



## Chapter 1

### Conrad and the Flawed Hero

#### I. "Heart of Darkness"

Conrad makes two interesting statements concerning one of his most famous short stories, "Heart of Darkness". It deals with as Conrad writes in Letters to William Blackwood: "the criminality of inefficiency and pure selfishness when tackling the civilizing work in Africa", and in Last Essays: "the vilest scramble of loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration." The story, thus, can be studied at one level as Marlow's journey into the heart of the Belgian Congo, describing the land, its people and those European ivory traders whose main concern is in making money though they are supposed to bring civilization there. At a symbolic and psychological level, this is the journey into the universal blackness of the human heart and soul, revealing the truth of man's unconscious, primitive, and deceptive self which is full of desires. This is shown only when Conrad's characters are in contact with the real 'savagery'--the elemental forces--not being able to realize its fateful, mysterious, and irresistible power. Being absolutely unfamiliar and primeval, the new environment is set to test their true faculties:

The true value of the sea and of the exotic place was that they offered him(Conrad)what might be called the laboratory conditions in which he could make his investigations into

the nature of man and the spring of actions....Conrad is the novelist of the extreme situation...the environment, having a double function, to isolate the character from society... so that he can be put 'in extremis', and to act as the agent of his self-confrontation. Nature itself can then become a symbol of evil, or rather, nature and the human being appear to exist almost as manifestations of each other.<sup>1</sup>

Through the episodes of "Heart of Darkness", it seems that we are observing Conrad's highly dramatized situations.

Being set very deep in the African jungles, the white men of "Heart of Darkness", who are called pilgrims, are totally free from all ties of civilized life, relying merely on their real strength. Without any external checks at all from neighbors, policemen, or even public opinion, they can do anything they like, not being aware that the immense wilderness is waiting to put them to death. Here, for Marlow, the truth of human nature is revealed and the meaning of life as well as existence are questioned simultaneously. The pilgrims, thus, are left hollow, weak, ignorant and more significantly become the victims of their own unconscious brutal instincts and lust for wealth and power. They are engaged only in thoughts of the self.

One of the major assumptions on which "Heart of Darkness" rests is that if we want to find out the real truth about man--what his 'essential' nature is--we must inquire into his origins...civilization is something merely imposed on man's essential nature--that culture does not eradicate but merely keeps in check his primitive instincts...what Kurtz in the end discovers for himself is what Marlow has already grasped: that the ideals of European life form no

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<sup>1</sup>Allen, The English Novel, p. 303.

part of man's essential self--that the heart of the European citizen, for all the endeavours of his education, remains an abode of darkness.<sup>2</sup>

Civilization, Conrad emphasizes in "An Outpost of Progress", is not innate. It lies, however, too deep in our consciousness for us to realize that it is collective not indeed our own. Our life and way of thinking depend profoundly on the society--our surroundings: "the courage, the composure, the confidence, the emotions and principles; every great and every insignificant thought belongs not to the individual but to the crowd..."<sup>3</sup> The 'crowd' or society, the writer feels, believes blindly in the irresistibility of its institutions and of its morals which are false illusions. According to Marlow, we cannot understand the natives because "we are too far and could not remember...those ages that are gone leaving hardly a sign and no memory."<sup>4</sup> "Heart of Darkness" can be considered as an inquiry into how strong the hold of civilization is on its members.<sup>5</sup> The 'savage' age and ours are very far apart. Organized society is seen as an expression of men's attempt to protect themselves from hostile environments in order to live safely. For Conrad writes in Notes on Life and Letters: "Know thyself. Understand

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<sup>2</sup>Jacques Berthoud, Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 60.

<sup>3</sup>Conrad, "An Outpost of Progress", ed. Morton Dauwen Zabel (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), p. 462.

<sup>4</sup>Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", ed. Morton Dauwen Zabel (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), p. 539. Further references will be to this edition.

<sup>5</sup>Berthoud, Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase, p. 45.

that you are nothing, less than a shadow, more insignificant than a drop of water in the ocean, more fleeting than the illusion of a dream." Civilized men are not free, their life does not depend on their own strength as real human beings like the primitives who have to face loneliness and wild nature by themselves. Thus, "the contact with pure unmitigated savagery, with primitive nature and primitive men, brings sudden and profound trouble"<sup>6</sup> into civilized men's hearts. They have to encounter something unusual, dangerous, vague, uncontrollable, unknown, and unpleasant. The savagery of the wilderness is waiting to release the pilgrims' forgotten, unconscious brutal instincts.

Conrad's achievement as psychologist comes from his grasping a fundamental law of human conduct, ie. each individual struggles to maintain an idea of his significance and power.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the pilgrims' work in Africa demonstrates European 'cultural egoism'.<sup>8</sup> So there is neither compassion nor sympathy for the natives though they are believed by outsiders to be going "to humanize, improve, instruct, those ignorant millions from their horrid way" (p. 504). Actually when left alone in the wilderness they do not do anything that deserves their salaries and percentages.

They enjoyed the sense of idleness for which they were paid  
 ...The only real feeling was a desire to get appointed to a

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<sup>6</sup>Zabel, ed., Conrad, "An Outpost of Progress", p. 462.

<sup>7</sup>Paul Kirschner, Conrad: The Psychologist as Artist (Edinbergh: Oliver & Boyd, 1968), p. 286.

<sup>8</sup>Eloise Knapp Hay, The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 129.

trading post where ivory was to be had, so that they could earn percentages. They intrigued and slandered and hated each other only on that account. (p. 522)

They are but "burglars breaking into the safe" tearing out the treasure from the land. Marlow feels as if he is stepping into 'the gloomy inferno' when he sees the demoralized land with its poor and weak blackmen. This represents the pilgrims' 'moral vacancy' of the mind. They are hollow men "with nothing inside but a little loose dirt." Besides, what seems important to Conrad, after their independence from social restraint, "they do not know what use to make of their freedom...their faculties, being both through want of practice, incapable of independent thought."<sup>9</sup> This kind of freedom is, for the writer, the most exalted and valuable part of being human: "there(in the jungles) you could look at a thing monstrous and free" (p. 540).

And the discovery of the self is the discovery of one's freedom. Away from the grooves that society provides for keeping us safely in a state of subsisting, we can discover that we are free to be, to do anything, good or evil...this radical freedom as it exists in Kurtz seems to Marlow both exalting and revolting. Exalting because it makes man human, revolting because in Kurtz it is so perverted and so absolute as to exceed all human limits and become inhuman...he has not evaluated what being human means.<sup>10</sup>

To Marlow, Kurtz is, in part, one of the hollow men of the story. He is like them in fighting for wealth and power,

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<sup>9</sup>"An Outpost of Progress", p. 464.

<sup>10</sup>Jerome Thale, "Marlow's Quest", University of Toronto Quarterly, XXIV (July, 1955), pp. 315-18.

but simultaneously he is grouped with Marlow by the others in 'the gang of virtue'—engaging for morality and ideals. Kurtz's words, his gift of expression about his high hopes for the land and its people, seem to Marlow the most elevated:

The International Society for Suppression of Savage Customs had intrusted him(Kurtz)with the making of a report, for its future guidance. And he had written it too. I've seen it I've read it. It was eloquent, vibrating with eloquence, but too high-strung, I think. Seventeen pages of close writing he had found time for (p. 561).

Soon after his nerve goes wrong—his degradation—Kurtz's writing is "the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness." This is the result of his lack of inner restraint. not being able to resist the wilderness' power which is going to free his evil desires. Thus, his good intentions are only a sham, not inherent, they are easily destroyed. What shocks Marlow most is Kurtz's ascending too far beyond man's limited capacities: his being worshipped by the natives as god, attending the unspeakable rites. Though Kurtz's heart is the darkest of all, consisting of conscious will in doing evil deeds, he is, to Marlow, gifted and remarkable, having fallen from a considerable height. He has truly tasted total freedom, living in great solitude away from social restraint. What Marlow most admires and does not have is Kurtz's courage in descending into the depth of his own soul. He is able to realize the truth, the meaning and the purpose of his life. This is represented by his last cry: "The horror! The horror!" and Marlow observes Kurtz's face at the moment of dying: "the expression of somber pride, of

ruthless power, of craven terror--of an intense and hopeless despair..." (p. 591) He is, to Marlow, extraordinary:

The remarkable man who had pronounced a judgement upon the adventures of his soul on earth...He had something to say. He said it...He had summed up--he had judged. 'The horror' ...After all, this was the expression of some sort of belief; it had candor, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth... (pp. 592-93)

Probably from his last words, Kurtz is illuminated, glimpsing the universal truth about man's hidden primitive self and his hostile universe--the evil power of darkness. He does not perceive this until he "took counsel with the great solitude." The spell of the wilderness

has beguiled his unlawful soul beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations...But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness it had looked within itself...No eloquence could have been so withering to one's belief in mankind as his final burst of sincerity. He struggled with himself too. I saw it, I heard it. I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggling with itself (pp. 586-87).

Kurtz reaches the ultimate wisdom at last about the truth of human nature, human existence, and an evil, malicious universe. This is, to Marlow, Kurtz's victory which is to be paid for by his "innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory! That is why I have remained loyal to Kurtz to the last, and even beyond..." (p. 593) Kurtz is weak and cannot overcome both the inner and outer pressure of dark powers. As Conrad writes in Twixt Land and Sea:

How weak, irrational, and absurd we are! How easily carried away whenever our awakened imagination brings us the irritating hint of a desire...the further one ventures the better one understands how everything in our life is common, short, and empty; that it is in seeking the unknown in our sensations that we discover how mediocre are our attempts and how soon defeated.

In "Heart of Darkness", one major theme, if not the ruling theme, is that civilization depends for its conquest of the earth on a combination of lies and forgetfulness.<sup>11</sup> Marlow, however, survives in spite of his pessimistic worldview. Possessing no exalted courage like Kurtz, Marlow feels humiliated at having nothing to say. He can only peep over the edge of the abyss of the human soul though he almost dies of sickness near the end. Unlike Kurtz, he is protected by his 'fine conscience' as well as his philosophy of work. He comes to the Congo as a somewhat serious thinker, feeling a common humanity and sympathy with the blacks of the dark jungles, who are akin to the sights and sounds there.

They had bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement, that was as natural and true as the surf along their coast. They wanted no excuse for being there...but what thrilled you was just the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and 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...could comprehend (p. 540).

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<sup>11</sup> Hay, The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad, p. 153.



The sounds the natives make, particular the drums, have deep meaning to Marlow. We would be just like them if we were born there or in the past ages. Life in society protects us from our cruel surroundings because, in fact, we are weak. Without any shield at all, the blacks must rely on their own strength for survival, and unlike us they are free. Moreover, feelings are the same whether we live in the past, present, or future:

the mind of man is capable of anything--because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What was there after all? Joy, fear, valor, rage--who can tell?--but truth--truth stripped of its cloak of time (p. 540).

Most significantly, Marlow nearly turns 'savage'--being fascinated like Kurtz by the sounds in the scene of the latter's escape from the cabin:

I thought I would never get back to the steamer, and imagined myself living alone and unarmed in the woods to an advanced age. Such silly things--you know. And I remember I confounded the beat of the drum with the beating of my heart, and was pleased at its calm regularity. I kept to the track though--then stopped to listen (p. 584).

Marlow's last sentence exemplified his often emphasized sense of conduct and duty, bringing him back to the world of reality and action, away from being swallowed up by dark instincts. He is also aware of the evil power of the wilderness--"the high stillness of the primeval forest." It is the most real and mysterious, fateful and beyond our limited perception. What is shown is man's insignificant existence, his weakness and ignorance. Marlow, however, does not meditate very long on the thought. He is a utilitarian who seeks a final and absolute truth, saying

also that we can find the sense of mystery of our Fates only in the conduct of our action.<sup>12</sup>

And this stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. It looked at you with a vengeful aspect. I got used to it afterwards; I did not see it any more: I had to keep guessing at the channel...When you attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality--the reality, I tell you fades. The inner truth is hidden--luckily, luckily (p. 537).

That is why Marlow outlives Kurtz. He is illuminated by the somewhat 'inconclusive' and 'somber' experience. It is like "throwing a kind of light on everything about me--and into my thoughts" (p. 496). It is his journey of psychic discovery, into self-knowledge and human self in general. This nightmare would certainly remain throughout the rest of his life. He has been enlightened. And his sitting position in telling Kurtz's story is seen by the narrator of "Heart of Darkness" as the idol of Lord Buddha. The world is, to Marlow, now in 'impalpable grayness'. There are no absolute truths and ideals. His life from now on is

without clamor, without glory, without the great desire of victory, without the great fear of defeat, in a sickly atmosphere of tepid scepticism, without much belief in your own right, and still less in that of your adversary. If such is the form of ultimate wisdom, then life is a greater riddle than some of us think it to be (p. 592).

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<sup>12</sup>Seamus Deane, "Conrad: The Criminal Interval", The Sewanee Review, VLXXXVIII, No. 4, (Fall, 1980), p. 608.

Back at the Company in Brussels, Marlow cannot bear looking at other people living their everyday stable lives which are, to him, full of "stupid importance, insignificant and silly dreams". Their knowledge of life is, to him, 'an irritating pretense'. They go about their business in a perfectly safe way. Marlow has no intention of enlightening them. He wants to laugh at their ignorance of the things he has learned. In the light of civilization, he perceives, the truth of human self is suppressed. That true self is ours, but apart from that the rest of our personality is the result of what society has put into us unconsciously. We grant what society gives us as our own, but actually it is, to Marlow, a sham, full of lies and false beliefs. And when human beings are set free of civilized life, they meet their tragedy, not being able to resist the elemental hostile forces as well as the dark side of themselves. However deceptive and illusory life is, Marlow accepts Kurtz's Intended's faith in Kurtz as a 'saving illusion' or something necessary for worldly living:

...bowing my head before the faith that was in her, before that great and saving illusion that shone with unearthly glow in the darkness, in the triumphant darkness from which I could not have defended her--from which I could not even defend myself (p. 601).

The result is that Marlow lies to her to help her stay always in her dream world about Kurtz though he hates and cannot bear a lie,

not because I am straighter than the rest of us, but simply because it appalls me. There is a taint of death, a flavor of mortality in lies--which is exactly what I hate and de-

test in the world--what I want to forget (p. 526).

Marlow cannot tell the Intended her lover's last words because without any illusion to live with, our life "would be too dark --too dark altogether."

What Kurtz essentially lacks is self-restraint. Thus he has gone too far beyond limited human power. The ability to overcome the evils within oneself is one of the principal preachings in Buddhism. Conrad's presentation as a whole throughout "Heart of Darkness", suggests his psychological or philosophical interest in human conditions like other great writers. He says in a letter of 1908: "Morbid psychology is perfectly legitimate subject for an artist's genius. But not for a moralist." The same main concern appears to be very common among European writers of the period, such as Mann, Gide, Malraux, especially Pirandello who, like Conrad, is not so much interested in exploring the unconscious as he is impressed by its power, and by the consequent incoherence in personality.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Kirschner, Conrad: The Psychologist as Artist, p. 281.

## II. Lord Jim

Conrad writes during the period of time when men like Henry James, Proust, and Freud are, "undertaking a meticulous scrutiny of the complex inward truth of the human heart."<sup>1</sup> The main interest in writing which novelists now turn to, especially Virginia Woolf, is 'character in itself', character which is emphasized as individual human being side by side with his sensibility and reaction.<sup>2</sup> Conrad must have had some share in his contemporaries' ideas when he wrote such psychological tales and romances as "An Outpost of Progress", "Heart of Darkness", and Lord Jim. In spite of being among his early works, these stories suddenly set the writer among dramatic artists about human character and when T. S. Eliot uses the haunting climactic phrase "Mistah Kurtz he dead"--as the epigraph for his poem, "The Hollow Men", in 1925, he acknowledges, as André Gide, Thomas Mann, and others have, that Conrad had become a master of the tragedy of moral desolation and defeated egoism which is one of the outstanding themes of modern literature.<sup>3</sup> In the three stories, Conrad's major concern is the truth of the human heart --its mystery together with the pursuit of its dreams, significance, and power, in the world of destructive elements. As he writes himself in Lord Jim: "is not mankind itself, pushing on its blind way, driven by a dream of its greatness and its power

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<sup>1</sup>Tony Tanner, Conrad: Lord Jim (London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1963), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Allen, The English Novel, p. 343.

<sup>3</sup>Zabel, ed. Conrad, pp. 10, 458.

upon the dark paths of excessive cruelty and of excessive devotion."

Lord Jim, is widely regarded as a story written in an impressionistic style: to create in the reader an intricate play of emotion and a rich conflict of sympathy and judgement. The view is due, in particular, to Jim, the tragic hero of the romantic 'ego-ideal'. His psyche has been probed into by Conrad to find out his real strength and weakness. Thus the reader is given 'a psycho-moral drama' with no solution particularly about the total characterization of Jim. No absolute judgement can be passed on his courage or cowardice. We are only allowed to see him either from other characters' different opinions, or by contrasting his action with theirs. Marlow himself tells his listeners that they may have better judgement on everything about Jim in accordance with the proverb: "the onlookers see most of the game". We cannot rely on Marlow though, for he says he is swayed by Jim and moreover neither he nor Jim know everything about themselves. Jim is mostly seen through Marlow's "instinctive feelings and bemused reflections". For example, Marlow cannot make up his mind about Jim's courage in wandering farther eastward after losing the license and these words of Marlow can also be applied to the two-sided view of Jim's death in Patusan: his victory or his failure:

There was always a doubt of his courage...whether his line of conduct amounted to shirking his ghost or to facing him out...as with the complexion of all our actions, the shade of difference was so delicate that it was impossible to say. It might have been flight and it might have been a mode of



combat.<sup>4</sup>

Yet perhaps the major cause of Jim's tragic failure is due to his own nature. As Marlow states: Jim is overwhelmed by "the inexplicable, by his own personality--the gift of that destiny which he had done his best to master (p. 252).

Many types of characters surely react differently in a certain given circumstance and the Patna case is the best example of this. Each human being or groups of them respond differently. There are the four crew, the two Malay helmsmen, Jim, and the French lieutenant. The first group flees for dear life whereas the helmsmen do not leave because there is no change of order. As for Jim, he remains apart, stands still as "cold stone from the soles of his feet to the nape of his neck".

All above is the main incident of the story which is Conrad's original purpose in writing Lord Jim. He says in its "Author's Note": "But seriously...my first thought was of a short story, concerned only with the pilgrims ship episode." In this central scene, "the pressure of standards of conduct will become less real, and other more sinister, irrational or non-rational forces will be felt by the isolated and heroic personality."<sup>5</sup> The significance of the affair is focused on Jim who has the "faculty of swift and forstalling vision", and whose "confounded imagination had evoked for him all the horrors of

<sup>4</sup>Joseph Conrad, Lord Jim (Signet Classic, 1961), pp. 147-48. Further references will be to this edition.

<sup>5</sup>Deane, "Conrad: The Criminal Interval", The Sewanee Review, p. 599.

panic, the trampling rush, the pitiful screams, boats swamped" (p. 70). "Somebody was speaking aloud inside my head...Eight hundred people and seven boats--and no time" (p. 69). Through his 'exquisite sensibility', Jim is paralysed with fear as foreshadowed by the scene of the training ship incident. Though he sees himself beforehand,

always an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a hero in a book....full of valorous deeds: he loved these dreams and the success of his imaginary achievements....He had been elaborating dangers and defences, expecting the worst, rehearsing the best (pp. 11, 21, 75).

Thus at the most desperate moment he jumps to join the other white men. Therefore this is the man in Gide's eyes: "who thinks he is a coward because he yielded to a momentary weakness --when he hoped he was courageous." Marlow sees this as "impulsive unreflecting desertion--of a jump into the unknown". For him, Jim is not afraid of death but of the emergency: "He might have been resigned to die, but I suspect he wanted to die without added terrors, quietly, in a sort of peaceful trance"(p. 70). It is the prompt decisiveness in taking action in a sudden crisis that Jim lacks. The greatest contrast in performance is, however, between Jim and the French lieutenant though they have never seen each other in person. The lieutenant is an experienced man of action, who remains on board the Patna for thirty hours, towing it to port. He says to Marlow: "One does what one can...One has done what is possible." Thus Marlow views him as "an expert in possession of facts....of extreme efficiency." The lieutenant thinks Jim's jump is only a 'child-play' and the



reason is that he is too young and afraid of death. For him, "one does not die....of being afraid....one is no more clever than the next man--and no more brave...Man is born a coward" (pp. 111-12). The lieutenant says all this in mature calmness to Marlow as if he was "the mouthpiece of abstract wisdom". For him, what makes life worthwhile is honour. He is, however, like Marlow in that he is not imaginative because when Marlow asks him with a 'disconcerted' smile if honour does really exist, "couldn't it reduce itself to not being found out?", the lieutenant's answer is: "This, monsieur, is too fine for me--much above me--I don't think about it" (p. 113).

As for the helmsmen, they have the unconscious quality that the whitemen including Jim lack, "that tradition of reliability, efficiency, and trust",<sup>6</sup> regardless of any outcome, even death.

These lascars stuck to the helm of that ship without steerage way, where death would have found them if such had been their destiny. The whites (being busy lowering the life boat) did not give them half a glance, had probably forgotten their existence. Assuredly Jim did not remember it. He remembered he could do nothing (p. 78).

Yet Jim's feeling towards the other white crew members is that he hates them, and without moving he looks at their comic attempt at survival:

He had kept his distance; that there was nothing in common between him and these men--who had the hammer...he thought

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<sup>6</sup>Tanner, Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 31.

himself cut off from them by a space that could not be traversed....They had given him up as if indeed he had been too far, too hopelessly separated from themselves...They had no leisure to look back upon his passive heroism...They pushed for dear life (p. 82).

This is exactly similar to his view of the 'low comedy' scene about the most courageous boy in the training ship incident. In spite of his failure to act courageously, Jim thinks the hero of the episode shows "a pitiful display of vanity" and his achievement is a lower one in Jim's view. He is always very conscious of his own suppressed superiority:

Those men did not belong to the world of heroic adventure.... The quality of these men did not matter; he rubbed shoulders with them, but they could not touch him; he shared the air they breathed, but he was different...he was too sure of himself (pp. 24-5).

He, however, jumps to join them in the boat below, and he now is seen as one of them. "His saved life was over for want of ground under his feet, for want of sights for his eyes, for want of voices in his ears" (p. 89).

His romantic conscience and the inflexibility or 'unshakable seriousness' of youth makes Jim face the court. This may be one of his qualities that makes Marlow sympathize with him, "his facing it--practically of his own free will--was a redeeming feature in his abominable case. I hadn't been sure of it before" (p. 56). Moreover, to Marlow, Jim has survived the attack of the infernal forces:

Jim by my side looked very stalwart, as though nothing --not even the occult power of moonlight--could rob him of his

reality in my eyes. Perhaps, indeed, nothing could touch him since he had survived the assault of the dark powers (p. 184).

They are the hostile forces that want to clear the world of all the insignificant and helpless inhabitants. Jim has caught sight of them early in his training ship experience. What is shown by the testing of "the brutal tumult of earth and sky", to Conrad, is "the inner worth of a man, the edge of his temper, and the fibre of his stuff; that reveals the quality of his resistance and the secret truth of his pretences, not only to others but also to himself" (p. 14). Thus Jim has been tried and proved to be a coward through fear. Conrad describes our fear in "An Outpost of Progress":

Fear always remains. A man may destroy everything within himself, love and hate and belief, and even doubt; but as long as he clings to life he cannot destroy fear; the fear, subtle, indestructible, and terrible, that pervades his being, that tinges his thoughts; that lurks in his heart; that watches on his lips the struggle of his last breath.

Though Jim tells himself he knows how to deal with "the spurious menace of wind and sea", after his training ship experience, he feels angry with "the brutal tumult of earth and sky for taking him unawares and checking unfairly a generous readiness for narrow escapes" (p. 13). He fails again in their test in the Patna affair. He feels he is so shamefully tried, not doing anything out of his own free will, "he had not acted but had suffered himself for the victim" (p. 85). Again like the training ship incident, he has been taken unawares. Everything has betrayed him. He is not given half a chance but utterly filled with despair at

such a 'beastly unfair thing'. "Do you (Marlow) think I was afraid of death...I am ready to swear I was not--I was not" (p. 69). Jim does not accept his own jump by saying that it is not a lie--but it is not truth all the same. His justification for himself is that: "There was not the thickness of a sheet of paper between the right and wrong of this affair." And Marlow's typical, unkind answer is: "How much do you want?" Jim's confession and character seem repeatedly, to us or to Marlow, to some extent, ridiculous and absurd:

In this assault upon his fortitude there was the jeering intention of a spiteful and vile vengeance; there was an element of burlesque in his ordeal--a degradation of funny grimaces in the approach of death or dishonour (p. 82).

Again Jim would not yield: "I would live it down--alone, with myself. I wasn't going to give in to such a beastly unfair thing. What did it prove after all? I was confoundedly cut up. Sick of life" (p. 101). He seems at the time, to Marlow, to deliberate upon death "because he thought he had saved his life, while its glamour had gone with the ship" (p. 99-100). This may foreshadow his acceptance of death in Patusan.

Jim is, to Marlow, a straggler--he does not believe in the idea of fidelity which Conrad tells us is the central idea of his works. It is in his preface to A Personal Record:

Those who read me know my conviction that the world, the temporal world, rests on a few very simple ideas: so simple that they must be as old as the hills. It rests, notably, among others, on the idea of Fidelity.

What he writes in Lord Jim may reflect the same thought: "in

our own hearts we trust for our salvation in the men that surround us....Woe to the straggler! We exist only in so far as we hang together."

...in them(Conrad's protagonists)we can watch some profound human truths being worked out. In their persons the inner problems of conduct and conscience are unpeeled and exposed. And usually this fatal jump is an act of betrayal, that most offensive of all acts which alienates a man from his fellows ...Conrad believed in the value of the ranks...he has a telling vision of the external and internal chaos which... drives men out and away from the solidarity of the ranks.<sup>7</sup>

Conrad seems to cast doubt on the romantic concern with the self. Probably to him, each of us, who is originally weak, full of fear, cannot survive singly amid our vast and destructive surroundings. Thus we must hang together in society, fighting off those evil powers. Jim is very different, as Marlow comments: "of all mankind Jim had no dealings but with himself." Jim's most revealing expression, demonstrating his feeling of superiority and his absolute self-absorption is: "Nothing can touch me". From this point, we may interpret his main affairs--the training ship, the Patna, and even the Patusan as proof that his self-honour is the sole purpose of all. He has no real interest at all in the world around him in, human relationships or cooperation. Therefore, he passes away at the end, in Marlow's eyes, to glorify his dream of self-idealization:

at the call of his exalted egoism. He goes away...to celebrate his pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct

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<sup>7</sup>Tanner, Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 58.

....ready to surrender himself faithfully to the claim of his own world of shades.

To Marlow or perhaps Conrad, Jim is heartless, self-deceptive, lacking self-knowledge. What causes all this is his interest only in his 'ego-ideal' and self-importance. "He was of those about whom there is no inquiry." He is a man of "callousness, of a colossal unconsciousness, of a gigantic deception....a sort of sublimated, idealized selfishness".

Jim's acceptance of death in Patusan is, however, his last card in showing that he is not yielding to the dark powers and he would not be robbed twice of his peace. The major cause is Brown's interference in his life here, "he sails to Jim's history, a blind accomplice of the Dark Powers", whereas Jim is seen by Marlow, fighting to overcome the forces. "For me that white figure(Jim)in the stillness of coast and sea seemed to stand at the heart of a vast enigma...seemed to catch all the light left in a darkened world" (p. 249). Brown is certainly jealous of Jim in his confidence of youth and his success over the land. His talking with Jim is highly psychological—he listens carefully to what Cornelius tells him about Jim, and from what Jim says together with his looks makes Brown able to gain the advantage: "he(Brown)seemed moved by some complex intention. He would rob a man if only to demonstrate his poor opinion of the creature" (p. 261).

Some great men owe most of their greatness to the ability of detecting in those they destine for their tools the exact quality of strength that matters for their works, and Brown, as though he had been really great, had a satanic gift to

finding out the best and weakness spot in his victim (p.285).

Jim lets Brown go because from their talk there is between them

a vein of subtle reference to their common blood, an assumption of common experience; a sickening suggestion of common guilt, of secret knowledge that was like a bond of their minds and of their hearts (p. 286).

Moreover, Jim cannot foresee Brown's and Cornelius' deceitful murder of his friend, Dan Waris. Most of all, Brown's situation reminds Jim of his Patna affair: "There are my(Brown's)men in the same boat--and, by God, I am not the sort to jump out of trouble and leave them in a d--d lurch" (p. 283). He feels sympathy for Brown when he says to Jewel: "Men act badly some time without being much worse than others". From the Patna lesson, perhaps, Jim thinks he cannot risk again deserting the natives in danger like those Moslem passengers. So Brown and his followers are allowed to retire safely. Perhaps Jim also wants to give Brown a chance and Jim promises to send him some food. The effect of the incident of Patusan on Jim is, however, great because of an inflexible romantic conscience. Taking responsibility on his head, he is courageous and ready to answer those infernal powers with his own life. Thus Marlow has made up his mind that Jim, for whom alone he cares, has at last mastered his fate. This is why in his eyes, Jim possesses "an unthinking and blessed stiffness before the outward and inward terror, before the might of nature". Jim's loneliness which is with him all life long is at its height now and he would conquer the fatal destiny itself by accepting death fearlessly. So he would neither fight nor flee. "Leave (Patusan)! Why! That's

what I was afraid of...it would have been harder than dying.... Leave! For where? What for? To get what?" (pp. 184-85). His death may be simultaneously taken as useless and full of self-concern again, leaving his people and lover behind. As in Jewel's view which is partly true, Jim has been driven away from her by a dream. It is the dream of "his own world of shades", of a "shadowy ideal of conduct" which is, for the others, incomprehensible, unpractical in the world of hard facts.

Conrad is seen to share the romantic idea of the artist and hero which is widely spread among nineteenth-century writers, such as Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Flaubert, and Carlyle:

Keenly aware of their separation from society. Baudelaire, with his deliberate adoption of a personality different from that of the ordinary man, is an obvious example. Obsessed by his isolation and unhappiness...He likened the poet to an albatross, regal among the clouds but so ridiculously clumsy on earth as to be for ordinary men a mere object of mockery. Flaubert shared this view. And Conrad was certainly aware of it...<sup>8</sup>

Nietzsche's Superman and Carlyle's Great Man can be seen as summarising the interest of the century in the hero: the great and lonely individual elevated above the common herd of society by the scope of his imagination, his dedication to dreams and Ideals, his contempt for the prosaic trivia of the day to-day existence.<sup>9</sup>

Thus individualism and imagination which are the key words for

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<sup>8</sup>Neville H. Newhouse, Joseph Conrad (New York: Arco Publishing Company, 1969), pp. 48-9.

<sup>9</sup>Tanner, Conrad: Lord Jim, pp. 7-8.



romantic writers and their realms of art, still exist in their heroes. So imaginative and conscious of his own self and its ideals, Jim, perhaps, is one of the best example of the romantic hero. About imagination, Conrad suggests in "Heart of Darkness" and Lord Jim that it can be a dangerous faculty, containing 'horrifying possibilities'.<sup>10</sup> Imagination, he says in Lord Jim, is the father of all terrors. It is, in a sense paradoxically the strong and weak points of the romantic hero. For the 'interior world', Conrad writes elsewhere, there are no policemen, no law, no pressure of circumstances or dread of opinion to keep anyone within bounds. It is, to Marlow, "respectable to have no illusion--and safe--and profitable--and dull". Yet, what in Jim matters to him, is the "virtue of his feeling". The imaginative people "swing farther in any direction, as if given a longer scope of cable". They are mostly seen as irrational and ridiculous because imagination has no limits. Marlow points out how Jim's excessive imagination causes his own fear and his inability to act: "he must have had an unconscious conviction that the reality could not be half as bad, not half as anguishing, appalling and vengeful as the created terror of his imagination" (p. 88). Thus Jim is immobilized when prompt actions or decision in real situations are needed:

His allegiance was always to the Abstract, to the Ideal: he was never equal to the demands of the actual....reality will not let him dream for very long...(he is) too fine, too frail and, perhaps too flawed to grapple with existence.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Newhouse, Joseph Conrad, pp. 108-10.

<sup>11</sup>Tanner, Conrad: Lord Jim, pp. 55-6.

Jim's tragic flaw is, however, due to the weak side of his own nature, to "a simple and sensitive character" as Conrad states in the "Author's Note" of the novel. We feel sympathy with him because of his falling through the irresistible weakness that can be ours. As Marlow says:

It is from weakness unknown, but perhaps suspected...from weakness that may lie hidden, watched or unwatched, prayed against or manfully scorned, repressed or maybe ignored more than half a lifetime, not one of us is safe. We are snared into doing things for which we get called names, and things for which we get hanged, and yet the spirit may well survive --survive the condemnation, survive the halter (p. 37).

As for the overall judgement of Jim's character, that is left for us to decide. His strength and weakness are revealed without any final judgement from Marlow: "as with the complexion of all our actions, the shade of difference was so delicate that it was impossible to say". After his death, Jim still remains insoluble to Marlow and perhaps to us all as well.

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