microcosm of what he sees outside himself. The only difference is that the microcosm "sees" both itself and the macrocosm in which it has its being. Conrad has moved a significant step from the pessimism to be found in his early letters. Let me quote yet another letter of the early period also addressed to his socialist friend, Graham. Conrad is here rigorously consistent in his diagnosis of this indifferent world. Graham had suggested, just as Camus was to do later, that the best way to confront the universe was to scorn it. To which Conrad replies:

'Put the tongue out', why not? One ought to really. And the machine will run on all the same. The question is whether the fatigue of the muscular exertion is worth the transient pleasure of indulged scorn.

On the other hand one may ask whether scorn, love or hate are justified in the face of such shadowy illusions. The attitude of cold unconcern is the only reasonable one. Of course reason is hateful...because it demonstrates (to those who have the courage) that we, living, are out of life, - utterly out of it. The mysteries of a universe made of drops of fire and clods of mud do not concern us in the least. 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 a vain sticking up for appearances, as though one were anxious about the cut of one's clothes in a community of blind men.²³

In Victory, the ardour for action, the impulse to involvement, is not a vain sticking up for appearances. It is built into Axel Heyst. In Kierkegaardian terminology, we would say that Axel Heyst has an "eternal consciousness."²⁴ This eternal consciousness is what Heyst cannot explain as he gradually finds that his defences against life are broken. We may go again to Unamuno and say that Heyst also hungers for immortality against the evidence of his cold reason.²⁵ For it is a contra-rational act to commit oneself to a pyre and yet it is an act of supreme faith in the absurd spectacle confronting one. Pure consciousness, as Conrad has created it in Victory, rejects this "destructive element". Yet it is this very

rejection as representing consciousness, that life swallows up and consumes in flames. Heyst is not proven wrong. He is overwhelmed, gripped and ultimately pulverized by life. It is fascinating to see how the letters to Cunninghame Graham resemble the teachings of Heyst the father. That these teachings are put side by side with, and swalled up by, the life-forces of Victory would indicate that Conrad has found that his skepticism is not wrong, but powerless, and ultimately to be buried by this indifferent and hostile universe.

Axel's father counsels: 'Look on - make no sound' (Vy 175). Conrad's letters counsel pretty much the same thing:

The question is whether the fatigue of the muscular exertion is worth the transient pleasure of indulged scorn.²⁶

Rather, Conrad's letters question the very act of counselling anything. Any concern with the universe is just out of the question. Yet in Victory, the concern is inevitable. It arises out of Heyst's humane feelings - feelings duplicated both in the dominant symbols of volcanoes and in lesser characters. The feelings of Heyst overwhelm his father's doctrines. Life overwhelms consciousness. The philosophy of Heyst's father is scattered all over Victory and at times we see what Heyst reads from his father's books (Vy 219-20). We are allowed to see some of the gems of wisdom from the scintillating

mind of a polymath. But even when this mind is praised, the narrator puts the hint that the summits of consciousness must come to terms with life, or at least with death, the more dramatic aspect of life:

With what strange serenity, mingled with terrors, had that man considered the universal nothingness! He had plunged into it headlong, perhaps to render death, the answer that faced one at every inquiry, more supportable. (Vy 219)

When this philosopher dies, we are again left with the impression of a consciousness which, like Decoud in Nostromo, is "swallowed up in the immense indifference of things" (Nmo 501). After he has advised his son to "look on and make no sound", Heyst the father dies. The stream of life swallows him up:

His son buried the silenced destroyer of systems, of hopes, of beliefs. He observed that the death of that bitter contemner of life did not trouble the flow of life's stream, where men and women go by thick as dust, revolving and jostling one another like figures cut out of cork and weighted with lead just sufficiently to keep them in their proudly upright posture (Vy 175).

Life, then, persists to be itself, to be life, in spite of what man knows about its deficiencies - and man is condemned to embrace life. This point is brought out over and over again in Victory. Its recurrence has also been hinted at by critic George F. Reinecke in the following terms. Victory acts out

a Prudentian psychomachy...the participants, indeed, having their roots in real character

but also standing for aspects of the contemporary intellectual's mind, as exemplified by Heyst in the earlier part of the book. It is this externalized soul - struggle and the implicit conclusions the reader is asked to draw from it which give weight and significance to the tale.²⁷

Reinecke also sees the book as dividing man according to intellect, emotions and instincts.²⁸ On the positive side stand Heyst, Lena and Wang. On the negative side are Jones, Ricardo and Pedro. This is a neat psychomachy and I venture to suggest that its weakness lies in this very neatness.

If we see the evil trio as standing on a significant side of an ethical boundary in the book, we ignore its gratuitous arrival on the scene and its care-free spirit of adventure - one might even say its "aesthetic" fidelity to purposeless wandering. My view is that the evil trio represents the contingency of evil and the unconcern of that spectacle described earlier in A personal Record.²⁹ It also stands for some of the smouldering forces within Axel Heyst. Heyst has intellect, emotions and instinct. His career is dominated by intellect and he uses intellect to defend himself against the slings and arrows of outrageous life, that is, against emotions and instincts. Thus when Lena observes that he has laughed twice since meeting her, Heyst replies:

"That is because, when one's heart has been broken into in the way you have broken into mine, all sorts of weaknesses are free to

enter - shame, anger, supid indignations,
 stupid fears - stupid laughter too."
 (Vy 210)

The validity of a psychomachy must depend on the extent to which it illuminates the dichotomy within Heyst. My criticism of Reinecke's critique is that it takes us too far away from Heyst and reduces him to the same stature as Jones, Ricardo, Pedro and Wang who are only aspects of him. Furthermore Reinecke ignores Schomberg, Davidson, and the "we" referred to by the narrator (Vy 19). They are all aspects of Heyst's basic humanity. I maintain that here, as elsewhere, Conrad has created a "doppelganger" situation in which Heyst is the world outside, that world castigated by his father's philosophy and this world is Axel Heyst. Mine is a much simpler psychomachy than that observed by Reinecke because I contend that Victory is about consciousness and life, that is, about the tensions between the Heyst who is born and the Heyst who is educated by his father. I contend, further, that Prudentius, on whom Reinecke's scheme hangs, takes us too far back into Catholic orthodoxy to illuminate Victory, a characteristic work of the twentieth century concerned not with the boundaries between good and evil, rewards and punishment, but rather, with the forces of negation and affirmation of life - within man.³⁰

This is not to say that references to soul-struggles can be avoided in any of Conrad's works. The

thing, the critical task, is to show to what this soul-struggle belongs, or, to use Marlow's phrase in Heart of Darkness, the critical thing is to show "how many powers of darkness" possess any psychomachy. In Victory, the dominant symbols emphasise the war between consciousness, represented by the philosophy of the elder Heyst, and life represented by the emotions and the instincts of all the characters. In some instances, the Tropical Belt Coal Company, as a product of man's efforts and man's thoughts opposed to the natural vegetation around it, represents consciousness. At the opening of Chapter I of Part III, the Company is a product of man's thoughts, nature becomes "kind" in burying the bonds of that enterprise:

Tropical nature had been kind to the failure of the commercial enterprise. The desolation of the headquarters of the Tropical Belt Coal Company had been screened from the side of the sea; from the side where prying eyes - if any were sufficiently interested, either in malice or in sorrow - could have noted the decaying bones of that once sanguine enterprise.

Heyst had been sitting among the bones buried so kindly in the grass of two wet seasons' growth. (Vy 173).

This kindness of nature, of life itself, is then followed by Heyst's meditation in which he suffers because he has failed to be a "masterpiece of aloofness" (Vy 174). Life has intruded upon and throttled the dictates of his consciousness. In Chapter IV of Part I life visibly

threatens to swallow up Heyst as "the last vestiges" of the Company:

He marched into the long grass and vanished - all but the top of his white cork helmet, which seemed to swim in a green sea. Then that too disappeared, as if it had sunk into the living depths of the tropical vegetation, which is more jealous of men's conquests than the ocean, and which was about to close over the last vestiges of the liquidated Tropical Belt Coal Company - A. Heyst, manager in the East. (Vy 29)

The vegetation of Samburan takes on an added significance as part of the life-forces in the macrocosm standing for the life-forces of emotions and instincts in that microcosm called Axel Heyst. The vegetation takes on an added significance. So do the geological and meteorological happenings of Victory. They symbolize the simmering battles of the soul-struggle within Heyst.

At the opening of Victory, the smoking macrocosm is juxtaposed with the smoking microcosm. Their potential life-forces are also compared through the ~~connecting~~ connecting analogy of an island:

He was out of everybody's way, as if he were perched on the highest peak of the Himalayas, and in a sense as conspicuous. Everyone in that part of the world knew of him, dwelling on his little island. An island is but the top of a mountain. Axel Heyst, perched on it immovably, was surrounded, instead of the imponderable stormy and transparent ocean of air merging into infinity, by a tepid, shallow sea; a passionless off-shoot of the great waters which embrace the continents of this globe. His most frequent visitors were shadows, the shadows of

clouds, relieving the monotony of the inanimate, brooding sunshine on the tropics. His nearest neighbour - I am speaking now of things showing some sort of animation - was an indolent volcano which smoked faintly all day with its head just above the northern horizon, and at night levelled at him, from amongst the clear stars, a dull red glow, expanding and collapsing spasmodically like the end of a gigantic cigar puffed at intermittently in the dark. Axel Heyst was also a smoker; and when he lounged out on his verandah with his cheroot, the last thing before going to bed, he made in the night the same sort of glow and of the same size as that other one so many miles away.
(Vy 3-4)

The state of things in this passage is a dormant, relaxed, coexistence between Heyst and his neighbours. It is a state of "live and let live" between life and consciousness. Haud quieta movere. Life has a rugged and violent potential. The tepid, shallow sea can become stormy and dangerous. It can be full of passion. The shadowy clouds can become menacing and full of lightning and thunder - and the lava of the volcano can exterminate everything around it by simply burying it. The juxtaposition of this fantastic potential of the natural world with Axel Heyst has a purpose. There is also in Axel Heyst a similar potential, every ready to embrace, exterminate, crush and pulverize everything in its way - including the lucid teachings of the elder Heyst!

At the end of Part II of Victory, Schomberg has sufficiently interested the evil trio, Jones, Ricardo, and Pedro, to astonish "der herr baron" and take his

riches. There are no riches, but Schomberg has to get rid of the trio and avenge himself on Heyst whom he not only gratuitously dislikes but who has also deprived him of Lena. The volcano of Samburan ceases to be Heyst's friendly neighbor. It is used to guide the evil trio to Samburan. Schomberg gives the direction:

"What do you think of a pillar of smoke by day and a loom of fire at night? There's a volcano in full blast near that island - enough to guide almost a blind man. What more do you want? An active volcano to steer by!"
(Vy 168-169)

When the trio arrives on the island, Mr. Jones explains languidly that "they were in a pretty bad state that morning, when they caught sight of the smoke of the volcano. It nerved them to make an effort for their lives. Soon afterwards they made out the island" (Vy 240). The volcano's role in the drama that follows is clear. It has become part of the gratuitous evil in the spectacle of the universe. The glowing role that it had earlier in being a light to Heyst has become a source of danger. Even the smoking of a cheroot by Heyst, a volcano-like luxury, has also become a source of danger. Heyst is meditating on the coming of the trio and of the calumny about his treatment of Morrison. He also smokes his cigar while trying to figure out how the predicament has come about:

He flung his glowing cigar away into the night. But Samburan was no longer a solitude wherein he could indulge all his moods. The fiery parabolic trail the cast out stump traced in the air was seen from another veranda at a distance of some twenty years. It was noted as a symptom of importance by an observer with his faculties greedy for signs, and in a state of alertness tense enough almost to hear the grass grow. (Vy 259)

On the day that Jones, Ricardo and Pedro reach Samburan, Heyst and Lena take a walk from their hut and sit on rocks facing the sea. Their discussion centres on Lena's childhood and Heyst's past life. Lena complains that the sea below makes her head swim:

"It seems as if everything that there is had gone under," she said.

"Reminds you of the story of the deluge," muttered the man, stretched at her feet and looking at them. "Are you frightened at it?"

"I should be rather frightened to be left behind alone. When I say, I, of course I mean we."

"Do you?". . . Heyst remained silent for a while. "The vision of a world destroyed", he mused aloud. "Would you be sorry for it?"

"I should be sorry for the happy people in it," she said simply.

His gaze travelled up her figure and reached her face, where he seemed to detect the veiled glow of intelligence, as one gets a glimpse of the sun through the clouds.

"I should have thought it's they specially who ought to have been congratulated. Don't you?"

"Oh, yes - I understand what you mean; but there were forty days before it was all over."

"You seem to be in possession of all the details." . . .

"Sunday school," She murmured.
(Vyl91)

There are, in this passage, several levels at which consciousness and life wage their eternal battle. Heyst himself comes out as pure consciousness and Lena as simple life both in her simple and physical response to the natural world - it makes her head swim - and in her simple reaction to the deluge mentioned by Heyst. She does not understand Heyst. He is way up in the philosophy of his father - an annihilating philosophy from which Heyst derives the view that the victims of a deluge "ought to have been congratulated". They escape the absurdities of this world! Lena and Heyst are talking at cross purposes here. The girl is responding in a simple positive manner to the world as she finds it, the man is always subjecting it to the scrutiny of his consciousness.

But the "deluge" becomes an omen to other things. The breakup of the home in which Lena and her father lived elicits from Heyst only one response, "The deluge". Considering Lena's subsequent fortunes, the deluge is a fitting description of the recasting of her life. Then comes a discussion of "the deluge" in another form:

"Does it every rain here?"

"There is a season when it rains almost every day," said Heyst, surprised. "There are also thunderstorms. We had once a mud-shower."

"Mud-shower?"

"Our neighbour there was shooting up ashes. He sometimes clears up his red-hot gulley like that..." (Vy 192)

The deluge, volcanoes, mud-showers, frightening sea. This indifferent universe appears to take a position in favour of life and against consciousness. On her way to the East, Lena sees Vesuvius, "a smoking mountain" (Vy 193). Heyst admits to having seen it also. But in looking at him attentively, Lena seeks "to discover some trace of that boyhood in the mature face of the man" (Vy 193). The juxtaposition of Lena's curiosity with the Volcano Vesuvius seems to me similar to the way in which earlier on the word "deluge" sticks in her mind and she asks whether it ever rains in Samburan (Vy 19). I am suggesting, in other words, that the narrator has subtly transferred the associations of Vesuvius to those of boyhood; that it is Axel Heyst's sexuality which Lena is now thinking of. This, then, leads to another cross-purpose in their discussion:

"I was thinking," she murmured very low.
 "Thought, action - so many snares! If
 you begin to think you will be unhappy."
 "I wasn't thinking of myself," she declared
 with a simplicity which took Heyst aback
 somewhat. (Vy 193)

Again the collision, even if playful, is indicative of a violent contradiction between these two. Consciousness has almost insulated him from life; life has made her what she is - simple, generous, passionate, naive.

These discordant notes in the conversation prefigure the violent drama to take place on Samburan.

The natural world can be disturbed and discordant. So can man. The conversation also prefigures the discussion of that calumny about Heyst's treatment of Morrison, a calumny that separates Heyst from Lena even further than he has been before:

"And she only half disbelieves it,"
he thought with hopeless humiliation.
(Vy 259)

The drama of *Samburan*, then, has been prefigured in the dominant symbols of natural phenomena - symbols standing for both the passionless placidity of repressed emotions and the violent conflagration of life itself. Cloudless skies can become dark and beget showers; a tepid sea can become stormy and volcanoes, good-natured and indolent as they usually are, can shoot up ashes. The natural world is, indeed, within Heyst and our eminently sensible friend, Davidson, has told us as much:

"Funny notion of defying the fates - to
take a woman in tow!" (Vy 57)

So far the discussion has emphasized the menace which life poses towards consciousness and the discordant notes to be found in Victory because of this menace. But consciousness also poses a threat to life. Consciousness is existence that is aware of itself, of its own paradoxes, predicaments and contradictions. Consciousness is a meaningful confrontation with the universe. Discordant notes must follow this confront-

ation. Part and parcel of being conscious is that implacable hostility towards the paradoxes, predicaments and contradictions in the universe. Whether this hostility is manifested in the advice "look on - make no sound" proposed by an elder Heyst, or "gorge and disgorge" as pursued by Jones, it will bring in its wake erupting volcanoes and mud-showers - for the life-process of the universe resists formulas of accommodation with it, which is to say, it resists consciousness. Yet man ceases to be himself the moment he loses all his formulas, that is, the moment he ceases to subject life to consciousness.

The portrait of the elder Heyst as well as his philosophy and his books intrude on the scene whenever Heyst is confronted by the predicaments of life. That is why he tells Lena during the conversation in which they discuss Morrison:

"Primarily the man with the quill pen in his hand in that picture you so often look at is responsible for my existence. He is responsible for what my existence is, or has been. ...I suppose he began like other people; took fine words for good, ringing coin and noble ideals for valuable banknotes. ...Later he discovered - how am I to explain it to you? Suppose the world were a factory and all mankind workmen in it. Well, he discovered that the wages were not good enough. That they were paid in counterfeit money."
(Vy 195-6)

This disillusionment of the elder Heyst becomes his son's formula for confronting the universe. "He is

also responsible for what my existence is, or rather has been." Again and again the elder Heyst returns in the form of his ideas to put a wedge between his son and the universe around him.

When Heyst returns from the walk during which Lena reveals Schomberg's calumny concerning Heyst's treatment of Morrison, he sits beneath his father's portrait and reads one of his father's books. Meanwhile the world of Samburan is encased in a brooding silence, "the silence of ardent thought":

Heyst sat down under his father's portrait; and the abominable calumny crept back into his recollection. The taste of it came on his lips, nauseating and corrosive like some kinds of poison. He shook his head, surprised at himself. He was not used to receive his intellectual impressions in that way - reflected in movements of carnal emotion. He stirred impatiently in his chair, and raised the book to his eyes with both hands. It was one of his father's. (Vy 218)

Intellectual impressions are here received in movements of carnal emotion. Consciousness struggles to express itself through life. This is something new for Heyst, "a hermit in the wilderness" (Vy 30-31). Schomberg's calumny shatters Heyst's tranquillity. It is part of the whole situation presented to him by life and he is unable to understand it and his father's philosophy only heightens the discordant vibrations around him. The father's philosophy is man's perfection of or attempt

at perfecting consciousness; the world confronting Heyst has all the absurdities of what is contra-rational. It has become "unreasonable, unsettled, and vaguely urgent, laying him under an obligation, but giving him no line of action" (Vy 258).

Lena is life as love and also as a contingent web; Schomberg becomes life as gratuitous calumny and irrational monomania; Morrison and Lena are victims of the Great Joke; the evil trio is a dislocation in the social order, mysterious in origin and authentic only as a dislocation. All these people have been anticipated by the philosophy of the elder Heyst. What has not been anticipated is how to deal with them. Consciousness has become inadequate in the presence of what it has diagnosed.

The writings of the elder Heyst are given an astonishing immediacy in Victory. The old man anticipates all the absurdities that will confront his son, and yet the son is demoralized by the absurd from the very moment that Jones, Ricardo and Pedro are given hospitality on Samburan:

He felt contemptuously irritated with the situation. The outer world had broken upon him; and he did not know what wrong he had done to bring this on himself, any more than he knew what he had done to provoke the horrible calumny about his treatment of poor Morrison. (Vy 258)

In the writings of the elder Heyst such a situation would be part of the "Great Joke" of existence, a world in

which the wages are paid in counterfeit money. The narrator of Victory quotes liberally from the writings of the elder Heyst. This, for example, is what the elder Heyst has to say about love:

Of the stratagems of life the most cruel
is the consolation of love = the most subtle,
too; for the desire is the bed of dreams.
(Vy 219)

Lena will have to make sacrifices to win a man steeped in this philosophy. There follows, in the elder Heyst's "last book", a bitter reflection on human misery diagnosing the same sort of suffering as the son is about to encounter vis-a-vis Jones, Ricardo and Pedro:

Men of tormented conscience, or of a criminal imagination, are aware of much that minds of a peaceful, resigned cast do not even suspect. It is not poets alone who dare descend into the abyss of infernal regions, or even who dream of such a descent. The most inexpressive of human beings must have said to himself, at one time or another: "Anything but this!"

We all have our instants of clairvoyance. They are not very helpful. The character of the scheme does not permit that or anything else to be helpful. Properly speaking its character, judged by the standards established by its victims, is infamous. It excuses every violence of protest and at the same time never fails to crush it, just as it crushes the blindest assent. The so-called wickedness must be, like the so-called virtue, its own reward = to be anything at all. ...

Clairvoyance or no clairvoyance, men love their captivity. To the unknown force of negation they prefer the miserably tumbled bed of their servitude. Man lone can give one the disgust of pity; yet I find it easier to believe in the misfortune of mankind than in its wickedness. (Vy 219=220)

This bitter critique of the world represented by the Book of Job forms "the last words" that Heyst reads from his father's writings. They are, then, a kind of ipse dixit, the ultimate resort to reason by a man who is now face to face with the unsettling universe of unreason, that is, of life itself. Heyst has hardly digested his father's last words when Lena appears on the scene and gives those words a new significance by begging of Heyst, "You should try to love me" (Vy 221). But above all this is the sinister presence of Jones, Ricardo and Pedro. Critics have seen this trio as allegorical and, indeed, there are many elements in plain Mr. Jones' speech which evoke something preternatural.³¹ The trio is almost hallucinatory. It is so extreme in its vividness as to be figures in a nightmare. We all feel like Schomberg listening to Ricardo unravelling some of the trio's adventures:

"Look here", exclaimed Schomberg violently, as if trying to burst some invisible bonds, "do you mean to say that all this happened?"
 "No," said Ricardo coolly. "I am making it up as I go along, just to help you through the hottest part of the afternoon. So down he pitches, his nose on the red embers...
 (Vy 140)

Ricardo is not making up the story as he goes along. Jones has already confirmed the essential facts of Pedro's position when the trio reaches Schomberg's hotel (Vy 100). I see the trio as fully integrated into the novel in much the same way as the stories of Bob Stanton, Chester

and Robinson, the French lieutenant, Captain Brierly and Stein are integral to the central theme of Lord Jim.

When the trio is received by Schomberg, the latter asks Jones if he is coming from Colombia. Jones' answer has overtones of something beyond the natural order of things:

"Yes, but I have been coming for a long time. I come from a good many places. I am travelling west, you see."
 "For sport, perhaps?" suggested Schomberg.
 "Yes. Sort of sport. What do you say to chasing the sun?"
 "I see - a gentleman at large," said Schomberg. . . (Vy 100)

Later when the trio is on Samburan, Jones has a similar exchange with Axel Heyst. Again he sees himself in terms of a spiritus mundi, of a Zeitgeist of boredom and world-weariness wandering for the sake of wandering but now hinting (without knowing) at a certain affinity with his host:

"In one way I am - yes, 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." (Vy 379)

Earlier in their conversation, Jones hints at a stature even more portentous:

"I am he who is - " (Vy 317)

As if this equation of himself with the God of Moses were not enough, Jones assumes yet another portentous pose, this time becoming leader of the fallen angels of Paradise

both in the Biblical and Miltonic sense of this notion:

"Having been ejected, he said, from his proper social sphere because he had refused to conform to certain usual conventions, he was a rebel now, and was coming and going up and down the earth. As I really did not want to listen to all this nonsense, I told him that I had heard that sort of story about somebody else before. His grin is really ghastly..."

"As to me, I am no blacker than the gentleman you are thinking of, and I have neither more nor less determination."
(Vy 317-318)

Jones, then, is cast in multiple roles. He is creator and creation, almighty God and rebellious Satan. He is also a ghost and a death and the narrator repeatedly sees him in the latter role. To Schomberg, Mr. Jones turns "hollow eyes, like an incurious spectre" (Vy 108). He has a glance of "spectral intensity" and insists on removing himself from the common lot of humanity whenever he speaks. He warns Schomberg:

"You don't think, by any chance, that you have to do with ordinary people, do you?" inquired Mr. Jones, in his lifeless manner, which seemed to imply some sort of menace from beyond the grave. (Vy 112)

Mr. Jones is death itself trying to kill time (Vy 113).

There is yet another role in which Jones is cast and which seems to have infatuated Ricardo into a fervent disciple of this free world-spirit. It is that of a gentleman, and in this role, again, Mr. Jones is as omnipotent as "he who is". He is not to be sized up so easily, especially by "tame" mortals like Schomberg.

It is not just that Ricardo has a strong English sense of class divisions, he sees the class to which Mr. Jones belongs as conferring absolute freedom of movement and action to the utter disregard of what the rest of humanity may think. There are overtones of Apostolic zeal when Ricardo tells Schomberg:

"I got on all right at sea, too. Worked up to be mate. I was mate on a schooner - a yacht, you might call her - a special good berth too, in the Gulf of Mexico, a soft job that you don't run across more than once in a lifetime. Yes, I was mate of her when I left the sea to follow him."

Ricardo tossed his chin to indicate the room above. . . (Vy 125)

The term "gentleman" to Ricardo becomes something aesthetic, existing freely in a world of psychic, rather than ethical, determinants. For Ricardo, a gentleman cannot be accused of theft, murder, hatred or any of these bourgeois crimes. A gentleman is an aristocrat - of the most blatant, rapacious and boisterous type. He can be murderous, bloody, and even a common thief just in order to do these things, not to eke out a living. Mr. Jones, then, belongs to Olympus, to Nietzsche's Olympus rather than to the Bible, although we have seen earlier that he speaks like "he who is".³² For him, life is a gamble and there is no shirking of necessity (Vy 136-137). Says Jones' historian ("secretary") Ricardo:

We gambled on the plain, with a damn lot of cattlemen in ranches; played fair, mind - and then had to fight for our winnings afterwards as often as not. We've gambled on the

hills and in the valleys and on the seashore,
and out of sight of land - mostly fair."
(Vy 137)

Life is a gamble for plain Mr. Jones and his secretary. They take away a skipper's cash-box (hardly enough to knock a man on the head for from behind"), they kill Antonio and nearly strangle Pedro and they terrorize Schomberg - all as a matter of course and with a certain aristocratic delicacy. Schomberg cannot believe his ears, but then who is he? He cannot call Mr. Jones "a common thief":

Garn! What if he did want to see his money back, like any tame shopkeeper, hash-seller, gin-slinger, or ink-spewer does? Fancy a mud-turtle like you trying to pass an opinion on a gentleman! A gentleman isn't to be sized up so easily. Even I ain't up to it some-times. For instance, that night, all he did was to waggle his finger at me. (Vy 135)

A gentleman isn't to be sized up so easily. An interesting aside here is that a young aristocrat named Kozerniowski isn't to be sized up so easily. He too did things in the Gulf of Mexico. He became a gun-runner for a dying cause, fought a duel for a hopeless love, meditated on suicide, spent money in an alarming way and caused his watchful uncle endless worries. But that was life on a psychic plane, before the British Merchant Service tamed this wilderness by its rigid discipline. A more interesting point is that we are seeing in Jones latent possibilities in Axel Heyst, "which the pitiless cold blasts of the father's analysis" would forever inhibit (Vy 92). We have earlier

seen that one of the distinguishing marks of Axel Heyst is that he is a perfect gentleman. The drinker old McNab has fastened an epithet on him:

"Heyst's a puffed g'n'lman.
Puffed! But he's a ut-uto-utopist."
(Vy 8)

I am trying to show here that in the evil trio Conrad has concentrated various possibilities of life that remain locked up in Axel Heyst. If then the evil trio stands for life, as both Lena and Schomberg do, Heyst's negation of life is justified. But although this negation is justified, Heyst has nowhere to go. He cannot offer himself to the dictates of his father's philosophy, which, as I have tried to show, are barren and sterile. They do not give him any clue about how he should confront the sinister, brooding and menacing life around him. He is condemned to deal with Lena, Morrison, Schomberg, Jones, Ricardo and Pedro. They are the matter, the stuff of life - and they are all within Heyst. Again, as I said earlier, Heyst is a microcosm of the macrocosm that is life. The only difference between the microcosm and its macrocosm is that the one is conscious of its own and of all other existence, the other simply exists. Conrad's tragic vision is a realisation of the conflict between the consciousness in the microcosm and the amoral, indifferent and even hostile presence of the macrocosm. I will quote again from that elegant piece of autobiography:

The ethical view of the universe involves us at last in so many cruel and absurd contradictions, where the last vestiges of faith, hope, charity and even of reason itself, seem ready to perish, that I have come to suspect that the aim of creation cannot be ethical at all. I would fondly believe that its object is purely spectacular: a spectacle for awe, love, adoration or hate, if you like, but in this view, and in this view alone - never for despair.³³

The evil trio accepts unreason, not so much as its own essence, but as its destiny. That destiny is taken on the spur of the moment, as witness Ricardo's Apostle-like haste in following Jones and Pedro's readiness to die at the hands of Jones and Ricardo. This trio fulfills its possibilities by gratuitous acts - whether of hatred, murder, theft or loyalty. What the trio stands for is "the spectacle" discussed in A Personal Record³⁴ Above all, it is that universe so well perceived by the elder Heyst, that factory in which the wages are paid in counterfeit money. Heyst must look on and make no sound - but he is condemned to make sounds because the spectacle is within him. It is muffled, not silenced. It grows in the distance like the ever-present thunder of Samburan.

The evil trio is larger than life. Conrad has so painted it in order that we may all the more clearly see the various possibilities which Heyst has negated. The trio wanders because it wants to be elusive to life. It is this desire to be elusive, to confront life with

consciousness, that distinguishes his wandering from that of Jones, Ricardo and Pedro:

It was the very essence of his life to be a solitary achievement, accomplished not by hermit-like withdrawal with its silence and immobility, but by a system of restless wandering, by the detachment of an impermanent dweller amongst changing scenes. In this scheme he had perceived the means of passing through life without suffering and almost without a single care in the world - invulnerable because elusive. (Vy 90)

The resemblance between Heyst and Jones is made explicit from the moment Jones reaches Schomberg's hotel. He is a bored, world-weary traveller and we by then know that Heyst has been wandering in New Guinea. Ricardo dreads the moment his governor says, "Martin, I am bored" (Vy 150). That means nothing can be good enough for him and nothing is worthwhile. We have here a simplification, a crude simplification, no doubt, of what Heyst has already declared, early in the book:

"I suppose I have done a certain amount of harm, since I allowed myself to be tempted into action. It seemed innocent enough, but all action is bound to be harmful. It is devilish. That is why this world is evil upon the whole. But I have done with it! I shall never lift a finger again. At one time I thought that intelligent observation of facts was the best way of cheating the time which is allotted to us whether we want it or not; but now I have done with observation, too." (Vy 54)

When Heyst says this he has already retired to his lonely island of Samburan. His observation on life is to come back to us in a crude form when we see "plain Mr. Jones"

lying down all day long full-length on a mat while a boy sings tristes to him from morning till night. He is not drunk, as Ricardo makes haste to remind us. He is only bored in the proper manner of a gentleman:

"That's another thing you can tell a gentleman by - his freakishness. A gentleman ain't accountable to nobody, any more than a tramp on the roads." (Vy 150)

Heyst distrusts life; Jones hates women. Now misogyny is not the same thing as pessimism. But the two are connected by one common enemy: feeling. Feeling is to be found in life - and in the context of Victory Lena, a woman, also represents feelings. Heyst is distant from Lena precisely because he lacks feelings and distrusts life. No clear reason is given for Jones' misogyny unless it be that being cast in the role of Satan (who could not stand the conventions of his class in heaven) he must hate women. In the Catholic interpretation of the myth of the Fall, God promises enmity between Eve (and her descendants) and the snake. The woman then defeats the snake through the incarnation of Christ. Whether Conrad had this interpretation of the myth of the Fall at the back of his mind, does not matter. What matters is that Jones' misogyny brings him closer to Heyst than a merely allegorical conception would. Jones is disgusted to know that Schomberg has a wife (vy 114). Ricardo tells us that Jones "would give any woman a ten-mile berth. He can't stand them" (Vy 127). We have already observed how Heyst distrusts

life. He can't stand it - though he has to.

On this theme of mistrusting life Heyst is also joined by his arch-enemy Schomberg. It is worth noting that whereas Heyst tortures Lena by his emotional distance from her, Schomberg tortures her by wanting to be just as close as Heyst is distant. We observe that Lena has become an obsession with Schomberg whose customers fear he might run mad just from reviling Heyst for having snatched Lena from him (Vy 96). Schomberg, then, is another possibility which Heyst might have become had he embraced life. But this possibility has tragic implications, for even Schomberg is a disillusioned man, who has come to see life in much the same way as Heyst sees it, even after moving on in the world in the opposite direction from Axel Heyst. He remembers the "fracas" he had with Zangiaco over Lena. He groans "with pain as of a hot coal under his breastbone" while giving himself up to desolation:

Ah, if he only had that girl with him he would have been masterful and resolute and fearless - fight twenty desperadoes - care for nobody on earth! Whereas the possession of Mrs. Schomberg was no incitement to a display of manly virtues. Instead of caring for no one, he felt that he cared for nothing. Life was a hollow sham; he wasn't going to risk a shot through his lungs or his liver in order to preserve its integrity. It had no savour - damn it!
(Vy 109)

The "doppel-ganger" situation in Victory is intricate and profound. We would not think of seeing Heyst in the form

of, say, a "murderous brute" like Pedro (Vy 115). But the functions of Pedro, a "supermasculine menial" to use Eldridge Cleaver's phrase,³⁴ have already been hinted as lying dormant in Axel Heyst. Pedro is originally an alligator-hunter (Vy 100). He now hangs on to Jones and Ricardo, watching over them, ever ready to kill whoever attacks them, doing their dirty jobs and in the end growls at Wang, who shoots him dead (Vy 411). But his functions are latent in Heyst. They are inhibited by Heyst's refinement, by his philosophy, which, as I showed earlier, can only lead to sterility and death. When Heyst discusses the Morrison affair with Lena, he spends a great deal of time meditating on killing. First:

"As to killing a man, which would be a comparatively decent thing to do, well- I have never done that." (Vy 211)

He wishes he had been able to do so in the unexplored lands that he visits, but then "he was simply moving on, while others, perhaps, were going somewhere" (Vy 211-212).

Again, killing becomes a philosophical issue:

"To slay, to love - the greatest enterprises of life upon a man! And I have no experience of either." (Vy 212)

We see, then, that the evil trio has been used by Conrad less in an allegorical sense than as an extension of Axel Heyst, an extension that his training rejects but which, nevertheless, looms before him until he dies. Symbolically the end of Jones, Ricardo and Pedro is the end of Heyst's

double. Jones has been presented as a spectre and a corpse. We have just seen the ape Pedro. Indeed, the double must be cleansed by fire. There is no other way. Schomberg has forecast this end when he sees the preternatural aspects of the trio:

A spectre, a cat, an ape - there was a pretty association for a mere man to remonstrate with, he reflected with an inward shudder; for Schomberg had been overpowered, as it were, by his imagination, and his reason could not react against that fanciful view of his guests. And it was not only their appearance. The morals of Mr. Ricardo seemed to him to be pretty much the morals of a cat. Too much. What sort of argument could a mere man offer to a ... or to a spectre, either! ... As to the ape - well, everybody knew what an ape was. It had no morals. Nothing could be more hopeless.
(Vy 148)

Nothing could be more hopeless. This sense of hopelessness before the absurd spectacle of existence permeates Victory. It is in order to underline man's hopelessness before life that the evil trio has been painted with an unusual brush that makes it seem grotesque. But the grotesque has to be anchored to what we know - or should know. In Victory, it is anchored to death, to hatred, to murder. That is why Jones, Ricardo and Pedro must be and must not be human - at one and the same time. When they reach Samburan, they seem to Heyst to be an apparition. But their being an apparition merely emphasizes the contingency, the transience, which is the lot of humanity

in this book:

Heyst had never been so much astonished in his life. He stared dumbly at the strange boat's crew. From the first he was positive that these men were not sailors. They wore the white drill suit of tropical civilization; but their apparition in a boat Heyst could not connect with anything plausible. The civilization of the tropics could have had nothing to do with it. It was more like those myths, current in Polynesia, of amazing strangers, who arrive at an island, gods or demons, bringing good or evil to the innocence of the inhabitants - gifts of unknown things, words never heard before. (Vy 227-228)

It is remarkable that Heyst at this point should see the evil trio as an apparition. He himself has already been seen in this light by Morrison when he helps the latter to meet the customs' duty demanded by the Portuguese authorities:

It was if he expected Heyst's usual white suit of the tropics to change into a shining garment flowing down to his toes, and a pair of great dazzling wings to sprout on the Swede's shoulders - and didn't want to miss a single detail of the transformation. ...

"Miracles do happen," thought the awestruck Morrison. To him, as to all of us in the islands, this wandering Heyst, who didn't toil or spin visibly, seemed the very last person to be the agent of Providence in an affair concerned with money. (Vy 16)

Chance and providence rule human destiny in Victory. The sense of hopelessness comes from the infinite possibilities open to man - possibilities not grounded on any ethical limitation but merely on the necessities of the physical universe. Chance, necessity, providence: these are

central ingredients in a world of purely psychic determinants. The philosophy of the elder Heyst is amply borne out by the career of the evil trio and I will come back to the conversation between Ricardo and Schomberg to explain this point. In the philosophy of the elder Heyst we learn:

"Man on this earth is an unforeseen accident which does not stand close investigation."
(Vy 196)

Ricardo's presence, as well as Ricardo's conversation with Schomberg, shows not only the contingency of man but also the truism that man is enemy to man. It is one of the eighteenth-century exponents of the contractual theory of the state, Hobbes, I believe, who is credited with this incisive insight, Homo homini lupus. Ricardo is the hostile cat and he accepts his role as a natural destiny. We will follow up Ricardo a little later. Let us first see how the possibilities he stands for have been petrified and immobilised by consciousness in the career of Axel Heyst. We will see this in Heyst's career - for that, too, has been created to give us a view of the underlying theme of Victory.

Two of the nicknames that Heyst receives in the course of his career have to do with hostility. When he is appointed "manager in the tropics" of the Tropical Belt Coal Company, the smaller businessmen in the Archipelago are frustrated. They call him, "Heyst the Enemy" (Vy 24).

Earlier on the narrator has told us about yet another
nickname:

Human nature being what it is...there were not a few who pretended to be indignant on no better authority than a general propensity to believe every evil report; and a good many others who found it simply funny to call Heyst the Spider - behind his back, of course. (Vy 21)

Spider, enemy. I am not saying that slander is truth or truth slander. Slander does not always remotely resemble the truth, nor even does it throw any light on the slandered person. What I am saying is that later in Victory, Conrad takes the very descriptions with which men slander Heyst and acts them out in Ricardo. The resemblance is overwhelming, although on the surface Heyst and Ricardo are contrasted:

To him [Ricardo] life was not a matter of passive renunciation, but of a particularly active warfare. He was not mistrustful of it, he was not disgusted with it, still less was he inclined to be suspicious of its disenchantments; but he was aware that it held many possibilities of failure. Though very far from being a pessimist, he was not a man of foolish illusions. He did not like failure; not only because of its unpleasant and dangerous consequences, but also because of its damaging effect upon his own appreciation of Martin Ricardo. (Vy 260)

Conrad emphasises the menace in Ricardo's grin - it shows a lot of teeth. (Vy 110-111). Ricardo is seen as "a stealthy, deliberate wild-cat turned into a man" (Vy 116), and has "the expression of a cat which sees a piece of fish in the pantry out of reach" (Vy 117). His eyes "gleamed

phosphorescent" and "he shows his teeth in a flash" (Vy 123). At times he is "a cat watching the preparation of a saucer of milk," and purrs after he has drunk (Vy 147). He has a "coyly voluptuous expression" (Vy 152).

Ricardo and Heyst receive their closest comparison and contrast in their confrontation with Lena. Ricardo's is a voluptuous, physical approach to life and he wishes to possess Lena on that level, although he uses his class-consciousness to woo her. Heyst's is a philosophical approach and he is primarily saving, rather than wooing, Lena. To him she is another Morrison, a cornered victim of the great joke of existence. Ricardo's voluptuous approach is immediately self-centred. It is a devouring approach, governed by appetite and egocentricity. Heyst's approach is also a devouring approach, governed by the appetite for philosophical speculation and egocentric humanitarianism. The masculinity of Heyst has been watered down by his consciousness; that of Ricardo has been taken away from him by Lena when she takes away his lethal knife. Ricardo is deliberately built up into a cannibalistic possibility of Heyst, a possibility Heyst rightly rejects - but whose rejection means a sterile relationship with Lena.

In his discussion of the problem of killing and of his never having killed a man, Heyst tells Lena:

"There are men who haven't been in such tight places as I have found myself in who have had to - to shed blood, as the

saying is. Even the wilds hold prizes which tempt some people; but I had no schemes, no plans - and not even great firmness of mind to make me unduly obstinate". (Vy 211)

Lena then asks him if he has no courage and he replies:

"I really don't know. Not the sort that always itches for a weapon, for I have never been anxious to use one in the quarrels that a man gets into in the most innocent way, sometimes. The differences for which men murder each other are, like everything else they do, the most contemptible, the most pitiful things to look back upon. No, I've never killed a man or loved a woman - not even in my thoughts, not even in my dreams."
(Vy 212)

Heyst might as well have added, "not even when I wandered in New Guinea". For there the temptations were numerous - for murder, for love, for cannibalism. Yet Heyst comes out of there with only a portable folio of sketches under his arm, after having had "an amusing time" (Vy 8).

Ricardo, on the other hand, loves, hates, murders and lives to the full. Conrad even hints that in Ricardo are cannibalistic tendencies - tendencies which, as I pointed out earlier, are very much at the back of Ricardo's approaches to Lena. Conrad associates Ricardo with cannibalism. We see this explicitly when Ricardo tells Schomberg how Antonio is killed and how Pedro becomes a member of the trio:

"Well, the governor was there right enough, lying comfortable on a rug, where he could watch the offing, but I had gone back to the hut to get a chew of tobacco out of my bag. I had no broken myself of the habit then,

and I couldn't be happy unless I had a lump as big as a baby's fist in my cheek."

At the cannibalistic comparison, Schomberg muttered a faint sickly "don't." Ricardo hitched himself up in his seat and glanced down his outstretched legs complacently.
(Vy 138)

Cannibalism, voluptuousness, murder, what else? The name 'Ricardo' has suggestions worth exploring - even at the cost of imposing meanings on the author's associations. Conrad appears to have been fascinated by the forces governing the era of "laissez faire" capitalism. Witness the amazing portraits of Holyroyd and the Goulds in Nostromo. Witness again the tragic career of the financier deBarral in Chance, a career not unlike that of the protagonists in H. G. Wells' Tono-Bungay. It seems as if Conrad looked at the frenzied hey-day of the Industrial Revolution with all its attendant ironies and individual suffering and concluded that here also was to be found the circularity of human actions. The commotion caused by the formation of the Tropical Belt Coal Company in Victory is not unlike that caused by the Gould Concession in Nostromo or by the speculative ventures of deBarral in Chance. Life begins to radiate out of nowhere and shareholders can be seen looking at fantastically illustrated prospectuses. In Victory the prospectus for the Tropical Belt Coal Company comes out East:

Some copies of the prospectus issued in Europe, having found their way out East, were passed from hand to hand. We greatly

admired the map which accompanied them for the edification of the shareholders. On it Samburan was represented as the central spot of the Eastern Hemisphere with its name engraved in enormous capitals. Heavy lines radiated from it in all directions through the tropics, figuring a mysterious and effective star - lines of influence or lines of distance, or something of that sort. Company promoters have an imagination of their own. There's no more romantic temperament on earth than the temperament of a company promoter. Engineers came out, coolies were imported, bungalows were put up on Samburan, a gallery driven into the hillside, and actually some coal got out. (Vy 24)

The narrator adds that these manifestations "shook the soberest minds". Why?

For all its magnificent and imaginative use of technology, a use to which Karl Marx paid an eloquent tribute,³⁵ the era of the Industrial Revolution is a moral jungle in which only the fittest survive. Financial wolves prowl around with the "hard facts" from the science of political economy. Homo homini lupus. We think of "laissez faire" capitalism, of the utilitarian philosophers Bentham and James Mill. We think of John Stuart Mill, of Adam Smith and of Malthus. ~~Above~~ all we think of the financier, parliamentarian, and political economist David Ricardo. This is the era of "classical economics" and David Ricardo is its outstanding theoretician.³⁶

I maintain, therefore, that having introduced Victory with a glimpse of the capitalistic ventures in which Axel Heyst has been involved, Conrad retained images

of the Industrial Revolution until he started creating the evil trio and that one of these images spilled over into the name of the 'secretary' to 'plain Mr. Jones'. This would then expand the wolfish characteristics of Martin Ricardo into the social world and increase his stature as a foil to Axel Heyst. What's in a name? A whole theme, the theme of life as a bad dog that will bite you if you give it a chance.

The world of money is tied up with the theme of the contingency of life and the miseries of humanity even in the story of the evil trio itself. The trio forces Schomberg to allow gambling to take place on his premises. The narrator gives us the pathetic spectacle of one of the gambling sessions:

It was a curious and impressive sight, the inside of Schomberg's concert-hall, encumbered at one end by a great stack of chairs piled up on and about the musicians' platform, and lighted at the other by two dozen candles disposed about a long trestle table covered with green cloth. In the middle, Mr. Jones, a starved spectre turned into a banker, faced Ricardo, a rather nasty, slow-moving cat turned into a croupier. By contrast the other faces round that table, anything between twenty and thirty, must have looked like collected samples of intensely artless, helpless humanity - pathetic in their innocent watch for the small turns of luck which indeed might have been serious enough for them. They had no notice to spare for the hairy Pedro, carrying a tray with the clumsiness of a creature caught in the woods and taught to walk on its hind legs. (Vy 118)

The world of money has its own ironies. For this scene is

cast in the mould of a religious service. It has its altar, its green cloth and its candles. It has its supplicants who are intensely artless and helpless. The irony is that the music has departed from this church and that we can see its grotesque and unholy trinity: a starved spectre, a nasty cat, a hairy ape. This is the world as a radical skeptic sees it, a world in which the gods are sub-human and humanity is helpless. It is the world of T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land coming on the scene seven years before Eliot's poem.³⁷

The gods of Victory, then, are sub-human. I have earlier said they were preternatural. They are that also. But above all, they are amoral. Ricardo does not want to harm anyone but he feels the power to do so. He tells Schomberg:

"Now, here we sit, friendly like, and that's all right. You aren't in my way. But I am not friendly to you. I just don't care. Some men do say that; but I really don't. You are no more to me one way or another than that fly there. Just so. I'd squash you or leave you alone. I don't care what I do".
(Vy 129)

For Ricardo, the world is absolutely amoral. Man is limited in his actions only by his freedom. Ricardo tells Schomberg:

"You may light your cigar or blow your brains out this minute, and I don't care a hang which you do, both or neither." (Vy 132)

A little later he ruminates on how the skipper from whom

Jones stole a cash-box escaped death:

"Strange what a little thing a man's life hangs on sometimes - a single world! Here you are, sitting unsuspecting before me, and you may let out something unbeknown to you that would settle your hash. Not that I have ill-feeling. I have no feelings. If the skipper had said 'Oh, bosh!' and had turned his back on me, he would not have gone three steps towards his bed ..." (Vy 133)

A little later he boasts of having learned how gentlemen do not lose their temper:

"I've had that schooling that you couldn't tell by my face if I meant to rip you up the next minute - as of course I could do in less than a jiffy". (Vy 136)

Life with Ricardo is precarious - but the precariousness and the contingency is that of the whole universe traversed by Victory. Ricardo is its most luminous metaphor both by his vivacity and by the contrasts and similarities that he presents to the central character Axel Heyst.

This point seems to me far enough in the discussion to provide a look back on what I have been trying to say. I have used Victory to show that in the tragic vision of Joseph Conrad life threatens by its absurdity to submerge, throttle and pulverise consciousness. Consciousness, on the other hand, reveals the absurdity of life, paralyses man in his moment of crisis by illuminating the plots and dangers confronting him in this absurd universe. Life goes its way and consciousness pulls the other way.

I have tried to show that Axel Heyst, the central figure of Victory, is condemned to his tragic end by the dual components of his upbringing. He is the son of an unusually conscious man. He inherits a philosophical (read, "conscious") view of the world which conflicts with his humane sympathy with the rest of mankind.

I have, above all, tried to show that the conflicting forces in Axel Heyst are externalised. He has consciousness which comes out in his views and he has life which comes out in extensions or elaboration of himself in Schomberg, Jones, Pedro and above all, Ricardo. He is right in believing that the world is bad - that is, in the context of Victory and the rest of the Conrad canon - but he is wrong in not seeing that the world is within him.

Consciousness and life are, in my view, the foundations of Conrad's tragic vision. They animate the conflicts within the individual. They are at the very heart of civilisation and of history. This was the basis of my opening remarks on Heart of Darkness and Nostromo. These works have not been discussed in detail. The next chapter will continue to probe the war between consciousness and life in the context of Heart of Darkness and Nostromo, which is the context of civilization and history against the background of modern imperialism. There is a war between consciousness and life. Do we just live or do we

just think - or can the two functions be reconciled?
 Unamuno wrestled with this same problem and saw only
 contradictions:

"I think, therefore I am", can only mean
 "I think, therefore I am a thinker"; this
 being of the "I am", which is deduced from
 "I think", is merely a knowing; this being
 is knowledge but not life. And the primary
 reality is not that I think, but that I live,
 for those also live who do not think.
 Although this living may not be a real
 living. God! what contradictions when we
 seek to join in wedlock life and reason!³⁸

Conrad himself once wrote:

And old life is like new life after all,
 - an uninterrupted agony of effort. Yes.
 Egoism is good, and altruism is good,
 and fidelity to nature would be best of
 all, and systems could be built and rules
 could be made, - if we could only get rid
 of consciousness. What makes mankind tra-
 gic is not that they are the victims of
 nature, it is that they are conscious of
 it. 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 pains, the anger, the strife - the
 tragedy begins.³⁹

And with this Conradian version of the Myth of Sisyphus,
 written forty-four years before that of Albert Camus,⁴⁰
 I will turn my attention to consciousness and life as
 dynamics of civilization and history.

CHAPTER III

SACRED FIRE AND PROFANE RITUAL:

A VIEW OF CIVILISATION AND HISTORY

"The subject which brings us together today is one of those which must be a supreme preoccupation to all friends of humanity. To open to civilisation and the only area of our globe to which it has not yet penetrated, to pierce together the gloom which hangs over entire races, constitutes, if I may dare put it that way, a crusade worthy of this century of progress, and I am delighted to note how deeply public opinion approves its accomplishment: the tide is running our way." (Address by King Leopold II to the Brussels Conference of 1876)

"He began with the argument that we whites, from the point of development we had arrived at, 'must necessarily appear to them (savages) in the nature of supernatural beings - we approach them with the might as of a deity... By the simple exercise of our will, we can exert a power for good practically unbounded...' There were no practical hints to interrupt the magic current of phrases, unless a kind of note at the foot of the last page, scrawled evidently much later, in an unsteady hand, may be regarded as the exposition of a method. It was very simple, and at the end of that moving appeal to every altruistic sentiment it blazed at you, luminous and terrifying, like a flash of lightning in a serene sky:

'Exterminate all the brutes!' (Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness)

"The District Commissioner Jacques to the Official in charge of the Station at Inoryo:

M.le Chef de poste. -

Decidedly these people of Inoryo are a bad lot. They have just been and cut some rubber vines at Huli. We must fight them until their absolute submission has been obtained, or their complete extermination." (Quoted in a Debate in the Belgian Parliament, 1906)

"There is a curse of futility upon our character: Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, chivalry and materialism, high-sounding sentiments and a supine morality, violent efforts for an idea and a sullen acquiescence in every form of corruption. We convulsed a continent only to become the passive prey of a democratic parody, the helpless victims of scoundrels and cut-throats, our institutions a mockery, our laws a farce - a Guzman Bento our master!" (Joseph Conrad: Nostromo)

Whatever consciousness creates and illuminates life threatens to submerge, throttle, and pulverise. Whatever life creates and reveres consciousness shows to be illusory and self-defeating. In the tragic vision of Joseph Conrad are to be found the tensions, contradictions, and paradoxes which result from the uneasy and unhappy union between life and consciousness. Man insists, as man on controlling and scrutinizing the universe around him. But man, as man, is also part of that universe which he controls and scrutinises. Man is both life and consciousness. That is the origin of his woes. It is also what gives his existence its poignant intensity and its pathos. It is what makes him romantic and from this romanticism there is no escape. In the Author's Note to Nostromo Conrad hints at this dilemma:

And in my gratitude I must mention here Mrs. Gould, "the first lady of Sulaco", whom we may safely leave to the secret devotion of Dr. Monygham, and Charles Gould, the Idealist - creator of Material Interests whom we must leave to his Mine - from which there is no escape in this world.
(Nmo XI - italics added)

In the preceding chapter of this thesis I analysed the theme and the dominant symbols of Victory in an attempt to show how they embody Conrad's tragic vision. The time has now come to expand the discussion of this vision from individual life as seen in Victory to civilization and history itself as seen in Heart of Darkness and in Nostromo.

In Heart of Darkness, Conrad weaves his irony around the symbolism of light and darkness. The frame of the story, that is, that part of the story which comes to us through the first narrator and not through Marlow, is characterised by "highly charged" elemental forces. There is a cosmic spectacle over which London, the work of man's hands, appears as a "brooding gloom". Of the elemental forces the most conspicuous are light and darkness. Light is both the light of day and the light of civilization. Darkness is both the shadow cast over the earth by the disappearance of the sun and the darkness cast over a historical era in a certain part of the globe by the failure of civilization to live up to its ideals. In its attempt to illuminate "the dark places of the earth" civilization ceases to be light and becomes "the heart of darkness." The elemental forces of light and darkness with which Heart of Darkness opens are soon transformed into the sacred fire of civilization and the profane ritual of colonial reality in Africa. The "spark from the sacred fire" degenerates into the rubrics of profane ritual.

It is the first narrator of Heart of Darkness who clearly indicates in his "prologue" the various senses in which Marlow will use "light" and "darkness". This narrator says of the Director of Companies:

It was difficult to realise his work was not out there in the luminous estuary,

but behind him within the brooding gloom.
(YTO 45)

The luminous estuary will soon be linked to civilization when Marlow begins to give us a glimpse of his inconclusive experiences (YTO 51). The brooding gloom is London. We here have an extension of darkness from an elemental force to a consciously "planted" metaphor. The gloom is the darkness which results not from the disappearance of the sun but from the inconclusive experiences within the centre of civilization. The gloom here is that darkness which describes the failure of civilization to give meaning to existence. It is still brooding.

In this use of gloom the first narrator takes great care to oppose what man has made to what exists in the cosmic spectacle:

The day was ending in a serenity of still and exquisite brilliance. The water shone pacifically; the sky, without a speck, was a benign immensity of unstained light; the very mist on the Essex marshes was like a gauzy and radiant fabric, hung from the wooded rises inland, and draping the low shores in diaphanous folds. Only the gloom to the west, brooding over the upper reaches, became more sombre every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun. (YTO 46)

This beauty in the cosmic spectacle is at war with the works of man. The first narrator seems to take a different view of this war from the views of Marlow. In the end, however, their views will be identical. I refer to the beauty ascribed to the firmament and the fearful gloom

given to the spot occupied by London:

And at last, in its curved and imperceptible fall, the sun sank low, and from glowing white changed to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men. (YTO 46)

The sun, a prominent member of the cosmic spectacle, a central spot in the spectacle of life is placed at loggerheads with the spot occupied by what consciousness and men's hands have created. I suggest that this juxtaposition gives us a simple premonition of what Marlow will later tell us. London is at the nerve-centre of Marlow's civilization. It is at "the beginning of an interminable waterway" (YTO 45). But the first narrator also sees this centre as a "brooding gloom" in the universe. It forms a striking contrast with the light of the cosmic spectacle. It is still a kind of light. It has been one of the dark places of the earth (YTO 48). We are to understand by that that it is no longer dark. Yet the kind of light it represents is ominous, monstrous, brooding, and luridly glaring. It is not natural. It does not seem desirable either:

The sun set; the dusk fell on the stream, and lights began to appear along the shore. The Chapman lighthouse, a three-legged thing erect on a mud-flat, shone strongly. Lights of ships moved in the fairway - a great stir of lights going up and down. And farther west on the upper reaches the place of the monstrous town was still marked ominously on the sky, a brooding gloom in sunshine, a lurid glare under the stars. (YTO 47-48)

It is well to keep this glaring image of civilization in mind. It goes far into the heart of darkness, far into the story as told by Marlow. As we see it at the moment it is being used by the first narrator. It may well be, then, that Conrad wants to firmly cement the body of the story to its "prologue". This lurid glare of civilization confronts Marlow as he reads that seventeen-page document to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs:

"There were no practical hints to interrupt the magic current of phrases, unless a kind of note at the foot of the last page, scrawled evidently much later, in an unsteady hand, may be regarded as the exposition of a method. It is very simple, and at the end of that moving appeal to every altruistic sentiment it blazed at you, luminous and terrifying, like a flash of lightning in a serene sky:
'Exterminate all the brutes!'
(YTO 118, italics added)

This glaring and jarring image of civilization is to be seen elsewhere in Conrad. We see it, for example, at the opening of Victory:

Now, if a coal mine could be put into one's waistcoat pocket - but it can't! At the same time there is a fascination in coal, the supreme commodity of the age in which we are camped like bewildered travellers in a garish, unrestful hotel. (Vy 3)

There is, however, a sense in which civilization is not a lurid glare. That is when it is seen as one of man's many illusions. It is a dream of greatness, a sacred fire which must be borne to the uttermost ends of

the earth. That is the sense in which civilization is seen, at one point, by the first narrator of Heart of

Darkness:

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 might 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. (YTO 47)

The first narrator of Heart of Darkness is here associating himself, as an Englishman, with the titled and untitled knights who dreamt dreams and created empires. Although he has referred to London as a "lurid glare" he is still so far removed from "one of Marlow's inconclusive experiences" as not to see that the builders of empires, like Leopold II, can be wreckers of societies and looters of a continent to which they profess to bring light. The first narrator of Heart of Darkness has not yet peeped over the edge of the abyss created by civilization.

Marlow has peeped over this edge and knows that the light carried by a conqueror has equivocal implications. "Timeo Danaos et dona ferrentes!" The light has equivocal implications. The Roman administrator coming to civilize Britain is sacrificing the comfort of Rome for an idea. He is carrying "the spark from the sacred fire" of Roman civilization to one of the dark places of the earth - for "darkness was here yesterday" (YTO 49). Marlow's young

Romans are those to be found in Caesar's De Bello Gallico. They think of promotions, no doubt, but they have, above all, the idea, the dream of civilising others. "They were men enough to face the darkness" (YTO 49).

But the darkness Marlow is speaking about soon ceases to stand for a backward culture or lack of technology. The Romans may have been facing darkness in the form of savages, swamps, skulking death (YTO 49-50). But they in turn bring a darkness of their own - the darkness of the coloniser. The darkness that was here yesterday becomes a two-fold darkness. It is the darkness of technological backwardness. It is also the darkness of conquerors looting the conquered. Marlow quietly transforms his picture of the civilising Roman into that of a looter. The darkness he has earlier associated with the savage Britons (and by implication, the savage Africans) sticks to the civilised conquerors:

"They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force - nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a large scale, and men going at it blind - as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness."
(YTO 50, italics added)

The Romans are tackling a darkness. With, perhaps, tongue-in-cheek, Marlow adds that they go at it blind because darkness must be tackled blindly. The blind

must lead the blind! The irony here is not fortuitous. It goes far into the heart of darkness. At the Central Station, Marlow's attention is arrested by a painting done by Kurtz:

"I rose. Then I noticed a small sketch in oils, on a panel, representing a woman, draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch. The background was sombre - almost black. The movement of the woman was stately, and the effect of the torchlight on the face was sinister." (YTO 79)

The lighted torch is in the hands of a blindfolded woman. The brickmaker informs Marlow that the man who painted the picture is "a prodigy ... an emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and the devil knows what else" (YTO 79). This is the emissary of pity and progress who counsels the International Association for the Suppression of Savage Customs to "exterminate all the brutes" (YTO 117). "Lux in tenebris luceat!"

The conquerors of Marlow's era, then, also tackle a darkness blindly. They are no better than the Romans whose administration was "a mere squeeze" (YTO 50). In fact, Marlow moves deftly from a criticism of Roman imperialism to the imperialism of his own day. One would still think that he is still on the subject of the Romans while he has already gone over to the scramble for Africa. The Romans go at it blind, but so do the conquerors of Marlow's time. There is no break between Marlow's references to Roman imperialism and that imperialism which

takes away the land from "those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves".

Blindness is essential in both cases:

"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. ..."
(YTO 50-51)

The idea that man can bow down before is man's faith. It is one of man's many illusions. In this case it is the illusion of progress which we have seen associated with "sacred fire" (YTO 47). As if to emphasize this association of "the idea" with light, the first narrator observes the flames gliding in the Thames. Earlier on, Marlow himself has observed that "light came out of this river" since the days of Roman conquest. Now light is everywhere on this waterway leading to the dark places of the earth:

Flames glided in the river, small green flames, red flames, white flames, pursuing, overtaking, joining, crossing each other - then separating slowly or hastily. The traffic of the great city went on in the deepening night upon the sleepless river.
(YTO 51)

The light of civilization goes on. But it is not long before it takes us up to the "poor chap" who is also at

the end of one river where he is handing over the flame of his civilization to the Africans. It looks as if the gliding flames on the Thames have reminded Marlow of yet another light at the end of another river:

"It was the farthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me - and into my thoughts. It was sombre enough, too - and pitiful - not extraordinary in any way - not very clear either. No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light." (YTO 51)

The light here is a new wisdom gained from meeting Kurtz, from peeping over the edge of an abyss. It is a light proceeding from the very heart of darkness. It would then appear that Marlow receives his light from darkness whereas Africa receives its darkness from the light brought by colonialism. This becomes clear when Marlow refers to the blank representing the heart of Africa on a world Atlas - and which since his boyhood had got filled with rivers and lakes and names:

"It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery - a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness." (YTO 52)

I have so far attempted to follow up the orchestration of light and darkness in Heart of Darkness because I see in it the fabric of what Conrad is trying to say. The orchestration of light and darkness is intricate but it is deliberately and delicately performed. It captures the themes of progress and self-deception which

permeate the story. Conrad does not always refer to light and darkness as light and darkness. They become ivory, steam-pipes, rivets, noble causes, progress, sepulchres, corpses, trade secrets. Light and darkness appear as things - and the things themselves seem to say what Marlow wants us to hear.

Marlow receives his appointment when the Company learns of the death of one of its agents, Fresleven. Fresleven has been stabbed to death for having whacked a village chief on the head because of two black hens. Marlow clearly sees this as an instance of the darkness to be encountered in colonial situations, but he bitingly presents it as an aspect of Fresleven's enlightenment:

"Fresleven- that was the fellow's name, a Dane - thought himself wronged somehow in the bargain, so he went ashore and started to hammer the chief of the village with a stick. Oh, it didn't surprise me in the least to hear this, and at the same time to be told that Fresleven was the gentlest, quietest creature that ever walked on two legs. No doubt he was; but he had been a couple of years out there engaged in the noble cause, you know, and he probably felt the need at last of asserting his self-respect in some way. ...What became of the hens I don't know either. I should think the cause of progress got them, anyhow."
(YTO 54)

The noble cause is the cause of progress. It is associated with light, with "the spark from the sacred fire" and Fresleven is one of its bearers. The first narrator earlier on sees greatness in the British ships which made

history and carried the spark of civilization to the dark corners of the globe. The names of these ships are "like jewels flashing in the night of time" (YTO 47). But Marlow shows us the reality, the ritual which such ships may have been carrying on:

"Once, I remember, we came upon a man-of-war anchored off the coast. There wasn't even a shade there, and she was shelling the bush. It appears the French had one of their wars going on thereabouts. ... In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent ... There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight..." (YTO 61-62)

The ships which carry the torch of civilization can also have this insanity, this emptiness, this lugubrious drollery around them. Light has now evolved into purposeless blasting. The activity of the French ship prepares us for what is going on at the Company's coastal station. The lugubrious drollery of the French ship is here replaced by a "wanton smash-up" of the symbols of civilization. Meanwhile the objectless blasting continues:

"I came upon a boiler wallowing in the grass, then found a path leading up the hill. It turned aside for the boulders, and also for an undersized railway-truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air. One was off. The thing looked as dead as the carcass of some animal. I came upon more pieces of decaying machinery, a stack of rusty rails. To the left a clump of trees made a shady spot, where dark things seemed to stir feebly. I blinked, the path was steep. A horn tooted to the right, and I saw the black people run. A heavy and dull detonation shook the ground, a puff of smoke

came out of the cliff, and that was all. No change appeared on the face of the rock. They were building a railway. The cliff was not in the way or anything; but this objectless blasting was all the work going on." (YTO 634-64)

The spark from the sacred fire is engaged in an objectless blasting. Its heavy and dull detonation is a ritual. It is the ritual of asserting the presence of civilization in one of the remaining dark places of the earth. But the ritual is profane. Its sacred objects are lying upside down "as dead as the carcass of some animal." It is a ritual whose objects are rusty, decaying, and suggesting a kind of prostitution. At the same station Marlow is confronted by a purposeless digging of the earth:

"I avoided a vast artificial hole somebody had been digging on the slope, the purpose of which I found it impossible to devine. It wasn't a quarry or a sandpit, anyhow. It was just a hole. It might have been connected with the philanthropic desire of giving the criminals something to do. I don't know. Then I nearly fell into a very narrow ravine, almost no more than a scar in the hillside. I discovered that a lot of imported drainage-pipes for the settlement had been tumbled in there. There wasn't one that was not broken. It was a wanton smash-up." (YTO 65-66)

"Si monumentum requiris, respice!" Marlow has here brought together the basic contradictions in the imperial venture which grips the Africa of his time. Philanthropy creates artificial holes. The instruments of progress are all in a state of wanton smash-up. The imperial venture is a vacancy. It is a vast artificial hole in the ideals of

those who promote it and those who carry it out. The brick-maker of the Central Station is seen by Marlow as a "papier-mache Mephistopheles" in whom might be found "a little loose dirt, maybe" (YTO 81). The manager has no learning, no intelligence, no genius for organisation. Just nothing. He seems to glory in this nothingness, too: 'Men who come out here should have no entrails' (YTO 73-74). Mr. Kurtz, of course, lacks restraint in the gratifications of his desires (YTO 131). Rivets are what he needs, if only he had known it! (YTO 84)

The possibility of the spark from the sacred fire of civilization turning to a vast artificial hole, into an abyss, is at times given comic reverberations:

"One evening a grass shed fully of calico, cotton prints, beads, and I don't know what else, burst into a blaze so suddenly that you would have thought the earth had opened to let an avenging fire consume all that trash. I was smoking my pipe quietly by my dismantled steamer, and saw them all cutting capers in the light, with their arms lifted high, when the stout man with moustaches came tearing down to the river, a tin pail in his hand, assured me that everybody was 'behaving splendidly, splendidly,' dipped about a quart of water and tore back again. I noticed that there was a hole in the bottom of his pail." (YTO 76)

The Company's officials at the Central station stroll aimlessly around "like a lot of faithless pilgrims" (YTO 76). The artificial hole is again linked to an empty faith. It continues all through Heart of Darkness to be linked with pointless activities and the misuse of the

sacred fire of civilization.

On his way to the Central Station Marlow meets one of the agents of civilisation, someone "looking after the upkeep of the road":

"Once a white man in an unbuttoned uniform, camping on the path with an armed escort of lank Zanzibaris, very hospitable and festive - not to say drunk. Was looking after the upkeep of the road he declared. Can't say I saw any road or any upkeep, unless the body of a middle-aged negro, with a bullet-hole in the forehead, upon which I absolutely stumbled three miles further on, may be considered as a permanent improvement."
(YTO 71)

As he pilots his steamboat towards the inner station Marlow is ambushed by Africans using arrows for their weapons. Marlow's passengers are the faithless pilgrims from the Central Station. To Marlow, the arrows used by the Africans "wouldn't kill a cat" (YTO 110). Yet the pilgrims "had opened with their Winchesters, and were simply squirting lead into the bush" (YTO 110).

On and on goes the ritual. The spark from the sacred fire is used in a profane ceremony of opening holes in the surface of the earth and in the very people for whose enlightenment it has been brought from Europe. Mr. Kurtz, the emissary of pity, of science and of progress is also the man who surrounds his hut with human heads on spikes (YTO 130-131). But the other agents of the Company do not accuse Mr. Kurtz of barbarity. The manager, in a language characteristic of politicians and diplomats of

all time, complains that Mr. Kurtz "did not see the time was not ripe for vigorous action." He accuses Kurtz of merely following an "unsound method" (YTO 137). Marlow finds himself "lumped along with Kurtz as a partisan of methods for which the time was not ripe" (YTO 138). There will be a time, apparently, for such murders! On this point I find the critique by Ralph Maud most illuminating. It is a critique which links Kurtz to the system in which he finds himself, a system possessing its own hysteria and contradictions in much the same way that the system which employed men like Eichmann did.¹

Professor Albert Guerard suggests that "the chief contradiction of Heart of Darkness is "that it suggests and dramatises evil as an active energy (Kurtz and his unspeakable lusts) but defines evil as vacancy"². Following up the various forms and shapes which the sacred fire of civilization takes in the story would appear to have disposed of this contradiction. Indeed, it is the man who is "hollow at the core", who lacks restraint, who is more prone to perpetrate crimes against humanity. Evil is, like Mr. Kurtz, "hollow at the core" (YTO 131). That hollowness is the disappearance of good. Jean-Paul Sartre has defined evil in this manner:

Good is only an illusion; Evil is a
Nothingness which arises upon the
ruins of Good.³

The evil in Mr. Kurtz is the extent of his failure to live

up to his ideals. It is the failure of the spark from the sacred fire of civilisation to remain sacred in the course of its civilising mission. The spark, in fact, becomes the catalyst in the unspeakable rites taking place in the jungle. Mr. Kurtz presides at midnight ceremonies ending with unspeakable rites offered up to him (YTO 117). The spark from the sacred fire of civilization becomes a central symbol, a god, in profane rituals.

Such a transformation is familiar to those who remember the history of the Congo. In 1876, King Leopold II addressed the Brussels Geographical Conference in these words:

The subject which brings us together today is one of those which must be a supreme preoccupation to all friends of humanity. To open to civilisation the only area of our globe to which it has not yet penetrated, to pierce the gloom which hangs over entire races, constitutes, if I may dare put it that way, a crusade worthy of this century of progress, and I am delighted to note how deeply public opinion approves its accomplishment: the tide is running our way.⁴

That is the idea of which Marlow speaks so eloquently as something you can bow down before and offer a sacrifice to (YTO 51). Leopold speaks of "the gloom which hangs over entire races." In Heart of Darkness the brooding gloom is London: the sepulchral city is Brussels. In the grove of death at the coastal station black people are dying in a "greenish gloom" (YTO 66). For Leopold II

the gloom is over the uncivilised Africans - for Conrad it is over civilization, over the process of civilization itself. It is also remarkable how Leopold's speech comes close to being Kurtz's seventeen-page letter to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs:

"He began with the argument that we whites, from the point of development we had arrived at, 'must necessarily appear to them (savages) in the nature of supernatural beings - we approach them with the might as of a deity ...' By the simple exercise of our will, we can exert a power for good practically unbounded' ... There were no practical hints to interrupt the magic current of phrases..." (YTO 118)

Leopold II does not counsel anyone to exterminate all the brutes. But he creates a system of taxing his black subjects - and the system does not abhor extermination. In a debate in the Belgian Parliament in 1906, seven years after the publication of Heart of Darkness, the following letter was quoted:

The District Commissioner Jacques to the Official in Charge of the Station at Inoryo:
M. le Chef de Poste. - Decidedly these people of Inoryo are a bad lot. They have just been and cut some rubber vines at Huli. We must fight them until their utter submission has been obtained, or their complete extermination.⁵

That is the word of a conqueror. But we must also bear in mind that he has come out, among other things, to teach those natives not to exterminate each other. The whole failure of civilization's ideals cannot be placed at the door of one person. That is why, perhaps, all Europe

contributed to the making of Kurtz (YTO 117). The shameful records of cruelty and exploitation in the Congo are the records of that civilisation which set out to enlighten this part of Africa. That is why Marlow continually makes references to what that civilization has done for European man and what it is attempting to do for the African. It has given Europeans their paved streets, their policeman and their butcher around the corner (YTO 116). It is giving the Africans a new dispensation, complete with criminal codes, purposeless blasting, and death in a "greenish gloom" (YTO 64-66).

In Heart of Darkness, a whole civilisation is tackling a darkness - and "going at it blind" (YTO 50). I have mentioned the remarkable resemblance between the eloquent sentiments of Mr. Kurtz in the seventeen-page letter to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs and those of Leopold II in his address to the International Geographical Society meeting in Brussels in 1876.⁶ But Mr. Kurtz is not just Leopold II. Mark Twain in his caustic satire would appear to place Congo exploitation solely on Leopold II.⁷ Heart of Darkness places it on the whole idea, on the whole illusion of civilization which assaults this dark place of the earth. Mr. Kurtz, is, really, not one man. He is neither Cecil Rhodes nor Stanley nor Antoine Klein whom some critics have suggested he is.⁸ Mr. Kurtz is a whole civilization.

His ideals are the ideals of a Europe committed to the illusion of progress and ready to see that illusion work in one of the "dark places of the earth" (YTO 48). We find, for example, that the second item on the agenda of the Brussels Geographical Conference of 1876 reads as follows:

Location of routes to be successively opened towards the interior, setting-up of medical and scientific posts and of 'pacifying' bases from which to abolish the slave trade, establishment of peace among the chiefs and provision of just and impartial arbitration, etc.⁹

This important ideal of a crucial conference appears in Heart of Darkness as one of the ideals of Mr. Kurtz. It comes out in the discussion between the manager and his uncle the leader of the Eldorado Exploring Expedition:

"The fat man sighed. 'Very sad'. 'And the pestiferous absurdity of his talk', continued the other; 'he bothered me enough when he was here. "Each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course, but also for humanising, improving, instructing." Conceive you, - that ass! And he wants to be manager! No, it's - ' (YTO 91)

What has happened here is that the devotion to an idea, a devotion to which Marlow refers at the opening of his story, has become a devotion to the more mundane aspects of that idea. Europe dreams of geographical exploration, suppression of the slave-trade, propagation of Christianity, provision of a just and impartial artibtration. That is what the consciousness of Europe is committed to achieve

in Africa. The life-forces of Europe create something else again. They create the purposeless blasting which Marlow observes on his way to the Central Station. The purposeless blasting forms part of a whole with faithless pilgrims, unspeakable rites, and the worship of ivory.

Ivory is a dominant symbol in Heart of Darkness. In it Conrad captures the tension between the dream of civilization and the reality which describes the features of that civilisation. Ivory must therefore be seen as an extension or elaboration of the light and darkness which I discussed earlier. It is a precious commodity, one directly linked to the symbolism of light - and to the irony attached to that symbolism. In Heart of Darkness ivory is a precious commodity which also stands for exploitation, lies, decay and death. It is a symbol of light which, nevertheless, stands for darkness. It is a flame to light the sacred fire of civilisation but it ends up as a rubric for a profane ritual. Ivory in Heart of Darkness plays a role similar to that assigned to silver in Nostromo. In that book, silver plays a pervasive role in everyone's life. It is to be found in the atrophying marriage of the Goulds, in Martin Decoud's suicide, in the moral decay and ideological vacuum of the Capataz de Cargadores, as well as in such seemingly peripheral objects as Emilia's spectacles and Nostromo's "silver-grey" mare. In Nostromo, silver is the pivot of history.

In Heart of Darkness ivory is the measure of a civilisation.

When Marlow explicitly refers to ivory for the first time he sees it as "precious." But even at this point, ivory is a precious commodity emerging out of the depths of darkness in exchange for spurious trinkets:

"Everything else in the station was in a muddle, - heads, things, buildings, Strings of dusty niggers with splay feet arrived and departed; a stream of manufactured goods, rubbishy cottons, beads, and brass-wire set into the depths of darkness, and in return came a precious trickle of ivory."
(YTO 68).

Ivory is that which emerges out of the depths of darkness. Mr. Kurtz is he who reigns in the depths of darkness. He is the chief of the Inner Station (YTO 79). This simple connection becomes very important as Marlow's story develops. Ivory is pervasive both in the dream and in the achievement of Mr. Kurtz. Marlow connects ivory not only with the lie he tells to the fiancée of Mr. Kurtz but also with the unspeakable rites in which Mr. Kurtz becomes one of the devils of the land:

"I laid the ghost of his gifts at last with a lie," he began, suddenly. "Girl! What? Did I mention a girl? Oh, she is out of it - completely. ... You should have heard the disinterred body of Mr. Kurtz saying, 'My Intended.' You would have perceived directly then how completely she was out of it. And the lofty frontal bone of Mr. Kurtz! They say the hair goes on growing sometimes, but this - ah - specimen, was impressively bald. The wilderness had patted him on the head, and, behold, it was like a ball - an ivory ball; it had caressed him, and - lo! - he had withered; it had taken him, loved him,

embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation. He was its spoiled and pampered favourite. Ivory? I should think so. Heaps of it, stacks of it. The old shanty was bursting with it. You would think there was not a single tusk left either above or below the ground in the whole country."
YTO 115)

The success in collecting ivory has gone hand in hand with moral failure. In Nostromo, the very success of Gould's silver mine is the moral downfall to everyone. True enough, in Heart of Darkness, imperialism is naked. It loots and plunders at will. In Nostromo, imperialism is of the more sophisticated, newer variety. It leaves the burden of pillage, plunder and civil wars to the natives. In both cases, however, power, weaknesses and failure radiate from a normally neutral, though precious object to every man and woman in every corner of the globe - from the peasants of Costaguana and the exploited Africans of the Congo to the steel magnates of San Francisco, the railway magnates of London and the heads of trading concerns in Brussels. Life radiates from ivory or silver because man invests these objects with an aura of faith. They become ultimate concerns. The objects themselves are neutral, man is not. He must cling to something - and that which man clings to enables him to put his civilisation to work and to "make history".

When Marlow comments on Mr. Kurtz's dying

moments, ivory is on the scene. It is on the face of the dying man, thereby saying something both about "the horror" seen by Mr. Kurtz and the abyss seen by Marlow:

"Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. Oh, I wasn't touched. I was fascinated. It was as though a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror - of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge?" (YTO 149)

Mr. Kurtz, then, has an ivory face. In the eyes of his colleagues he also has an ivory standing. The Company's chief accountant regards him as a first-class agent because he sends in "as much ivory as all the others put together" (YTO 69). For the same reason the manager sees Kurtz as an exceptional man (YTO 75). The manager is not on this occasion explicitly referring to the ability of Mr. Kurtz to bring in as much ivory as all the others put together. But we have already seen the manager in an "everlasting confab" with the leader of the Eldorado Exploring Expedition (YTO 87-90). Here the subject of the back-biting is Mr. Kurtz who appears to have annoyed his manager not only by dismissing his assistant but also by sending in lots of ivory (YTO 89-90).

Ivory has become a symbol of faith. Marlow links it to the agents whom he finds at the Central Station. They are the faithless pilgrims milling around with absurd

long staves. They are making a pilgrimage to the holy land of ivory - and not accomplishing even that very well:

"I went to work the next day, turning, so to speak, my back on that station. In that way only it seemed to me I could keep my hold on the redeeming facts of light. Still, one must look about sometimes; and then I saw this station, these men strolling aimlessly about in the sunshine of the yard. I asked myself what it all meant. They wandered here and there with their absurd long staves in their hands, like a lot of faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotten fence. The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it. A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse. By Jofe! I've never seen anything so unreal in my life." (YTO 75=76)

Corpses, rapacity, imbecility, unreal enterprises. This is the degeneration of the ideal to which man can bow down and offer a sacrifice - if we are to believe Marlow's opening remarks (YTO 51). This is one aspect of the truth symbolised by light and by an extension of that light, ivory. That aspect is darkness. The truth is, indeed, a precious commodity like ivory. It is also the taint of imbecils rapacity which conjures up a whiff from some corpse. It is darkness. It is death.

Earlier on I discussed Conrad's treatment of what Marlow calls "a spark from the sacred fire". I showed that the sacred fire is civilisation. I also attempted to show that the spark of civilisation does not light up to show that the spark of civilisation does not light up a new civilisation on its pilgrimage to Africa.

It is used for a purposeless blasting and for the "lugubrious drollery" of firing into a continent. In Ivory Conrad gives us yet another aspect of the truth of civilisation. Ivory is linked to decay and death. One of the dying men in the grove of death has something that looks like ivory around his neck, "a bit of white worsted" (YTO 67). The African mistress of Mr. Kurtz, that powerful figure in the just and high proceedings of the depths of darkness, is weighed down by the value of ivory:

"She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet; she had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek... 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." (YTO 135-136)

This woman has the ominous, stately pose of the woman in the painting at the Central Station (YTO 70). She has the value of several elephant tusks around her. In that, she is like Emilia Gould in Nostramo, who is weighed down by so many jewels. Above all, she is linked to Kurtz's Intended in Europe by ivory. The Intended receives Marlow in an atmosphere charged with all the death-like associations which Conrad has given to ivory:

"The dusk was falling. I had to wait in a lofty drawing-room with three long windows from floor to ceiling that were like three luminous and bedraped columns. The bent gilt legs and backs of the furniture shone in indistinct curves. The tall marble fireplace had a cold and monumental whiteness. A grand piano stood massively in a corner;

with dark gleams on the flat surfaces like a sombre and polished sancrophagus." (YTO 156)

The one woman wears the trinkets bought with ivory, the other mourns in its atmosphere. Both women are a measure of the vast plans and abysmal failures of Mr. Kurtz. The fiancée is always referred to as "my Intended." She epitomises the dream of Mr. Kurtz, those vast plans he leaves unfulfilled, that illusion which animates his early days in Africa. The African mistress is the reality which measures the achievements of Mr. Kurtz. She lives at the centre of a confrontation between primordial life and Mr. Kurtz's civilisation, between the consciousness of Europe and that life which challenges such a consciousness.

The Intended of Mr. Kurtz lives in the sepulchral city, among the eerie skeletons of Mr. Kurtz's civilisation. When Marlow is received by the Intended of Mr. Kurtz he feels as if he "had blundered into a place of cruel and absurd mysteries not fit for a human being to behold" (YTO 157). This same atmosphere is to be seen when Marlow leaves for Africa. It has not changed. Marlow has.

When Marlow leaves for Africa he has to clear some details about his appointment at the head office of his Company. This office is in a city that always makes Marlow think of "a whited sepulchre" (YTO 55). This "prejudice" of Marlow runs through his whole story. The whited sepulchre shares the same significance with ivory.

In Heart of Darkness precious ivory also stands for lies, death and decay. It stands for darkness. A whited sepulchre, like those pious men castigated by Christ in the New Testament, shows whiteness outside and hides death and decay within.¹⁰ A whited sepulchre is a monumental lie. All of Marlow's lies, those instances in the nightmare during which Marlow compromises his integrity are somehow linked to the sepulchral city. Of this link a little later.

The sepulchral city, like ivory, has something to do with trade secrets. "I believe I undertook amongst other things not to disclose any trade secrets" (YTO 56). No such secrets are disclosed by Marlow's inconclusive experience makes clear what they are - the moral emptiness which shapes a man like Kurtz and produces the wanton smash-up which Marlow meets all along his trail towards Mr. Kurtz. After all, for Marlow, "the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine" (YTO 48). That the "trade secrets" are really not secret at all may also be seen in Marlow's comments on the Eldorado Exploring Expedition:

"This devoted band called itself the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, and I believe they were sworn to secrecy. Their talk, however, was the talk of sordid

buccaneers: it was reckless without hardi-
hood, greedy without audacity, and cruel
without courage; there was not an atom of
foresight or of serious intention in the
whole batch of them, and they did not
seem aware these things are wanted for
the work of the world. To tear treasure
out of the bowels of the land was their
desire, with no more moral purpose at
the back of it than there is in burglars
breaking into a safe." (YTO 87, italics
added)

This equation of imperialism with the doings of sordid
buccaneers is to reappear in Nostramo when Martin Decoud
speaks of the curse of futility on the character of his
nation (Nmo 170-171). We see in both cases a quiet
dismissal of the cliches on which imperialism built its
case. The "trade secrets" which Marlow has to keep secret
are no more secret than the act of burglars breaking into
a safe - and no more honourable! At the Company's coastal
station ("coastal" for the sake of convenience - it is
thirty miles from the coast) Marlow meets a chain-gang
supervised by a black man carrying a gun. Marlow then
reminates about the motives of the imperial venture
responsible for such human misery and such purposeless
opening-up of scars in the surface of the earth. His
comments are similar to those he makes about the Eldorado
Exploring Expedition. There is no more moral purpose
in all these doings "than there is in burglars breaking
into a safe." There can be no secret at all, unless
it is the secret inherent in the pretensions of flabby
devils:

"I've seen the devil of violence, and the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire; but, by all the stars! these were strong, lusty, red-eyed devils, that swayed and drove men - men, I tell you. But as I stood on this hillside, I foresaw that in the blinding sunshine of that land I would become acquainted with a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly. How insidious he could be, too, I was to find out several months later and a thousand miles further." (YTO 65)

When Marlow sets his eyes on the heads surrounding the jungle residence of Mr. Kurtz he again returns to the "trade secrets" which he had been warned not to disclose:

"I am not disclosing any trade secrets. In fact, the manager said afterwards that Mr. Kurtz's methods had ruined the district. I have no opinion on that point, but I want you clearly to understand that there was nothing exactly profitable in these heads being there. They only showed that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him - some small matter which, when the pressing need arose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence." (YTO 131)

The heads on the stakes climax those eerie happenings which Marlow has been observing on his way into the heart of darkness. After signing his papers and meeting the head of his Company, Marlow feels "slightly uneasy". He feels as though he had been let into a conspiracy, into "something not quite right" (YTO 56). This eerie feeling is made worse by those knitters of black wool - who suggest a martyrdom for the faith. The martyrdom is there, all right, but since it is climaxed by the vision of heads

on a stake, it is a profane martyrdom. Civilisation becomes the only armor that the martyrs will wear in their confrontation with the darkness of an unexplored continent. This armor does not help them. It merely accentuates their own darkness and hastens their moral decay. And so the guardians of civilisation are also the guardians of darkness and they knit the warm pall of moral and physical decay:

"In the outer room the two women knitted black wool feverishly. People were arriving, and the younger one was walking back and forth introducing them. The old one sat on her chair. . . . She glanced at me above the glasses. The swift and indifferent placidity of that look troubled me. Two youths with foolish and cheery countenances were being piloted over, and she threw at them the same quick glance of unconcerned wisdom. She seemed to know all about them, and about me, too. An eerie feeling came over me. She seemed uncanny and fateful. Often far away there I thought of these two, guarding the door of darkness, knitting black wool as for a warm pall, one introducing, introducing continuously to the unknown, the other scrutinising the cheery and foolish faces with unconcerned old eyes. Ave! Old knitter of black wool. Morituri te salutant. Not many of those she looked at ever saw her again - not half, by a long way." (YTO 56-57)

The martyrdom facing Marlow is the very opposite of Christian martyrdom. Yet everyone in the story continues to look at it in Christian terms. Marlow's aunt talks about "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways" (YTO 59). This dear aunt has read her New Testament and sees in the commercial activities of Marlow's

Company something which the early Mr. Kurtz sees in his mission to Africa. While still at the Central Station the younger Kurtz lectures his manager on the need for every station to become a beacon of light, a centre for civilisation besides, of course, being a centre for trade (YTO 91). In the seventeen-page letter to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, Mr. Kurtz sees the white man's burden in Africa as being that of exerting an unbounded power for good (YTO 118).

What I am trying to emphasise, once again, is that Mr. Kurtz is not alone in these sentiments. His hopes and fears are the hopes and fears of an era. His successes, such as they are, are also the successes of an era. His failures, too, speak for a particular period of history - though by extension that period becomes all time and the men of that period become all men. I am trying to emphasise that even Marlow's aunt shares the sentiments of Mr. Kurtz. That is why Conrad lets her hold forth on the religious nature of Marlow's mission to Africa. She, too, prepares us for our meeting with Mr. Kurtz. She hopes Marlow will "wean those ignorant millions from their horrid ways" and does not see any contradiction between such a mission and the quest for ivory. "'You forget, dear Charlie, that the labourer is worthy of his hire', she said, brightly" (YTO 59). Here also is an instance of consciousness being yoked

together with life. Here is civilisation, represented by the gospel, being pressed into the service of the mundane and ordinary dictates of life.

Earlier on I spoke of a spark from the sacred fire of civilisation. I attempted to show that in lighting a new fire in Africa the spark engages in a purposeless blasting and in the "lugubrious drollery" of firing into a continent and dispossessing its peoples. The spark from the sacred fire of civilisation is carried by unreal pilgrims, those faithless pilgrims whom Marlow meets on his way to Mr. Kurtz. The journey to this unreal pilgrim is nightmarish, hence the frequent recurrence of "nightmare" in Marlow's travelogue. Thus after giving some mail to the French man-of-war firing into a continent, Marlow sees himself as a martyr in an "overheated catacomb" and fears that he has already entered a nightmare:

"We called at some more places with farcical names, where the merry dance of death and trade goes on in a still and earthy atmosphere as of an overheated catacomb... Nowhere did we stop long enough to get a particularised impression, but the general sense of vague and oppressive wonder grew upon me. It was like a wary pilgrimage amongst hints for nightmares." (YTO 62).

When Marlow discusses "the methods" of Mr. Kurtz with the manager, he finds that he has to choose between two nightmares - that represented by Kurtz and his "unsound methods" and the one represented by the manager with his moral emptiness:

"It seemed 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. He started, dropped on me a cold heavy glance, said very quietly, 'he was' and turned his back on me. My hour of favour was over; I found myself lumped along with Kurtz as a partisan of methods for which the time was not ripe: I was unsound! Ah! but it was something to have at least a choice of nightmares." (YTO 138)

Marlow has, indeed, a choice of nightmares. Mr. Kurtz may seem preferable to all his new acquaintances, but as a pilgrim bringing the sacred fire of civilisation to Africa, he is the most unreal of all of Marlow's new acquaintances. He is a lie. He is only a voice crying in the wilderness, proclaiming, not the coming of the Kingdom of God as his early ideals would have led us to believe, but the coming of the kingdom of ivory: "My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my---!" (YTO 116). Yes, everything belongs to him - the intentions and the reality, the ideals and the failures of civilisation. He is the man of immense plans and abysmal failures. He is the man who hopes that every station will be a beacon of light but makes his own station, the Inner station, the heart of darkness.

In the first chapter of this thesis I discussed Marlow's lies. I pointed out that Marlow tells, not one, but three lies.¹¹ The one lie usually discussed by the critics is the one Marlow tells to the Intended of Mr.

Kurtz.¹² But Marlow also lies to that "papier-mache Mephistopheles", the brickmaker at the Central Station. He lets this man believe anything about his influence in Europe, that is, in the sepulchral city (YTO 82). Marlow also lies by offering to a representative of the Company "the report on the 'Suppression of Savage Customs', with the postscriptum torn off" (YTO 153). In all three cases Marlow lies to protect Mr. Kurtz the nightmare of his choice. Marlow has to lie in order to keep in the mind of his listeners the clean and perfect picture of civilisation which they cherish. In a way, none of Marlow's listeners are interested in the truth about Mr. Kurtz. Like the Intended of Mr. Kurtz, they want something to live with (YTO 161). In that sense what they really want is something which Marlow says he detests but which he nevertheless embraces. They want a lie and Marlow sees in any lie, a taint of death. We are back to the significance of ivory and whited sepulchre which I discussed earlier:

"There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies - which is 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." (YTO 82)

This is the same Marlow who closes the story of one of his "inconclusive experiences" with a lie. He lies to the Intended of Mr. Kurtz but denies that he has thereby

compromised his integrity. "The heavens do not fall for such a trifle" (YTO 162). What would earlier have brought a flavour of mortality to Marlow (how rightly he captures that Shakespearean phrase!) is now seen as a trifle. Marlow has not contradicted himself. He has merely acknowledged the necessity of a lie in the mighty cause of progress. Marlow's lies are all linked to Mr. Kurtz. They are all linked to life in the sepulchral city, which cannot bear its own evolution in "one of the dark places of the earth." All of Marlow's lies have to do with civilisation. They are either committed in the sepulchral city or are meant to protect some belief rampant in that city. Marlow's lies have their origin in the city where Marlow's civilisation is supposed to take off on its mission to Africa. Marlow's lies also protect the most luminous metaphor of that civilisation, the gifted Mr. Kurtz. The brickmaker at the Central Station is uttering the sentiments - and the jealousy, of his fellow agents when he says of Mr. Kurtz:

'He is a prodigy... He is an emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and the devil knows what else. We want...for the guidance of the cause intrusted to us by Europe, so to speak, higher intelligence, wide sympathies, a singleness of purpose.'
(YTO 79)

The basis of Conrad's skepticism in Heart of Darkness is that the prodigy, the emissary of light, is the most murderous brute who ever carried the banner of his civil-

isation into a alien continent. The tragic implication of Conrad's skepticism in Heart of Darkness is that we either have a Mr. Kurtz or we have the manager and the aimless pilgrims at the Central Station. Heart of Darkness has tragic implications. It leaves us with "a choice of nightmares." We either accept the emptiness of the pilgrims and the lie which cushions Marlow's civilisation or, like Mr. Kurtz, we plunge into the rites and privileges of Conrad's primordial world. Marlow's civilisation cannot embrace the fullness of life without obliterating itself. It has to appear in the garb of sweetness and light while struggling with the volcanic forces of impulses and the lure of "unspeakable rites." We then have Marlow saying of Mr. Kurtz that "he lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts" (YTO 131). There is doubt that Mr. Kurtz knows his deficiency:

"I think the knowledge came to him at last - only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with his great solitude - and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating." (YTO 131)

In "An Outpost of Progress," Carlier and Kayerts also have to face the wilderness with the strength of their civilisation. This civilisation collapses with the swiftness of a melodrama as the two white men discover first,

that they have become slave-traders and that this is the only way in which they have been able to get any appreciable amount of ivory, and secondly, that their sanity hangs on the six lumps of sugar left to them. They fight for the lumps of sugar and one of them is accidentally shot. The other hangs himself - and then only arrives the shrill whistle of the steamer carrying the Director of their Company. Progress is back again - but it comes too late.

Within the confines of civilisation simmer impulses and the call of the jungle. Civilisation suppresses this call. It prefers the lie of paved streets, solicitous neighbours and watchful policemen. It prefers efficiency and the devotion to ideas. But such an efficiency and such a devotion are also inhuman. They can never really bring sweetness and light. That is the dilemma. In Heart of Darkness it is also the source of a fruitful ambiguity.

Marlow attempts to distinguish modern imperialism from that of the Romans by giving modern imperialism two attributes which the Romans are supposed to have lacked. After saying that the Roman administrator who came to Britain would sooner or later surrender to the hatred of his mission, Marlow continues:

"Mind, none of us would feel exactly like this. What saves us is efficiency - the devotion to efficiency. ...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. ..." (YTO 50-51)

But efficiency and the worship of the idea preclude each other in Heart of Darkness. They have no redemptive power together. As the idea evolves into actuality, as the word becomes flesh, so to speak, efficiency wanes and almost vanishes into thin air. As efficiency evolves into actuality, the idea evaporates until the man who comes out to Africa equipped with the greatest number of ideas becomes the emptiest. He lacks restraint but has the most ruthless efficiency on record, "Exterminate all the brutes!" (YTO 117). In Nostromo, the position is the same. As the efficiency of Charles Gould becomes legendary, his devotion to peace and justice in Costaguana, his idea, becomes so elastic as to encompass just about every form of corruption:

Charles Gould was competent because he had no illusions. The Gould Concession had to fight for life with such weapons as could be found at once in the mire of corruption that was so universal as to almost lose its significance. He was prepared to stoop for his weapons. For a moment he felt as if the silver mine, which had killed his father, had decoyed him further than he meant to go; and with the roundabout logic or emotions, he felt that the worthiness of his life was bound up with success. There was no going back. (Nmo 85)

That is "the horror" at the end of efficiency. In Heart of

Darkness, Marlow tells us that what redeems imperialism is the idea at the back of it (YTO 50-51). Yet on his way to Africa Marlow sees the idea at work and feels trapped in "an overheated catacomb" (YTO 62). The idea at work is the French man-of-war shelling a continent (YTO 61-62). It is the grove of death near the Company's coastal station (YTO 66). It is also the artificial hole dug there for some humanitarian purpose (YTO 65). It is the chain-gang stonily marching up the hill like so many replicas of Sisyphus being wantonly punished by the new gods of Africa. That is the idea - and Western man's devotion to the idea! The idea in actuality is also represented by those "faithless pilgrims" at the Central Station (YTO 75-76).

And what is efficiency? Efficiency is a chief accountant who keeps both his appearance and his books in applie-pie order while all around him there are groans of dying men. Efficiency is this man devoted to his books in spite of the general demoralisation of the land (YTO 67-68). Marlow takes him for "a sort of vision" and regards him as a "miracle" (YTO 67). Marlow appears to respect this man:

"Yes; I respected his collars, his vast cuffs, his brushed hair. His appearance was certainly that of a hair-dresser's dummy; but in the great demoralisation of the land he kept up his appearance. That's backbone." (YTO 68)

But Marlow's respect for the chief accountant is at best

ambiguous. The chief accountant appears soon after Marlow has emerged from the grove of death (YTO 67). He is also not moved by the groans of the dying agents from up-country (YTO 69). Death surrounds him but he notices it not. He is strongly fortified by his starched apparel. He is strongly fortified by the lie with which his civilisation surrounds him. More remarkable is his resemblance to the Kurtz who puts the lightning postscriptum to the report on the "Suppression of Savage Customs". The chief accountant does not say, "Exterminate all the brutes". He says, "When one has got to make correct entries, one comes to hate those savages - hate them to the death" (YTO 70). That is efficiency. Correct entries, correct appearances. It is the elegance of a hairdresser's dummy. Marlow in the end presents us with a picture of this man which not only heightens the incongruity of his appearance in the surroundings in which we find him, but also hints at his moral and emotional obtuseness:

"He turned to his work. The noise outside had ceased, and presently in going out I stopped at the door. In the steady buzz of flies the homeward-bound agent was lying flushed and insensible; the other, bent over his books, was making correct entries of perfectly correct transactions; and fifty feet below the doorstep I could see the still tree-tops of the grove of death." (YTO 70)

The chief accountant is as immaculate and as elegant as Sammael in Wyndham Lewis' Malign Fiesta¹³. In that work, Sammael supervises all the atrocities meted out to men and

women regarded as "Sinners"... Sammael is elegant, handsome, well-dressed. His speech is urbane. His learning is encyclopaedic. But Sammael is also the Devil himself. He tells his guest, Pullman:

"I am aware that you forget that you are speaking to the Devil. Treat me always as a man. I shall like that best."¹⁴

That also is efficiency. It is painfully striving to be human. In Heart of Darkness, efficiency lives in the lie that it is extremely human. Says Marion Brady, speaking of that "apparition" at the company's Central Station: "The accountant and his books do not impose order - they hide the disorder."¹⁵

Efficiency also enters Heart of Darkness with Marlow's complaints about the absence of rivets at the Central Station:

"What I really wanted was rivets, by heaven! Rivets to get on with the work - to stop the hole. Rivets I wanted. There were cases of them down at the coast - cases - piled up - burst - split! You kicked a loose rivet at every second step in that station yard in the hillside. Rivets had rolled into the grove of death. You could fill your pockets with rivets for the trouble of stooping down - and there wasn't one rivet where it was wanted. ...

He was becoming confidential now...for he judged it necessary to inform me he feared neither God nor devil, let alone any mere man. I said I could see that very well, but what I wanted was a certain quantity of rivets - and rivets were what really Mr. Kurtz wanted, if he had only known it" (YTO 83-84).

Rivets had rolled into the grove of death and there wasn't

one rivet where it was wanted. There is not one brick at the Central Station where bricks are wanted. Rivets are really what Mr. Kurtz needs - if only he had known it. Marlow is contrasting that inefficiency which is responsible for the "wanton smash-up" at the Coastal Station and for the emptiness of life at the Central Station with the consummate efficiency of Mr. Kurtz. In both cases, rivets are wanted. Rivets stand for restraint, for the right kind of efficiency - and it is the best that any culture has to offer. Kurtz lacks restraint. The cannibals on Marlow's steamboat have it. Restraint is the only thing that will hold Marlow's civilisation in its place and restraint is what is missing both in the efficiency and in the ideals of this civilisation.

Conrad is not alone in positing restraint as the standard that man must adopt for himself in order to deal with the wilderness around him. Thinkers in other fields were warning their contemporaries about the real meaning of evolution and the position man needed to take in a world subject to this law. Thomas Henry Huxley wrote his "Prolegomena to Evolution and Ethics" in 1894. He says, among other things:

That which lies before the human race is a constant struggle to maintain and improve, in opposition to the State of Nature, the State of Art of an organised polity; in which, and by which, man may develop a worthy civilisation, capable of maintaining and constantly improving itself, until the

evolution of our globe shall have entered so far upon its downward course that the cosmic process resumes its sway; and once more the State of Nature prevails over the surface of our planet. 16

The fear of evolutionary processes abounds in Heart of Darkness. Hence the prominence which Marlow gives to "restraint". Here again Conrad shares the same fears with some of the great thinkers of his era. They also see both the need and the frightening absence of restraint in Western civilisation. Six years after Conrad's death, the great psychologist Sigmund Freud came out with his book, Civilisation and Its Discontents.¹⁷ In it, he says, among other things:

The fateful question for the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the disturbance of their communal life by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction. It may be that in this respect precisely the present time deserves a special interest. Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that with their help they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man. They know this, and hence comes a large part of their current unrest, their unhappiness and their mood of anxiety. And now it is to be expected that the other of the two 'Heavenly Powers' eternal Eros, will make an effort to assert himself in the struggle with his equally immortal adversary. But who can foresee with what success and with what result?18

In Heart of Darkness Marlow's unrest and anxiety appear to be based on the powerlessness of civilisation before the "brooding gloom" of primordial life. Man is capable of

returning to this life at any moment. Restraint is necessary and it is the one thing missing in the nightmares which Marlow undergoes. In his evocation of primordial life, Conrad writes some of the best passages in his whole canon - and some of his most specious things. The remarkable passages are concerned with the vegetation and the countryside seen by Marlow. The specious passages concern the Africans who come into contact with Marlow and who seem to have left a strange impression on him. Here is one of the remarkable passages:

"Next day I left that station at last, with a caravan of sixty men, for a two-hundred-mile tramp.

"No use telling you much about that. Paths, paths, everywhere; a stamped-in network of paths spreading over the empty land, through long grass, through burnt grass, through thickets, down and up chilly ravines, up and down stony hills ablaze with heat; and a solitude, a solitude, nobody, not a hut. The population had cleared out a long time ago. Well, if a lot of mysterious niggers armed with all kinds of fearful weapons suddenly took to travelling on the road between Deal and Gravesend, catching the yokels right and left to carry heavy loads for them, I fancy every farm and cottage thereabouts would get empty very soon. Only here the dwellings were gone, too. Still I passed through several abandoned villages. There's something pathetically childish in the ruins of grass walls. Day after day, with the stamp and shuffle of sixty pairs of bare feet behind me, each pair under a 60 lb. load. Camp, cook, sleep, strike camp, march. Now and then a carrier dead in harness, at rest in the long grass near the path, with an empty water-gourd and his long staff lying by his side. A great silence around and above." (YTO 70-71)

This is an amazingly realistic picture of contemporary Africa. It visualises the Congo, but it could have stood for a District Commissioner "on safari" anywhere in Central Africa at that time. Put Marlow in a hammock and the Africa of Lugard, Harry Johnston, Alfred Sharpe and others is complete. More remarkable still is how Marlow presents an Africa that really corresponds to what he has earlier said on Roman imperialism in Britain.

"Or think of a decent young citizen in a toga - perhaps too much dice, you know - coming out here in the train of some prefect, or tax-gatherer, or trader even, to mend his fortunes. Land in a swamp, march through the woods, and in some inland post feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed around him, - all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men."
(YTO 50)

Marlow seems to me to overdo this bit about the mystery "in the hearts of wild men." I will attempt to show why he does this. But before I do that I will quote one more remarkable description of the African countryside and show how Marlow sees Africa at the beginnings of the evolutionary process:

"Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An' empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. There was no joy in the brilliance of the sunshine. The long stretches of the waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On silvery sandbanks hippos and alligators sunned

themselves side by side. The broadening waters flowed through a mob of wooded islands..." (YTO 92-93).

This again is Tropical Africa, registered with a keen eye for detail. But there is more to it than that. Conrad appears to see in Africa the beginnings of time itself - and this will make his description of the Africans specious. He sees Africa in prehistoric terms and the Africans as prehistoric men:

"We were wanderers on prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil... The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us - who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings..." (YTO 95-96)

The prehistoric man was praying to us, cursing us, welcoming us. This is not Mr. Kurtz speaking. It is Marlow. Marlow, after all, does not counsel the extermination of all the savages, as Mr. Kurtz does. But he too has difficulty recognising the humanity of "Homo Africanus". It comes to him slowly - almost like the human characteristics of an anthropological specimen making their impact on a cautious scientist:

"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 passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you - you so remote from the night of first ages - could comprehend." (YTO 96)

There is in this passage a uncritical acceptance of the theory of evolution and a firm belief in the substantiation of that theory by what Marlow sees in Africa. This becomes clearer when we connect "the night of first ages" with the "Improved specimen" who helps Marlow as a fireman:

"Who's that grunting? You wonder I didn't go ashore for a howl and a dance? Well, no - I didn't. Fine sentiments, you say? fine sentiments be hanged! I had no time. ...I had to watch the steering... And between whiles I had to look after the savage who was fireman. He was an improved specimen; he could fire up a vertical boiler. He was there below me, and, upon my word, to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind-legs. ...He ought to have been clapping his hands and stamping his feet on the bank, instead of which he was hard at work, a thrall to strange witchcraft, full of improving knowledge. He was useful because he had been instructed; and what he knew was this - that should the water in that transparent thing disappear, the evil spirit inside the boiler would get angry through the greatness of his thirst, and take a terrible vengeance" (YTO 97-98).

Conrad's predilection to the use of stereotypes regarding black people has been well discussed by Michael Echeruo in his critique on The Nigger of the "Narcissus".¹⁹ In

Heart of Darkness, something worse is at work and it is the really disturbing ambiguity in the story. Conrad sees the black man at one end of the evolutionary scale - at the beginning. The black man is seen as prehistoric man. I am not saying that Conrad should have written a historical or sociological tract. All I am saying is, that having anchored his vision of darkness to a particular era in a particular area of the globe, he had no business speaking about "pre-history" and "the night of first ages". His Congo is the Congo the 1890's - four hundred years after a Congolese King opened diplomatic relations with the king of Portugal and four hundred years after the Pope had appointed the first Congolese Bishop!²⁰ It does not help, either, to explain away Conrad's equation of Africans with prehistoric man by saying that we are following Marlow's journey into the self.²¹ So, indeed, we are. But without its historical and social milieu this journey loses both its form and its uniqueness.

What I am trying to show is that in Heart of Darkness the shibboleths of Marlow's age are shown for what they are, but the stereotypes on which these shibboleths are based are uncritically accepted. That is the basis of ambiguity in the story. The muffling effect of certain adjectives, which Dr. Leavis sees as cheapening the tone of the story, are not, in my view, half as disturbing as the recurrence of pejorative terms such as "dusty niggers,"

"faces like grotesque masks," and similar expressions which mingle with respectable terms like "negro" or "black people."²² The term "nigger," found in the writings of other great men such as Mark Twain and Karl Marx, is not again half as disturbing as the fact that a writer who denounces imperialism in the clearest of terms and with such powerful images as "whited sepulchre" should look at the dispossessed Africans as sub-human species.

This is an important point. It returns us to the central concern of this thesis. Heart of Darkness remains a strident "tour de force" when Conrad adheres to his rigorous skepticism, when he questions that crusading zeal with which Europe entered "the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of mankind and of geographical exploration."²³ Heart of Darkness has its weakest moments when it accepts uncritically some stereotypes about Africans, stereotypes which, as Douglas Killam points out, are based on popular notions of evolution.²⁴ Needless to add that it was around such stereotypes that men like Leopold II built their case and justified the kind of nightmares which Marlow goes through. But the ambiguity is only a weakness. It does not neutralize the story which, to use the phrase of Dr. Leavis, remains "one of Conrad's best things."²⁵ I have dwelt on the weakness because it has so far been largely ignored by Conrad's critics. Even those who take into account the

milieu of the story do not examine the passages I quoted, although like Donard R. Benson, they see the main currents of thought which shape the story:

Three powerful currents of nineteenth-century life and thought converged upon the keepers of the humane tradition at the end of the nineteenth century, and thus upon Conrad is his conception of Heart of Darkness: scientific naturalism described a universe indifferent to man, an earth cooling under a darkening sun; evolution offered to account for man biologically and socially in terms of subhuman origins and civilisation, largely unaware of these profound challenges to itself, piously set forth on a final brutal assault on the unexploited corners of the earth. Conrad, caught in this convergence, and keenly aware of its force, sought in Heart of Darkness as elsewhere, for some essential ground on which to base a belief in humanity.²⁶

In Nostromo, Conrad also seeks more essential ground on which to base a belief in humanity. But this search for a ground on which to base a belief in humanity is also a search for the power behind history. The story opens on a myth which mirrors the history of what we are to see in the Republic of Costaguana. There are, in the Azueras two lost Americanos who are supposed to be "spectral and alive, ...dwelling to this day amongst the rocks, under the fatal spell of their success. They are now rich and hungry and thirsty - a strange theory of tenacious gringo ghosts suffering in their starved and parched flesh of defiant heretics, where a Christian would have renounced and been released" (Nmo 5).

Running through this myth, which has suggestions of Midas, Tantalus, and Protestantism, is the theme of man being trapped by his success in the fight against his human limitations. In Nostromo, man is creating his destiny. He has no God to help him.

The eye of God Himself - they add with grim profanity- could not find out what work a man's hand is doing there; and you will be free to call the devil to your aid with impunity if even his malice were not defeated by such a blind darkness. (Nmo 6-7)

But the darkness is so blind that man must have a god. He creates one in his own image. From Charles Gould to the robbers led by Hernandez, the silver mine assumes preternatural characteristics:

They invested it with a protecting and invincible virtue as though it were a fetish made by their own hands, for they were ignorant, and in other respects did not differ appreciably from the rest of mankind which puts infinite trust in its own creations. (Nmo 398)

Man invests a neutral object with supernatural power. That is faith. It is also an illusion Charles Gould is a man of faith:

"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 the lawlessness and the disorder. It is justified because the security which it demands must be shared with an oppressed

people. A better justice will come afterwards." (Nmo 84)

A better justice never comes, Representatives of the people are as disgruntled towards the end of the story as they are at the beginning:

The Cardinal-Archbishop straightened up his gaunt, bony frame.

"We have worked for them; we have made them, these material interests of the foreigners. ...

Let them beware, then, lest the people, prevented from their aspirations, should rise and claim their share of the power", the popular Cardinal-Archbishop of Sulaco declared, significantly, menacingly. (Nmo 510)

That is the extent to which Charles Gould has realised his dream. That is the extent to which he has made history. We can also see the other side of Gould's illusion from what Dr. Monygham says:

"No!" interrupted the doctor, "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." (Nmo 511).

Man being man insists on seeing a moral principle in things that have their own law. He insists on regulating certain life-forces according to the dictates of his consciousness. That is his tragedy. The dictatorship which Charles Gould brings to power collapses as suddenly as it appears.

Conrad, in fact, first presents the collapse and then shows the attempts at making the regime work (Nmo 13-43). The Occidental Republic which follows this regime is seen with resentment against "material interests." Charles Gould has gone wholeheartedly into his mining enterprises while remaining essentially detached from its emotional milieu. He cannot share the hopes and fears of the people who depend on him. He is efficient. It is this very efficiency which takes him away from his wife. The efficiency of the mine ensures the survival of the mine, not of the people of Costaguana. Emilia sees this:

She saw the San Tome mine hanging over the Camp, 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. He did not see it. He could not see it. It was not his fault. He was perfect; but she could never have him for herself. (Nmo 521-522)

But Charles Gould is doomed to follow his dream to its tragic end. Elsewhere I have discussed the association which Conrad makes between Gould and the world of minerals.²⁷ There are, then, two sides to his life and the two sides make him tragic. Don Jose Avellanosa is in the same mould. So is Nostromo and Georgia Viola. They all follow their dream. Where they succeed, they are trapped by their success, where they fail they still live as if the dream would have endured forever. Nostromo captures man's historical moment in the way best described

by Robert Penn Warren:

Conrad's skepticism is ultimately but a "reasonable" recognition of the fact that man is a natural creature who can rest on no revealed values and can look forward to neither individual immortality nor racial survival. But reason, in this sense, is the denial of life and energy, for against all reason man insists, as man, on creating and trying to live by certain values. ...Man must make his life somehow in the dialectical process of these terms. ... The victory is never won, the redemption must be continually re-earned...²⁸

That is the skepticism. It is also the foundation of a tragic vision.

NOTES

NOTES

CHAPTER I

"HOW TO BE": THE SURFACE AND INNER
CRISIS OF MAN

¹Lord Jim. The Mediallion Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad in Twenty Volumes. Vol. IV. London: Gresham Publishing Company, 1925 p. 211. All page references to Conrad's Works will be to this edition. All such references are bracketed within the text of the thesis and the following abbreviations have been adopted for the whole thesis:

AF = Almayer's Folly
 OI = An Outcast of the Islands
 NN = The Nigger of the "Narcissus"
 TU = Tales of Unrest
 Typ = Thyphoon
 LJ = Lord Jim
 YTO = Youth, and Two Other Stories ("Youth", Heart of Darkness, The End of the Tether)
 Nmo = Nostramo
 SA = The Secret Agent
 SS = A set of Six
 UWE = Under Western Eyes
 Cce = Chance
 Vy = Victory
 SL = The Shadow Line
 WT = Within the Tides

Works not included on this list of abbreviations will be documented in the notes - should the need to refer to them ever occur.

²"Pattern in Lord Jim; One Jump after Another." College English, XIII, 1951/52, 396-397.

³Dynamics of Faith. New York: Harper, 1956 p. 3

⁴J. E. Zimmerman, Dictionary of Classical Mythology, New York: Harper & Row, 1964 pp. 221-222. Among other things, Prometheus "stole fire from heaven for which crime Zeus ordered Hermes to chain Prometheus to a rock on Mount Caucasus where a vulture fed daily on his liver".

- ⁵Ibid., p. 222 "After he was freed from Mount Caucasus, he was brought to Olympus, to join the gods he had ridiculed."
- ⁶Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays, Transl. Justin O'Brien. New York: Vintage Books, 1955
- ⁷Letter to R.B. Cunninghame Graham, 14 January, 1898. Gerard Jean Aubrey: Joseph Conrad, Life and Letters, 2 vols., Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1927 p. 222
- ⁸Dorothy van Ghent, "On Lord Jim" in her The English Novel, Rinehart, 1953 pp. 229-244. Mrs. van Ghent sees the ideal as "the destructive element".
- Albert Guerard, Conrad the Novelist, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1958 pp. 165-166. "The dream is equated with the ideal of self or ego-ideal and with the sea and with the destructive element."
- Ted E. Boyle, Symbol and Meaning in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad, The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1956 p. 79. "Stein does, of course, give a practical illustration of his philosophy's meaning when he tells Marlow how he captured the prize butterfly of his collection."
- ⁹Soren Kierkegaard, "The Ancient Tragical Motif as Reflected in the Modern" in his Either /Or Vol. 1 New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1959, p. 151.
- ¹⁰Symbol and Meaning in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad, The Hague: Mouton, 1965, p. 80
- ¹¹ibid., p. 80
- ¹²ibid., p. 80
- ¹³Fear and Trembling/ The Sickness Unto Death. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, transl. Walter Lowrie, 1954, pp. 26-29.
- ¹⁴Letter to Edward Garnet, August 28, 1908. Quoted in Walter F. Wright's Conrad on Fiction, Lincoln, Neb: 1964, p. 31. "There is even one abandoned creature who says I am a neo-platonist? What on earth is that?"

- ¹⁵ John A. Gee and P.J. Strum, Letters of Joseph Conrad to Marguerite Poradowska, 1890 - 1920. Yale, 1940
- For letters to R.B. Cunninghame Graham see Gerard Jean Aubry, Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters, 2 vols., New York: Doubleday, 1927
- For Conrad's letters to and from his uncle, together with the famous "Bobrowski Testament" see Zdzislaw Nadjer: Conrad's Polish Background Letters to and from Polish Friends, transl. Halina Carroll. Oxford, 1964.
- ¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals, transl. Francis Golffing, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956 p. 29.
- ¹⁷ A. Grove Day, "Pattern in Lord Jim: One Jump After Another." College English, XIII, 1951/52, 396-397.
- ¹⁸ See page 2 of this thesis.
- ¹⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra in The Philosophy of Nietzsche, Modern Library, 1927 p. 26.
- ²⁰ See Notes ⁴ and ⁵ above.
- ²¹ J. E. Zimmerman, Dictionary of Classical Mythology, New York: Harper, 1964 p. 255.
- ²² ibid., p. 255
- ²³ ibid., p. 255
- ²⁴ ibid., p. 255
- ²⁵ Robert Browning, The Ring and the Book, V, 1558-1559 Everyman, 1911
- ²⁶ ibid., V, 1575-1578
- ²⁷ See Chapter Three of this thesis
- ²⁸ Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, Holt, Rinehardt & Co., 1948, p. 160
- ²⁹ Doubleday Anchor, 1954, transl. Walter Lowrie.
- ³⁰ ibid., pp. 64-77
- ³¹ ibid., p. 41

- 32 ibid., pp. 102-103
- 33 See Note 25 above.
- 34 Fear and Trembling/Sickness Unto Death p. 30
- 35 Soren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, transl. David F. Swenson, rev. Walter Lowrie, Princeton U.P., 1941, p. 347
- 36 Robert Penn Warren, "Nostramo", Sewanee Review, LIX 1951, 377-387
- 37 Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 355.
- 38 Ted E. Boyle, Symbol and Meaning in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad p. 84
 "Jim has rid himself on his hollow romanticism, but has not foresaken his dream. His triumph is complete because he does not blame the circumstances but integrates them into his dream, enlarging the dream beyond the self, transforming it into an ideal which will serve all mankind." Meanwhile, what becomes of Doramin and all of Jim's dependents?
- 39 Letter to R. B. Cunninghame Graham, 31 January, 1898 in Aubry's Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters, pp. 225-226.
- 40 Soren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, trans. & introd. Walter Lowrie, Princeton, U.P., 1944 pp. 87-98.
- 41 The Birth of Tragedy p. 65
- 42 "Easter, 1916" in Selected Poetry of W. B. Yeats, edited & introd. Norman Jeffares, MacMillan, 1963, p. 93
- 43 T. S. Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral, edited Voaden & Brown, Faber & Faber, 1959, part I
- 44 ibid., "Interlude" pp. 35-37
- 45 ibid., Part I p. 32.
- 46 Ted E. Boyle, "Marlow's 'Lie' in Heart of Darkness" Studies in Short Fiction, I, 1963/64, 159-162

Kenneth A. Bruffee, "The Lesser Nightmare: Marlow's 'Lie' in Heart of Darkness." Modern Language Quarterly, XXV, 1964, 322-329

⁴⁷See Chapter III of this thesis.

⁴⁸Besides being in all kinds of anthologies of short stories, "The Lagoon" is a much discussed story in The Explicator.

⁴⁹Franz Kafka, The Trial, transl. Willa & Edwin Muir, Modern Library, 1937, p. 269

^{49a}ibid., p. 276

⁵⁰See Note ³⁶ above.

⁵¹Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 468

⁵²ibid., p. 475

⁵³ibid., p. 488

⁵⁴ibid., p. 489

⁵⁵See Notes ² and ¹⁷ above.

⁵⁶"Joseph Conrad and Shakespeare", Conradiana, Vol. I No. II, 1968, 15-22.

⁵⁷Preface to The Nigger of the "Narcissus".

⁵⁸Martin Euber, The Way of Response, edited N.N. Glatzer New York: Schocken, 1966, p. 83.

CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDATIONS OF A TRAGIC VISION:
CONSCIOUSNESS VERSUS LIFE.

- ¹ Nostromo. p. 171. The Medallion Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad in Twenty Volumes. Vol. IV. London: Gresham Publishing Company, 1925, p. 211. All page references to Conrad's works will be to this edition. All such references are bracketed within the text of the thesis and the abbreviations found in Note 1 to Chapter I have been adopted for the whole thesis.
- ² "Conrad's Pyrrhic Victory", Twentieth-Century Literature, V + VI, 1959/61, 123-30.
- ³ M. C. Bradbrook: Joseph Conrad: Poland's English Genius. Cambridge U.P., 1941, 62-67.
- ⁴ The Great Tradition, New York, 1963 (first pub. Chatto & Windus, 1948), 201-209.
- ⁵ Conrad the Novelist, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard U.P., 1958, p. 272.
- ⁶ ibid., p. 27
- ⁷ ibid., p. 272
- ⁸ The Tragic Vision: Variations on a Theme in Literary Interpretation. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston 1960, Chapter Six: "Joseph Conrad: Action, Inaction & Extremity."
- ⁹ ibid., p. 179-180
- ¹⁰ ibid., p. 180
- ¹¹ ibid., 192. "Conrad pointedly shows us how much simpler it would be for Heyst to disarm Mr. Jones than for Lena to disarm Ricardo as she does. Now it is true that this difference in their capacity to act is crucial to Conrad's theme. It follows, then, that the threat sent them by the world could, by a healthier attitude, have been effectually dismissed; that the ~~clouds~~ could, by a sunnier disposition towards life and hope, have been dispelled before they brought the deluge. . ."

In my view, we cannot afford to miss the point about Conrad's emphasis on the up-bringing of Axel Heyst. Heyst cannot be put impotent in the face of the irrational. He is condemned to this impotence by his upbringing just as in Nostromo Charles Gould is condemned to fall in love with his mine.

¹²The elder Heyst and his consciousness are always placed at "strategic" points in Victory. In Chapter III of Part I, we first meet the elder Heyst who has dragged on this "earth of ours the most weary, the most uneasy soul that civilisation had ever fashioned to its ends of disillusion and regret" (VY 91). His appearance at this point is to show us how he has, with his consciousness, warped his son Axel Heyst on whom the rest of life is closing with his meeting of Lena. Part III, Chapter I opens with Heyst's meditation on Adam lifting up his muddy frame from the celestial mould and inspecting and naming the animals of that Paradise which he was soon to lose (VY 173-74). "And I, the son of my father, have been caught too, like the silliest fish of them all."

We are then shown the father advising his son to look on and make no sound (VY 175). The destroyer of systems dies and life goes on as before. We see his furniture shipped to Samburan, and we are shown Heyst's life on this island and how Wang elects to remain with him there after all the other labourers of the Tropical Belt Coal Company leave. But the "Adam myth" is still in our mind when Heyst and Lena take their walk and Heyst expatiates on the great Joke of existence. The elder Heyst reeneters the discussion and this becomes the prelude to the coming of the evil trio.

¹³Zdzislaw Nadjer, editor, Conrad's Polish Background; Letters to and from Polish Friends, Oxford U.P., 1964 p. 10-11.

Nadjer shows that Conrad's father did not, in fact, burn all his manuscripts and that Conrad himself had the opportunity of seeing them in 1914, preserved in the Dagiellonian Library in Cracow.

This still leaves a heritage for Conrad the son, as conflicting as that of Axel Heyst:

"On the one hand he could not escape the powerful appeal of Apollo's fascinating personality and of the heroic fidelity with which he had served to the tragic and the ideals of patriotism as he had conceived them. On the other hand he was by no means sure if these ideals had had any reasonable basis. Conrad's father must have seemed to him at once awe-inspiring and absurd; his attitude towards him was a mixture of admiration and contemptuous pity. And he could never forgive his father the death of his mother." Nadjer, p. 11.

¹⁴ The Tragic Vision, p. 193.

¹⁵ A Personal Record, Some Reminiscences,
Medallion edition on Conrad's Works, Vol. IX,
London, 1925, p. 92. This essay was published
in 1912. Victory came out in 1915.

¹⁶ The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays,
transl. Justin O'Brien. Vintage Books, New York,
1955. (First publ. in French in 1942).

See also Justin O'Brien's article on Camus and Conrad in The Romanic Review, vol. LVIII, No. 3, October 1967 pp. 196-199. In this article O'Brien compares Conrad's "The Secret Sharer" with Camus' La Chute and "L'Hote" and suggests that Camus may have read "The Secret Sharer" and formulated his two stories on it. There certainly seems to be a great deal in common in the thoughts of these two writers. A more detailed study on the subject might well prove fruitful.

¹⁷ Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo, Tragic Sense of Life, transl. J. E. Crawford Clitch, Dover Publications, 1954, p. 13, first published 1921.

¹⁸ ibid., p. 117

¹⁹ ibid., p. 1, Homo sum; nihil humani a me alienum puto.

²⁰ Letter to R. B. Cunninghame Graham, 20th December, 1897 in Gerard Jean Aubry's Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters. 2 vols. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1927, pp. 215-16.

- 21 See Jessie Conrad, Joseph Conrad as I knew him, Doubleday, 1926, pp. 157-158. Jessie says here that she was most moved by Graham's essay, of all the tributes paid to her husband. For the whole essay see R. B. Cunninghame Graham's "Inveni Portum: Joseph Conrad," in his Redeemed and Other Sketches, London, Heinemann, 1927. The essay was first printed in the Saturday Review of 16th August, 1924. Graham's essay takes in Conrad's characteristic evocations of the natural world as well as the universal setting in space and time of Conrad's works.
- 22 See Note 20 above.
- 23 Letter to R. B. Cunninghame Graham, 14 January, 1898. in Aubry's, Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters. Doubleday, 1927, p. 222.
- 24 Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death, transl. Walter Lowrie, Doubleday Anchor, 1954. (First written 1843 & 1849) p. 30.
- "If there were no external consciousness in a man, if at the foundation of all there lay only a wildly seething power which writing with obscure passions produced everything that is great and everything that is significant, if a bottomless void never satiated lay hidden beneath all - what then would life be but despair?"
- 25 Tragic Sense of Life, transl. J. E. Crawford Clitch, Dover, 1954, p. 36.
- "For the present let us remain keenly suspecting that the longing not to die, the hunger for personal immortality, the effort whereby we tend to persist indefinitely in our own being... and this is the effective basis of all knowledge and the personal inward starting point of all human philosophy, wrought by a man and for men."
- 26 See Note 23 above.
- 27 Conrad's Victory: Psychomachy, Christian Symbols, and Theme" in Renia Drell Reck's Explorations of Literature, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1966, pp. 70-71.
- 28 ibid., pp. 70-80
- 29 See note 15 above.

³⁰ According to The Catholic Encyclopedia, (1911 edition, Vol. XII, article by Paul Lejay).

"Purcentius wrote to glorify God and atone for his sins... Orthodoxy is his great preoccupation in these poems and he invokes all kinds of punishments on heresy..."

³¹ See, for example, Murray Krieger's article: "Victory: Pseudo Tragedy and the Failure of Vision," in his The Tragic Vision, p. 188. "And who are these envoys of an outer world? That they are allegorical figures is plain enough - if anything, too plain."

³² The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals, transl. Francis Golting. Doubleday Anchor, 1956. p. 29.

"Whoever approaches the Olympians with a different religion in his heart, seeking moral elevation, sanctity, spirituality, loving-kindness, will presently be forced to turn away in ill-humoured disappointment. Nothing in these deities reminds us of asceticism, high intellect or duty: we are confronted by a luxuriant, triumphant existence, which defies the good and the bad indifferently."

³³ See Note 15 above.

³⁴ Eldridge Cleaver, Soul on Ice, New York: McGraw Hill (A Ramparts Book), 1968, p. 162.

³⁵ "The Communist Manifesto" in Lewis S. Feuer, editor; Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy. Doubleday Anchor, 1959, pp. 10-14.

³⁶ Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1968 edition, pp. 299-300. Ricardo systematised and gave classical form to the rising science of economics. Among other things he showed that "profits can be raised only by a fall in wages."

³⁷ Victory came out in 1915 and The Wasteland in 1922. Eliot has some thematic affinities to Conrad as witness one of the epigraphs to "The Hollow Men" and the recurrent theme of human beings not being able to bear very much reality in The Four Quartets. (See also the short story by Henry James: "The Madonna of the Future".)

38 Tragic Sense of Life, p. 35. Later in the book Unamuno quotes Plato's Parmenides to make the point: "All that is vital is irrational and all that is rational is anti-vital, for reason is essentially skeptical." p. 90.

PARMENIDES of Plato has this statement in the following form: "The one is and is not, and both itself and others, in relation to themselves and one another, are and are not, and appear to be and appear not to be."

39 Letter to R. B. Cunninghame Graham, 31 January, 1898, quoted in Aubry's Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters. Doubleday, 1927, pp, 225-226.

40 Victory came out in 1915, Camus' Myth of Sisyphus came out in 1942. The letter to Graham comes out seventeen years before Victory.

CHAPTER III

SACRED FIRE AND PROFANE RITUAL:

A View of Civilisation and History

- ¹ Ralph Maud, "The Plain Tale of Heart of Darkness," Humanities Association Bulletin, XVII, ii, 1966, 13 - 17.
- ² Conrad the Novelist, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1958, p. 37
- ³ See Sartre's Introduction to The Maids and Death Watch, two plays by Jean Genet, Grove Press, 1954, p. 31.
- ⁴ Neal Ascherson, The King Incorporated, Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1964 p. 94 quoted from Comte Louis de Lichtervelde's Leopold II pp. 155-158.
- ⁵ See Edmund D. Morel, Red Rubber, the Story of the Rubber Slave Trade Flourishing on the Congo in the Year of Grade 1906, Introd. Sir Harry Johnston, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1906, p. 37. Quoted from official shorthand reports, Belgian Parliamentary debates, February to March, 1906.
- ⁶ See Note ⁴ above.
- ⁷ King Leopold's Soliloquy, the P.R. Warren Co., Boston, 1905. Perhaps the most biting satire on the whole Congo nightmare. Mr. Clemens quotes primary sources on the subject (Missionary sources and travellers' documented findings) and uses them with devastating effect against Leopold II and all the Governments which helped Leopold II become King and owner of the Congo. Heart of Darkness is also quoted by Mr. Clemens - see note on the illustration on p. 42.
- ⁸ Guerard suggests Stanley - Conrad the Novelist p. 34
Aubry suggests Antoine Klein, see his book, Conrad in the Congo, Little Brown & Co., 1927, Elois Knapp Hays suggests Cecil Rhodes, see her chapter on Heart of Darkness in the book The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad, Chicago University Press, 1963, pp. 109-158
- ⁹ Ascherson, p. 94. See also Note ⁴ above.

- ¹⁰ See also Marion Brady, "Conrad's Whited Sepulchre", College English XXIV, 1962, 24-29, In College English see also articles on pages 561-562, 562-563.
- ¹¹ See chapter One of the thesis.
- ¹² See Note ⁴⁶ in Chapter One
- ¹³ Published by Calder & Boyars, London, 1928.
- ¹⁴ ibid., p. 59
- ¹⁵ "Conrad's 'Whited Sepulcher'", College English, XXIV 1962, p. 26.
- ¹⁶ Selections from the Essays of Thomas Henry Huxley, edited by Alburey Castell, New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1948, p. 118
- ¹⁷ Transl. & edit. James Strachey, W.W. Norton & Co., 1961, first publ. 1930.
- ¹⁸ ibid., p. 92
- ¹⁹ M.J.C. Echejio, "James Wait and The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'" English Studies in Africa, VII, 1962-64, 166-180.
- ²⁰ See Ruth Slade, King Leopold's Congo: Aspects of the Development of Race Relations in the Congo Independent State, Oxford U.P., 1962, pp. 3 - 4,
- ²¹ In his Conrad the Novelist, pp. 38-39, Albert Guerard maintains that it is "hard to take Marlow's plight seriously on the literal plane," that is, when the events are abstracted from their dream-sensation. But does the dream excuse everything?
- ²² The muffling effect seems to be all that matters to some critics. Only Douglas Killam in his work, Africa in English Fictin (Ibadan, 1968) concerns himself with the question of Conrad's description of the Africans.
- ²³ Joseph Conrad, Last Essays, London & Toronto: Dent, 1926 p. 25. Note the resemblance what Conrad says about Africa in this essay to what both Marlow and the first narrator say at the opening of Heart of Darkness.

- ¹⁰ See also Marion Brady, "Conrad's Whited Sepulchre", College English XXIV, 1962, 24-29, In College English see also articles on pages 561-562, 562-563.
- ¹¹ See chapter One of the thesis.
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