"ICE OR FLAME": A THEMATIC STUDY OF THE FICTION OF JOSEPH CONRAD

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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'ICE OR FLAME': A THEMATIC STUDY OF THE FICTION OF JOSEPH CONRAD

by

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A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English Language and Literature

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND

1976

ABSTRACT

Conrad abandons as means of 'seeing' truth traditional formal logic and practical reason, idols worthipped in nineteenth-century positivist thought; and, like Calderón, he adopts a dream-logic of contradictions akin to Nicholas of Cusa's principle of the coincidentia oppositorum. Conrad, like a mystic, struggles 'to see' the Inconceivable by the light of a synthetic logic and to translate into verbal symbols the unspeakable truth within and without.

Conrad's logic is the dream-logic of the infinite, the logic of analogy. Expressed analogically as sea, dream, mirror, woman and jungle, the Infinite is mutually-reflected within the craftsman, mankind and the universe. Conrad's works are themselves dreams, dramatic performances of the absurd in a universal playhouse of multiple interchanging optical and moral perspectives and identities, in which distinctions between reality and illusion, actor and spectator, good and evil, order and anarchy, dreaming and waking are ambigubus and obscure. Immersed in this dream-like, timeless element of contradictions, Conrad's protagonists, landsmen and seamen, initially ignorant of the truth of existence, become 'raving somnambulists' afloat in a sea of 'ice or flame.' Their subsequent interior

vision, a learned unknowing of truth, coincides with catastrophe.

The widespread failure of critics to perceive Conrad as a dream-logician and prose-poet of the Infinite, rather than as a craftsman of mere facts and surface logic, accounts for much of the mistranslation of Conrad's semantics of the Inscrutable, for the general misreading of his achievement within the tradition of Western letters, and for the mistaken charges that Conrad sentimentalized women and 'the seaman-self.' Conrad's ironic dream-logic, the logic of the Inscrutable, pervades the corpus of his work and provides its single underlying formal theme. Mankind, 'the intimate alliance of contradictions,' is Conrad's perennial subject.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the preparation of this dissertation I incurred many debts of gratitude. Space here permits me to record but a few:

to Dr. C. J. Francis, of Memorial University, for supervising this work on Conrad;

to Dr. G. M. Story and Dr. D. G. Pitt, of Memorial University, for their encouragement and criticisms;

to Dr. Gerald Morgan, of Royal Roads Military College, for expert guidance in nautical matters, and for reading the efforts of a novice 'sailor';

to Dr. Norman Sherry, of the University of Lancaster, for his solicitude and suggestions;

to Major G. W. S. Brodsky, Mr. Patrick Stewart, and Dr. Theo. Dombrowski, of Royal Roads Military College, for reading the initial draft of this dissertation;

to the Principal, Dr. E. S. Graham, and the Deans, Dr. Ron Oldham and Dr. A. Bricknell, of Royal Roads Military College, for their support and encouragement;

to the library staff of the University of British Columbia, the University of Victoria, and Royal Roads Military College, for assistance in locating materials; and

to my wife, Diane, and family, for patiently sharing in my odyssey.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

'Thus I saw change, re-change, interchange
The seventh moat's ballast; if my pen has erred,
Pray pardon me: it was all so new and strange.'
-- Dante, Inferno, Canto XXV

It has been over a half-century since the death of Jozef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski, leaving unfinished a novel set in Napoleonic times. Suspense, the uncompleted final work of a master of two crafts, leaves Cosmo and Attilio eternally afloat in the Gulf of Genoa, anxiously awaiting the dawn. So with the reader of Conrad. But his is a more fortunate lot: forty-three fictions remain, the study of which casts, as it were, light in the darkness of an unending suspension.

Efforts at elucidating the vision of the Pole who declared the intention, 'before all, to make you see,'[1] have not been wanting: Teets and Gerber[2] list nearly 2000 items published on Joseph Conrad to 1967. Various angles of vision have yielded a generous range of insights, those

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[1] Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS.

[2] Joseph Conrad: An Annotated Bibliography of Writings about Him (1971).

of psychoanalysis being in the ascendant in recent years -- witness the highly-reputed full-length studies by Thomas Moser (1957),[3] Albert J. Guerard (1958),[4] and Bernard C. Meyer (1967).[5] Of the many perspectives open to the Conrad critic, that of ideas has received relatively little attention during this period. Paul Wiley's study of 1954[6] is the last published effort in English to treat Conrad's ideas comprehensively. Perhaps Conrad's delightfully ironic self-abasement before a 'chinaman of letters' summoned from the Shades to explain that "The Return" (Tales of Unrest) is 'transcendental symbolico-positivist with traces of illuminism,'[7] has been read as a satirical admonition to future scholars tempted to analyze his work. But such

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[3] Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline.

[4] Conrad the Novelist.

[5] Joseph Conrad: A Psychoanalytic Biography. The psychological topography of "Heart of Darkness" in particular seems to offer an infinite number of routes to the Conrad explorer.

[6] Conrad's Measure of Man. Bruce Johnson's Conrad's Models of Mind (1971) restricts itself largely to matters of epistemology; and Eloise Knapp Hay's The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad (1963) concentrates almost exclusively on political ideas treated at times in isolation from Conrad's aesthetics, theoretical and practical.

[7] Letters from Joseph Conrad, 1895-1924, ed., Edward Garnett (1928), p. 129. Letter of 24 January 1898.

does not seem to have been the intention of the one-time commander of the barque OTAGO, who came to the craft of fiction, in his words, 'a man of formed character' and of 'conclusions...immovably fixed.'[8] He unfailingly encouraged Edward Garnett and Richard Curle to bring precise thought to the analysis of his vision; and on at least one occasion he expressed his scorn for novelists who made public their 'unreasoned' emotions, that is, who did not write with the self-control of a specific artistic intention.[9] And, as critics have generally emphasized when writing of such works as The Secret Agent and Under Western Eyes, for example, Conrad's art is marked by a quality of 'controlled irony.'[10] As he generalizes in a letter of 8 August 1923 to Edward Garnett, his pages are 'reasoned out and meditated.'[11] It is in consonance with this attitude that this study proposes to seek some light in the work of this complex writer.

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[8] G. Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters (1927), Vol. II, p. 204.

[9] "A Glance at Two Books," Last Essays, p. 132.

[10] Guerard, p. 248.

[11] Garnett, ed., p. 293.

Recent studies of Conrad's ideas have been either limited in scope or distorted in focus. Avrom Fleishman's fine analysis published in 1967,[12] for example, isolates political themes in Nostromo, The Secret Agent and Under Western Eyes; and Christopher Cooper's study (1970) of the 'moral foci' of Conrad's vision limits itself to the same three novels, in which the critic discerns explicit and implicit moral judgments offered for the edification of the reader.[13] Though, as critics have generally and justly insisted, Conrad's art is profoundly moral in that it pivots on questions of truth, good and evil -- a view which this study will sustain and extend --, it does not aim at 'moral justification or condemnation of conduct.'[14] The end of art is not to encourage virtue and to discourage

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[12] Conrad's Politics: Community and Anarchy in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad

[13] Conrad and the Human Dilemma: '...there is an optimism in these novels, and this...survives largely because Conrad, when he condemns, does so by implication rather than by direct statement. Of course he does damn utterly on occasion. One would be ignoring the meaning of the words if one read Conrad's final description of Ossipon in any other way' (p. 154). Cooper seems to overlook the fact that as a betrayer Ossipon cannot hold a candle to such Conrad 'heroes' as Lingard and Jim.

[14] The Arrow of Gold, p. 4. The words are those of the main narrator, who explains that his tale is not didactic.

vice, but to make men see the truth, 'the moral discovery which should be the object of every tale,' in the words of the English Teacher in Under Western Eyes.[15] The vision of truth, as Conrad writes in A Personal Record, 'is a moral end in itself.'[16] Conrad's 'superiority to his English contemporaries, who held openly or secretly an ethical belief,' suggests Edward Garnett, 'is shown in the impartiality which, facing imperturbably all the conflicting impulses of human nature, refuses to be biassed in favour of one species of man rather than another.'[17] And as Conrad writes in the Author's Note to Chance, the art of the novelist is 'no longer justified by the assumption, somewhere and somehow, of a didactic purpose.'[18] R. B. Cunninghame Graham nicely summarizes, I think, the matter of the

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[15] Under Western Eyes, p. 67.

[16] A Personal Record, p. 93.

[17] "Conrad's Place in English Literature," Conrad's Prefaces to His Works (1971), p. 25. Reprint of 1937 edition.

[18] Author's Note to Chance, p. ix. As the Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS shows, Conrad was much concerned with justification of his art. See also, Author's Preface, The Secret Agent: 'I have always had a propensity to justify my action. Not to defend. To justify' (p. viii); and the Author's Note to Under Western Eyes: '...my primary conviction that truth alone is the justification of any fiction' (p. viii).

relationship of morality and art in Conrad: 'Conrad never preaches, but only holds the mirror up to nature, for men to see themselves, and draw such moral as they can, from their own faces.'[19]

The study of Conrad's philosophical context is germane to the study of his fiction. Perhaps the simplest means of illustrating this is to observe how the assumptions of a critic, when at variance with those of the writer he examines, may lead to misinterpretations of that writer's work. David Daiches, for example, finds a contradiction in Conrad's thought and art: while Conrad insists that the author 'must preserve an attitude of perfect indifference,'[20] he also claims for himself as an artist 'the faculty of so much insight as can be expressed in a voice of sympathy and compassion.'[21] The verdict is clear: 'He did not tie up these contradictions into a philosophical system -- Conrad was no philosopher -- but allowed them to live side by side.'[22] Daiches seems to overlook the possibility that one need not

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[19] Preface to Tales of Hearsay, p. xv.

[20] Aubry, vol. I, p. 302. Cited by Daiches, "Joseph Conrad," The Novel and the Modern World (1939), p. 58.

[21] "A Familiar Preface," A Personal Record, p. xv. Cited by Daiches, p. 58.

[22] Daiches, p. 58.

be a professional philosopher to make a philosophical utterance; also, he seems not to acknowledge the fact that even systematic philosophers frequently fail to tie up contradictions. It is worth noting here that, as Morton Zabel observes, Conrad 'always held the visionary or philosophic tendencies of fiction under suspicion.'[23] And Robert Hodges, pursuing a similar line of thought, examines Conrad's reservations about Polish Messianism in the letters collected by Zdzislaw Najder.[24] This is not to say, however, that Conrad rejected such tendencies. As he remarks in the preface to A Personal Record, his very efforts to write imaginative literature of the highest quality involved striking a bargain with 'some grotesque devil,' a bargain he approached with 'dislike and distrust.'[25] Suspicion, for such a complex writer as Conrad, is not to be confused with simple rejection.

In reality, Conrad did not indulge in the uncritical

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[23] "Introduction," The Portable Conrad (1969), p. 13.

[24] The Dual Heritage of Joseph Conrad (1967), Chapter II.

[25] "A Familiar Preface," A Personal Record, pp. xvi-xviii.

contradictions outlined by Daiches. In the letter to R. B. Cunninghame cited in the critique, Conrad is speaking to the subject of artistic 'indifference,' the objectivity of the 'creator,'[26] what Matthew Arnold termed 'disinterestedness,' which attitude is not necessarily incompatible with sympathy and compassion, as the harlequin-costumed Russian seaman in "Heart of Darkness" and the Haldin women in Under Western Eyes, seen in the light of Conrad's own life, may readily illustrate.

Daiches, having charged Conrad with denying 'the logical implications of his attitude to his characters,'[27] observes in two novels the artistic results of his alleged intellectual shortcomings:

> His story of virtue untriumphant, of petty vice and greed and villainy defeating vitality and happiness and moral worth -- this story he entitled Victory, out of no sense of irony, but simply out of an inner conviction of optimism. He managed to make the story end on a note of triumph. And so he did with Lord Jim, also a story -- from one aspect at least -- of petty forces of evil finally victorious over romantic virtue. But Conrad managed to infuse into

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[26] Aubry, Vol. I, p. 302. Cf. "A Familiar Preface," A Personal Record, pp. xvi-xxi.

[27] Daiches, p. 60.

> the story something that was not warranted by the facts at all -- a sense that somehow it had been worth while.[28]

The literal victory of the immediate principals, Ricardo, Jones, Pedro and Gentleman Brown, is, in fact, equivocal. Heyst, the tame *deracine*, literally outlives the composite 'beast of prey looking upon all the tame creatures of the earth as its natural victims,'[29] before committing himself to the flames; and Gentleman Brown, ever accompanied by the harrowing spectre of a Spanish prison,'[30] is rewarded with a terrifying ordeal at sea and a monstrous death in a Bangkok hovel. Schomberg in exile and Cornelius in death share an equally equivocal victory.

Daiches' strictures, however, are not so wrong-headed in their conclusions as they are in their assumptions. The victory of Jim and Heyst is the victory of self-knowledge, for good or for evil, both of which are ambiguous. As Conrad writes to Sir Sidney Colvin (18 March 1917), 'All my concern has been with the "ideal" value of things, events,

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[28] Daiches, p. 60.

[29] *Victory*, p. 269.

[30] *Lord Jim*, p. 356.

and people. That and nothing else.'[31] His primary concern has not been with 'material' values. Captain Whalley's acute sight in blindness, for example, must be considered a non sequitur in terms of Daiches' assumptions: neither linear logic nor surface facts account for it. What the critic seems not to see is that the coincidence of virtue, happiness and enlightenment is foreign to Conrad. Conrad, the novice sailor in the TREMOLINO, a self-styled 'nautical casuist' trying to explain why his ship was not being chased by a ship of the Spanish coastguard, was self-deceived because he failed to take into account Caesar's treachery and the unpredictability of events.[32] Later, as a master of the craft of fiction, Conrad was to give full expression to the conviction that rational, surface inquiry was not the way to truth.

A brief survey of three other major critics suggests that assumptions similar to Daiches' are common in Conrad

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[31] Aubry, Vol. II, p. 185. As J. A. Palmer notes, it has been the tendency of recent studies to ignore this point: Joseph Conrad's Fiction: A Study in Literary Growth (1968), p. 266.

[32] The Mirror of the Sea, p. 173.

criticism. F. R. Leavis, in an influential analysis, states that Conrad often made a virtue of obscurity.[33] Such a suggestion is hardly consistent with the identification of Flaubert as Conrad's master.[34] It should be mentioned to Conrad's credit that, when writing fiction, he practised what he preached: 'the ideal of perfect accuracy,' 'words in direct relation to things and facts.'[35] Nowhere in his essays does he enter the dark mist of 'quiet unyieldingness,' 'a suggestion of a certain emptiness,' 'consummateness,' 'inevitable naturalness,' and 'exquisitely sensitive crispness.'[36] It appears that Leavis, while expressing a view of some merit and substance, assumes Conrad to be a 'realist,' a writer of surface facts and surface logic, then criticizes him for lapses from 'realism' into the 'inscrutable.'[37] C. B. Cox offers a similar critique of Leavis' view, and notes of Conrad's fiction that it is a search 'for an

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[33] The Great Tradition (1948), pp. 177-182.

[34] Ibid., p. 190.

[35] "Outside Literature," Last Essays, p. 40; "The Unlighted Coast," Last Essays, p. 50.

[36] Leavis, pp. 197, 200, 209, 211.

[37] Ibid., pp. 177-182. Robert Stallman points out a similar procedure in the criticism of Philip Rahv: "Fiction and Its Critics: A Reply to Mr. Rahv," Kenyon Review, XXIX (1957), 290-299.

artistic form to capture an awareness beyond the area of immediate sensation.'[38] In a manner similar to Leavis', Thomas Moser, in his interesting study of Conrad's misogyny, interpreting 'to see' either literally or as voyeurism, praises the 'early Conrad' for his 'psychological realism,' and chides the 'later' for failing to account for 'improbabilities' and for sometimes failing 'to distinguish between illusion and reality.'[39] The charge is mystifying, for one of Conrad's constant themes is that any distinction between illusion and reality is ambiguous in a universe of improbabilities. The charge, ironically enough, may recall the feverish Travers' chiding of d'Alcacer in The Rescue: 'You have lost all sense of reality, of probability.'[40] It is interesting to note on the subject of appearance and truth that Moser finds Conrad's loss of two branches of a candelabra in The Arrow of Gold a sign of growing debility,[41] while failing to mention that in The Nigger

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[38] Joseph Conrad: The Modern Imagination (1974), p. 49.

[39] Moser, pp. 176, 128, 153.

[40] The Rescue, p. 352.

[41] Moser, p. 190.

of the NARCISSUS, an early work, Conrad has the reader of Bulwer-Lytton's Pelham unable to sign his name. And Moser himself (though such is understandable in view of the intricacies of Conrad's text) is not without factual error. For example, he presents us in an analysis of The Rescue with an 'unlettered Lingard' (who, in fact, has read the Iliad),[42] an Amy Foster with a 'capacity for resolute.... action under stress' (who, in fact, through inaction, 'did not prevent the crime'),[43] and a Jewish tugboat skipper (who is, in fact, a Dutch lieutenant of a gunboat).[44] A third influential critic, Marvin Mudrick, editor of the Twentieth-Century-Views collection of essays on Conrad, identifies him as a 'realist,' and thus understandably finds his frequently 'narcissistic' prose 'ludicrous.'[45] In another article, Mudrick berates Conrad for brooding over

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[42] Moser, p. 67; The Rescue, p. 22. The 'unlettered Lingard' appears in An Outcast of the Islands, p. 198. Moser's case, which rests almost entirely on the comparison of early and late texts, is seriously weakened by such an error.

[43] Ibid., p. 91; "Amy Foster," Typhoon and Other Stories, p. 109.

[44] Ibid., pp. 101, 122-123; "Freya of the Seven Isles," 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 159.

[45] "Introduction," Conrad: A Collection of Critical Essays (1966), pp. 4, 5.

the 'Incomprehensible' and the 'Infinite.'[46] This critic's healthy resistance to indulge the sometimes exaggerated claims of Jungian analysts, who tend to confuse analogy or similitude with identification in the 'Unconscious,' also has the unfortunate tendency, it seems to me, of requiring the reader to discard all but the most literal-minded views of Conrad's fiction, thus doing an injustice to the demonstrably multi-layered nature of Conrad's art. The study of Conrad, who, 'confronted by the...enigmatical spectacle' of the universe, descended 'within himself,'[47] is perhaps better founded on philosophical assumptions consonant with his own.

Conrad's fiction is not philosophical in the manner of George Eliot, Meredith, Wells, Huxley or Zamiatin. Victory, which may remind the reader of The Ordeal of Richard Feverel in that it presents the dramatic test of a philosophical system, is an anomaly in this respect.

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[46] "Conrad and Terms of Criticism," Hudson Review, VII (1954), 419-426. See also, his article, "The Artist's Conscience and The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,'" Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XI (1957), 288-297: Conrad is 'too much taken up with his metaphysics to go much beyond merely stating it.'

[47] Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS.

Writing to Edward Garnett, his intimate friend and literary mentor, Conrad flatly judges "The Return" (Tales of Unrest) 'bad art' in that its 'moments' seem to him created for 'the illustration of the idea';[48] though, in a letter to R. B. Cunninghame Graham, Conrad observes: 'I don't start with an abstract notion. I start with definite images.'[49] But these statements are themselves ideas, as Paul Wiley illustrates in his treatment of Conrad's 'cosmic imagery.' The scholar's conclusion goes well beyond the consideration of imagery in itself:

> The view of man as a limited being is central to the drama in the bulk of Conrad's fiction. It is a belief which inspires the subtlest ironies as well as the tragic outlines of so many of his tales. It is also at the root of his perception that harmony of mind and instinct is essential to the complete individual.[50]

The study of medium as an analogue of thought, of images as incarnations of ideas, has provided in this case an 'ideal' protractor for the plotting of Conrad's conceptual 'odyssey.'

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[48] Garnett, ed., p. 111. Letter of 11 October 1897.

[49] Joseph Conrad's Letters to R. B. Cunninghame Graham, ed. C. T. Watts (1969), p. 116. Letter of 8 February 1899.

[50] Wiley, p. 213.

As the English Teacher observes in Under Western Eyes, 'A novelist['s]...belief is made sufficiently manifest by a telling phrase, a poetic image, the accent of emotion.'[51] For the 'writer of prose' as for the 'poet,' Conrad writes in A Personal Record, 'truth' is 'often dragged out of a well and clothed in the painted robe of imaged phrases.'[52]

A perspective which has been overlooked in conventional Conrad scholarship as practised in the United States and the United Kingdom is that of his kinship with Calderón de la Barca. Jocelyn Baines, for example, allows but one sentence on Calderón's theme, 'Life Is a Dream,' while dedicating some four pages to considerations of Flaubert's influence.[53] Conrad, it is true, once noted that La tentation de Saint-Antoine and L'Education sentimentale provided him with models, but 'only from the view of the rendering of concrete things and visual impressions.'[54]

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[51] Under Western Eyes, p. 162.

[52] A Personal Record, p. 93.

[53] Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography (1959), pp. 145-146, 148, 180, 182, 190, 275. Though Baines may have considered Calderón's 'influence' and found little in it, he does not give an account of having done so. I agree with Cox when he notes that Baines 'is out of touch with an artistic sensibility that ...considers human rationality an illusion' (p. 17).

[54] Aubry, Vol. II, p. 206. Letter to Hugh Walpole (1918).

The 'only' is significant. While Conrad, unlike Melville and Dostoevski, insisted on fidelity to the surface aspects of 'the visible world' and found abhorrent any rejoicing in a 'mystical' intoxication with evil,[55] he never limited his sight to 'mere facts,'[56] 'accidents only,'[57] the surface appearances which Zola had enshrined in Le roman experimental (1880).[58] Guided by his imagination, Conrad sought to render

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[55] See "Turgenev," Notes on Life and Letters: the characters of the 'convulsed terror-haunted Dostoevski' are 'strange beasts in a menagerie or damned souls knocking themselves to pieces in the stuffy darkness of mystical contradictions' (pp. 47-48). As has been often suggested, Conrad had a guarded attitude toward his imagination; Dostoevski did not. See Neville Newhouse, Joseph Conrad (1966), p. 51. Sir Jacob Epstein records a comment on Melville made by Conrad in 1924: 'He knows nothing of the sea. Fantastic, ridiculous.... Mystical, my eye! My old boots are mystical'--Epstein: An Autobiography (1954), p. 288.

[56] E.g.: Nostromo, p. 107; Under Western Eyes, pp. 3, 251; The Arrow of Gold, p. 58; Author's Note to Typhoon and Other Stories, p. viii; The Secret Agent, p. 278; "The Planter of Malata," Within the Tides, p. 10.

[57] Aubry, Vol. I, p. 183. Letter to Edward Noble, 28 October 1895. Conrad advises Noble: 'Well, that imagination (I wish I had it) should be used to create human souls; to disclose human hearts, -- and not to create events that are properly speaking accidents only. To accomplish it you must cultivate your poetic faculty -- you must give yourself up to emotions (no easy task).'

[58] G. Brereton, A Short History of French Literature (1954), p. 224. See J. Ortega y Gasset, "Flaubert, Cervantes and Darwin," Meditations on Quixote (1961), pp. 162-165.

verbally 'the mystic nature of material things.'[59] 'All creative art,' he writes in an appreciation of Henry James, 'is an evocation of the unseen.'[60] 'On the track of the enigma,' the artist, like the character Alven Hervey in "The Return," passes 'out of the world of senses into the region of feeling.'[61] Conrad's vision is not limited to that of 'the Western eye, so often concerned with mere surfaces,' as Marlow generalizes in Lord Jim.[62]

European critical approaches have long recognized the centrality of the mystical, Baroque strain in Conrad. Przemyslaw Mroczkowski, for example, repeats in 1957 Mégroz's speculations of 1931 regarding the Baroque 'double-sidedness'

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[59] A Personal Record, p. 130. The phrase occurs in a recollection of the contemplation of a quiet 'moonlit' sea during a night of 'dreamy splendour.' The aura of moonlight may recall to the reader the often-cited passage in "Heart of Darkness":

> But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him 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' -- p. 48.

[60] "Henry James," Notes on Life and Letters, p. 13. Critics who overlook this point tend to make Conrad heir to Flaubert. See, e.g., F. R. Karl, "Joseph Conrad's Literary Theory," Criticism, II (1960), 317-335.

[61] Tales of Unrest, p. 177.

[62] Lord Jim, p. 262.

of Conrad's mind.[63] Gérard Jean-Aubry, in Vie de Conrad (1947), underlines Conrad's relationship to Słowacki, the nineteenth-century Polish mystical poet and dramatist and translator of Calderón.[64] And Adam Gillon recalls Baroque themes in two chapters of The Eternal Solitary: A Study of Joseph Conrad (1960) -- "To Follow the Dream" (II) and "The Balance of Colossal Forces" (III). As Conrad himself notes in an interview with Marian Dąbrowski: 'In commenting on my works, the English critics always say that they find in them things that are incomprehensible, unfathomable.'[65] Specialists in European literature have, I think, been more willing to take these 'things' into account.[66]

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[63] "A Polish View of Joseph Conrad," Listener, LVIII (1957), 979-980; Joseph Conrad's Mind and Method (1931).

[64] Translated as The Sea Dreamer (1957), p. 262. See also, Zbigniew Grabowski, "Po trzydziestu latach," Conrad Żywy, ed. Wit Tarnawski (1957), pp. 134-140.

[65] "Rozmowa z J. Conradem," Tygodnik Illustrowany, XVI (18 April 1914); reprinted in translation in Polish American Studies, XVII (1960), 66-71. Conrad remarks of English critics in A Personal Record:

> An ideal of reserved manner, adhered to from a sense of proprieties, from shyness, perhaps, or caution, or simply from weariness, induces, I suspect, some writers of criticism to conceal the adventurous side of their calling, and then the criticism becomes a mere 'notice'.... (p. 96)

[66] See also, Gustav Morf, The Polish Heritage of Joseph Conrad (1930). Though Morf does not refer to Słowacki, he (cont...).

Working within the European tradition, Gerald Morgan, in Sea Symbol and Myth in the Works of Joseph Conrad,[67] briefly notes Conrad's kinship with Calderón. Referring to the Calderonian themes of Narcissus and mirror in a Platonic context including Słowacki and Cusa, he comments on philosophical dimensions of Conrad's relationship to the sea.[68] The present study, similarly focussing on Baroque themes familiar to the historian of ideas and literature, will consider the Conrad-Calderón relationship in a radically different context, that of Aristotelian formal logic. Conrad, replying to the charge that he lacked a 'creed,' ironically commented in a letter to Edward Garnett (20 July 1905): 'for myself I don't know what my philosophy is. I wasn't even aware I had it.... Shall I die of it do you think?'[69] The playful comment, qualified by Conrad's observation, noted above, that he had come to the craft of writing a man of 'conclusions...immovably fixed,' may merely

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[66]cont.: ...frequently mentions the 'mystic' element in Conrad. The omission of Słowacki is perhaps understandable in view of Morf's concern with the reading of Conrad's fiction as psychological autobiography.

[67]Doctoral dissertation, Université de Montréal, 1962.

[68]Morgan, Chapter V. See his "Conrad, Madach et Calderón," Etudes Slaves et Est-Européennes, VI (1961), 196-209.

[69]Garnett, ed., p. 193.

suggest that Conrad's art is not philosophical in the sense that it does not explicitly articulate a positive creed. This study, unlike Morgan's work, will examine the 'dream-logic' of Conrad's fictions, defined in its negative aspect as a rejection of the Aristotelian principle of contradiction, and thereby taking perhaps more fully into account Conrad's skeptical and ironic temper of mind.[70] And though critical terms implying a sort of logic, such as 'chronological loops,' 'duality,' 'bifocal vision,' 'dialectical tension,' 'two-sidedness,' and 'ambiguity,' have gained some currency in Conrad studies,[71] they and their consequences for Conrad's art and Conrad criticism remain unexamined in terms of traditional formal logic. Thus, while endeavouring in part to complement, to assimilate, and, it is hoped, to extend some of the insights of previous critics, this study proposes to establish a distinctive view of Conrad from a yet unexplored perspective.

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[70] Cf. Wylie Sypher, "The Late-Baroque," Four Stages of Renaissance Style (1955), pp. 291 ff. Sypher considers David's Hume 'metaphysical rack' -- 'every proposition involves a contradiction' -- as the starting point of modern intellectual inquiry.

[71] See, e.g., I. Watt, "Joseph Conrad: Alienation and Commitment," The English Mind, eds. Davies and Watson (1964), pp. 257-278; Fleishman, op. cit.; and J. Zuckerman, "Contrapuntal Structure in Conrad's Chance," Modern Fiction Studies, X (1964), 49-54.

Conrad's vision bears some striking similarities to Calderón's. It is Calderón's philosophical drama evoking the illusory nature of existence, La vida es sueño (Life Is a Dream) (1635), that provided the epigraph of Conrad's second novel, An Outcast of the Islands (pub. 1896):

> Pues el delito
> Mayor del hombre
> Es haber nacito.
> (Jornada Primera).[72]

(Man's greatest sin is to have been born. -- The First Day)

Stein's declaration may suggest comparison with Calderón's view of life: 'A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea.'[73] Decoud, submerged in himself, similarly reflects: 'All this is life, must be life, since it is so much like a dream.'[74] In a letter to Arthur Symons, another explorer of the land of somnambulists,

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[72] All quotations from Calderón are taken from Obras Completas, edición de A. V. Briones (1966), three volumes. The most obvious parallel to this epigraph in An Outcast of the Islands is ironically placed in the mouth of a drunken scientist, a self-professed 'materialist': '"My dear fellow," he addresses Almayer, "don't -- don't you see that the ba-- bare fac--the fact of our existence is off--offensive"' (pp. 362, 367).

[73] Lord Jim, p. 214.

[74] Nostromo, p. 249.

Conrad observes: 'Life is a dream';[75] he makes the same reflection to Christopher Sandeman some eleven years later in 1922: 'I feel more than ever that la vida es sueño';[76] and, searching for a principle of classification for his works in one of his last completed pieces, "Preface to The Shorter Works of Joseph Conrad," he notes: 'Calderón said that "Life is a Dream."'[77] The direct references extend from 1896 to 1924, virtually Conrad's entire life as a writer. Almayer's Folly, his first published novel, appeared in 1895. Though these references and analogues do not provide 'hard' evidence of direct influence, they do, I think, give us warrant to examine parallels between these two authors so often concerned with similar themes.

This study proposes to clarify Conrad's vision in the light of a cluster of inter-related concepts incorporated in Calderón's philosophical drama. A consideration of Calderón's central themes, particularly as they relate

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[75] Aubry, Vol. II, p. 126. Letter of 1911.

[76] Aubry, Vol. II, p. 286.

[77] Last Essays, p. 142.

to logic, a sketch of their heredity, and a brief survey of the routes by which they lead to Conrad, provide a convenient means of elucidating these concepts.

Aristotelian logic is ineffectual in the world created by Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681). In the eyes of this playwright given to the examination of illusions, enlightenment follows upon immersion in dreams. This central perception provides the title of his most influential work, the comedia, La vida es sueño.

Set in Poland, the play explores the interchanging nature of illusion and reality. Basilio, King of Poland, assuming a real distinction between waking and reaming, conspires to test Prince Segismundo; he manipulates his son's environment so that Segismundo cannot distinguish literal dream from literal reality. The dénouement finds Basilio learning that his use of illusion is itself part of a more comprehensive dream. His effort to avert destiny -- the victory of Segismundo over himself and his father -- proves a material cause in the realization of that destiny. Both father and son come 'to see' that reality may be illusion, and illusion, reality; they are enlightened; they are disabused of their illusory belief that man can

distinguish between fact and dream, Segismundo underlines the lesson in a final address on the subject of dreaming, waking, and learning:

> ¿Que os admira? ¿Que os espanta,
> Si fue mi maestro un sueño,
> y estoy temiendo, en mis ansias,
> que he de despertar y hallarme
> ostra vez en mi cerrada
> prision. Y cuando no sea,
> el sonarlo solo basta;
> pues asi llegue a saber
> que toda la dicha humana,
> en fin, pasa como sueño.
> (Jornada Tercera)

(What surprises you? What startles you if my teacher was a dream, and in anxiety I fear that I shall awake and find myself again locked in my prison? And though this were not so, only to dream it is enough; for thus I have come to know that all human fortune, in the end, passes like a dream. -- The Third Day)

Conrad, in the year following the publication of An Outcast of the Islands, with its epigraph from La vida es sueño, made a similar observation to R. B. Cunninghame Graham, an enthusiastic translator of Spanish literature: with growing 'consciousness' comes the 'knowledge' that man's life is 'more fleeting than the illusion of a dream.'[78] In a vein paralleling Daiches' on Conrad, François Bertaut, a perhaps

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[78] Watts, ed., pp. 53-54. Letter of 14 December 1897.

overly-zealous Aristotelian, commented some ten years after a visit with the white-haired Calderón in 1659: 'il ne savait pas grand'chose.'[79] The kind of knowledge that comes by way of rational analysis is not the kind of knowledge which Calderón and Conrad seek to unveil.

To see one's self in a dream is like seeing one's self on a stage. Segismundo, acting the somnambulist, sees himself playing the role of victor on la anchurosa plaza del teatro del mundo ('the specious stage of the playhouse of the world');[80] Basilio, playing the part of director of dreams only to find that Fate assigned him the rôle of actor, comes to define the world as a teatro funesto ('dark stage').[81] Calderón made the metaphor concrete in the auto sacramental, El gran teatro del mundo. Spectators and actors share mutually-reflecting double-identities on a continuously shifting stage where real and illusory existences mingle in doubled perspectives. Spectators and actors exchange rôles under the direction of God. In the mythological

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[79] Journal du voyage in Espagne (1669), p. 171. See René Bray, La Formation de la doctrine classique (1966), Chapitre II.

[80] Jornada Segunda.

[81] Jornada Tercera.

perspective of Eco y Narciso (Echo and Narcissus), a drama first performed in 1661, Calderón explored two further analogues of this dual vision. As his twentieth-century compatriot and a renowned Hegelian, José Ortega y Gasset, observes in relation to Renaissance drama, actors and spectators enter the single playhouse para ver ('to see') and para ser vistos ('to be seen').[82]

The reconciliation of opposites, expressed as antitheses and parallels, according to Everett W. Hesse, is the fundamental formal principle in Calderón's plays.[83] While this, of course, is true to some extent of all drama, the emphasis on formal patterns of antithesis and balance, as Richard Levin observes, varies according to the aesthetics prevailing in any one period in the history of drama.[84] Calderón's characters come to perceive their illusions, and resolve their problems in 'an illusory synthesis of discordant elements.'[85]

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[82] Idea del teatro (1968), p. 37.

[83] Calderón de la Barca (1967), pp. 99 ff.

[84] The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama (1971), Chapters III and VII.

[85] M. Oppenheimer, "The Baroque Impasse in the Calderonian Drama," PMLA, LXV (1950), 1163. Cf. Jean Rousset, La littérature de l'âge baroque en France: Circé et le paon (1954), pp. 66, 123, 226.

The fates of Basilio and Segismundo, drawing them in opposite directions, lead to mutual enlightenment in reversed perspectives. Immersion in dreams deprives man of his reason (el humano discurso priva),[86] and in this atmosphere of optical-moral illusions, fuego y hielo ('fire and ice')[87] unite, and a vivo cadaver ('living corpse')[88] wanders about in a somnambulistic trance. Anarchy would seem the logical corollary of such a vision; yet, as Clotaldo reminds Segismundo, and as, in reversed rôles, Segismundo reminds Clotaldo, que aun en sùenos no se pierde el hacer bien ('even in dreams one should not lose the sense of what is right').[89] Obrar bien es lo que importa (' to do what is right is what is important')[90] is a principle familiar to the student of Conrad.

The themes outlined above may also be traced to Conrad by direct reference and by comparison along a network of secondary channels. In Calderón's vision, which finds its principal antecedent analogue in the

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[85] Jornada Segunda.

[87] Jornada Primera.

[88] Jornada Tercera.

[89] Jornada Segunda y Tercera.

[90] Jornada Tercera. See Morgan, "Conrad, Madach et Calderon," p. 202.

philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa, many nineteenth-century writers found the dramatic synthesis of what appeared to be a fragmented universe, the key to the knowledge of the supreme reality -- a synthesis and a key mirrored in the Hegelian dialectic and in Schelling's aesthetics. From Germany, Poland, France, and England, the synthetic logic may be traced forward to Conrad and back to the fifteenth-century philosopher of the coincidentia oppositorum.

Stein, an 'anatomy' of nineteenth-century German romanticism -- Goëthe's Torquato Tasso furnishes him with an appropriate verse on the subject of the mind's relationship to the outer world --,[91] delivers the Calderón-like pronouncement, 'A man that is born falls into a dream,' and defines Nature as a 'balance of colossal forces' --[92] both doctrines dear to the Baroque artist. Calderón was exalted by the German littérateurs. La hija del aire (The Daughter of the Air) (1653), with its marriage of darkness and light, and with its use of character, plot

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[91] Lord Jim, p. 211.

[92] Ibid., pp. 214, 208.

and imagery as inter-reflecting mirrors, Goëthe found congenial.[93] Friedrich and Wilhelm Schlegel translated five of Calderón's plays between 1803 and 1809.[94] In his widely-read History of Poetry, J. K. F. Rosenkrantz, a popularizer of Hegel's logic, made a comparative study of Calderón's El magico prodigioso (The Wonder-Working Magician (1637) and Goëthe's Faust.[95] An analysis by Johann Schulze of El principe constante (The Constant constante) (1629) appeared in 1811; and lengthy eulogies by Otto von der Malsberg, Friedrich Zimmerman and R. Braumstarck were published in 1819, 1848 and 1868, respectively.[96] F. Lorinser, a particularly ardent Calderonian, translated in entirety the Spanish master's 73 published autos.[97]

And themes parallelling Calderón's were common in

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[93]Hesse, pp. 99-102, 157.

[94]Ibid., pp. 99-102.

[95]Ibid., p. 157. See Henri-Frédéric Amiel, Amiel's Journal, trans. Mrs. Humphrey Ward (1889), p. 53.

[96]Arturo Farinelli, La vita è un sogno (1916), Parte Seconda, pp. 340-343.

[97]A. Parker, The Allegorical Drama of Calderón (1968), p. 37.

nineteenth-century German fiction. The tales of the one-time inhabitant of Warsaw, E. T. A. Hoffmann, for example, mentioned in relation to Mme. de S___ in Under Western Eyes,[98] may be defined as evocations of 'les symptômes du somnambulisme.'[99] "L'homme au sable" ("The Sandman"), Hoffmann's tale of nightmares, prefigurations, optical illusions and double-identities in a microcosm of 'funèbres' and 'lumières,'[100] ends in suicide; and in "Glück," an investigation of the psychic double, Hoffmann writes:

> Beaucoup de voyageurs oublient leur rêve dans le pays des rêves; ils deviennent eux-mêmes des ombres au milieu de tous ces brouillards.[101]

The narrator in "Don Juan," which most clearly reveals Hoffmann's preoccupation with Baroque themes, is unable to distinguish sleeping from waking, illusion from reality; he reflects on 'la double possibilité' that the Dona Anna of Mozart's opera is simultaneously 'dans la salle et sur la scène.'[102] In the end, like Basilio, the narrator comes

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[98] Under Western Eyes, p. 215.

[99] Hoffmann, "Le majorat," Contes fantastiques (n.d.), p. 69.

[100] Hoffmann, p. 195.

[101] Ibid., p. 219.

[102] Ibid., p. 204.

to believe in the truth of illusions: Dona Anna, the *persona* who dies in his dream and on the stage, is also the person who actually dies during the performance. A comparison of Hoffmann with Calderón is further suggested by Wilhelm Schlegel, the German philosopher of idealism and co-translator of several of Calderón's plays, who declared that, by viewing truth and illusion as images of each other, Calderón had solved the enigma of the universe.[103]

Perhaps the most important channel of Calderón-like ideas as they relate to Conrad may be discovered in the works of the Polish poets, Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki. Conrad states in an interview with the future novelist Marian Dabrowski:

> My father read *Pan Tadeusz* aloud to me and made me read it aloud on many occasions. But I preferred *Konrad Wallenród* and *Grazyna*. Later I preferred Słowacki. Do you know why Słowacki? Il est l'âme de la Pologne, lui.[104]

In the same interview, he declared that, of all writers,

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[103] A. del Rio, *Historia de la literatura Española* (1948), Vol. I, p. 329. See E. R. Curtius, "George, Hofmannsthal, and Calderón," *Essays on European Culture* (1973), pp. 142-168. Curtius considers the influence of Calderón ~~on, two of Conrad's~~ on two of Conrad's contemporaries.

[104] Dabrowski, pp. 66-71.

Słowacki had the greatest influence on his work.[105] While Conrad did not specify the exact nature of Słowacki's influence, the fact that he considered it the greatest on his work and of a 'spiritual' nature (l'âme de la Pologne), strongly suggest that it had to do with Conrad's abiding concern, truth, which, as this study proposes to show, may be described in the philosophical language of the coincidentia oppositorum. Few Conrad scholars in the English-speaking world have acknowledged the clue. Frederick Karl, for example, does not mention Słowacki, though he treats of Flaubert's influence at length.[106]

The major themes of Polish Romantic literature are reflected in the Baroque strain of Mickiewicz's work. Konrad Wallenrod, his Messianic epic, written in 1828, deals in part with questions of reality and illusion, betrayal and expiation. The hero, who provided Apollo Nalecz Korzeniowski with one name for his only child, is, like Byron's Conrad in The Corsair, a double-agent; assuming the role of traitor to his native land, Konrad betrays the

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[105] Dąbrowski, pp. 66-71. Cf. A. Gillon, "Some Polish Literary Motifs in the Works of Joseph Conrad," Slavic and East-European Journal, X (1966), 424-439.

[106] A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad (1960).

invading Teutonic Knights. In Part Three of the poetic drama, Forefathers' Eve (1832), Mickiewicz presents another variation on the theme of double-identity: Konrad and Father Peter are dual facets of the one person living in a union of past and present. And, as in Calderón, the 'tension of opposites' is the basic formal principle in Mickiewicz.[107] Andrzej Busza has discerned in Conrad's "Karain: A Memory" (Tales of Unrest), a tale of doubles, reflections, spectres and guilt, echoes of Mickiewicz's ballad, "The Ambush."[108]

Juliusz Słowacki's debt to Calderón is direct. He undertook a study of Spanish at the age of 24 that he might read Calderón in the original.[109] The creator of modern Polish drama translated El principe constante, and imitated Calderón in the play, Ksiadz Marek (Father Mark).[110] The scholar Jean Bourrilly, considering Kordian, Mary Stuart, Godzina Mysli and Lambro, finds Slowacki's imagination obsessed with contrasting appearances which

> dessinnent deux aspects d'un univers, tour

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[107] David Welsh, Adam Mickiewicz (1966), p. 76.

[108] Conrad's Polish Literary Background, Antemurale (1966), pp. 209-213.

[109] J. Bourrilly, La Jeunesse de Jules Słowacki (1959), p. 128.

[110] Julian Krzyzanowski, Polish Romantic Literature (1931), pp. 130, 150.

> à tour ténébreux et clair, monstreux et suave, violent et doux, macabre et délicieux, démoniaque et angélique.[111]

Zbigniew Folejewski similarly notes:

> Hegelian formulae of dialectic oppositions ...[are] reflected in a series of poetic works in which the Polish poet...strives at a synthesis between the angelic and satanic elements in the history of mankind.[112]

Słowacki's characters wander through a dream-like world of contradictions, wrestling with the Infini in quest of enlightenment, the attainment of which more often than not coincides with catastrophe.[113] Conrad's Tuan Jim and Axel Heyst, for example, share a similar fate. The schema might be compared to that of a nineteenth-century Calderón.

Calderón's vision is also mirrored in another literature with which Conrad had more than a passing acquaintance, that of nineteenth-century France. Paul Verlaine's poem, "A Propos d'un centenaire de Calderon," dedicated to José Maria de Heredia, Martin Decoud's literary

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[111] Bourrilly, p. 447.

[112] "The Theme of Crime and Punishment in Słowacki's Poetry," Studies in Russian and Polish Literature, eds. Folejewski, Karpovich, Whitfield and Kaspin (1962), pp. 164-165.

[113] Bourrilly, p. 448. Cf. the Introduction by G. Rapall to Słowacki's Anhelli, Trans. Dorothea Prall Radin (1930).

model,[114] suggests the nature and extent of Calderon's influence among the symbolistes:

> Ce poète terrible et divinement doux,
> Plus large que Corneille et plus haut que Shakespeare;
> Grand comme Eschyle, avec ce souffle qui l'inspire,
> Ce Calderon mystique et mythique est à nous.[115]

A fellow symbolist poet, Baudelaire, whose "La musique" provided the epigraph of The Shadow-Line,[116] offers a glittering reflection, by analogy, of Calderón's vision. Like the author of the musical Art poétique, a poet given to contemplating the infinitely beautiful 'correspondances' reflected in water, Baudelaire charges his poetry with mythical significance. His is a world of dreams and mirrors. The "Rêve Parisien," for example, with its 'rideaux de cristal,' 'glaces éblouies,' and 'gigantèsques naiades' mirrored in 'étangs dormants,'[117] may be traced in its immediate inspiration to Swedenborg and Joseph Le Maistre,[118] but further upstream lies the 'mystic and mythic' Calderón.

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[114] Nostromo, p. 151.

[115] Oeuvres poétiques complètes, ed. Y. G. Le Dantec (1962), p. 437.

[116] '...D'autres fois, calme plat, grand miroir / De mon désespoir....' -- Oeuvres, ed. Y. G. Le Dantec (1954), p. 202.

[117] Les Fleurs du Mal, ed. W. Fowlie (1963), pp. 78-80.

[118] Fowlie, "Introduction," p. 8.

'Le sommeil est plein de miracles.'[119]

Dreams lie at the core of the symboliste metaphysic. Only in dreams does man come to learn that his apparent 'lucidité' is 'une nuit profonde,' that

> toutes choses, dans notre univers sensible, ont une signification symbolique, sont le reflet à moitié lumineux, à moitié obscur de la realité suprême.[120]

This dual aspect of the world of the senses reveals itself 'sous forme de lutte entre les tendances contraires.'[121] And such a dialectic underlies a mode of thought clearly distinct from traditional logic: 'la pensée analogique.'[122] Treating the visible universe an an analogy, a 'reflection' of the truth, the artist strives to see the similarity of dissimilars. The symbol or analogy, evoked in dreams, is thus an act of enlightenment and reconciliation. Henri-Frédéric Amiel, with whose Journal intime Conrad was familiar,[123] meditated on the theme:

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[119] Fowlie, ed., p. 78.

[120] Albert Béguin, L'Amè romantique et le rêve (1939), p. 68.

[121] Ibid., p. 68.

[122] Paul Claudel, Art poétique (1903), pp. 50-52.

[123] The epigraph of Almayer's Folly is taken from the Journal intime.

> This power which dreams have of fusing incompatibles together, of uniting yes and no, is what is most wonderful and symbolical in them.[124]

With the 'marriage of contraries' come 'learned innocence' and 'foolish wisdom.' 'Our waking life,' Amiel confesses, 'is...but...a connected dream.'[125] And Amiel, it is to be noted, meditated on both Rosenkrantz's History of Poetry, with its comparison of Calderon and Faust, and his explication of Hegel's logic.[126] The logic of opposites may be likened to the logic of dreams.

Victor Hugo, referred to by Amiel as 'a Gallicized Spaniard,'[127] had incorporated this complex of ideas in Les travailleurs de la mer (1866), the first book that directed Conrad's attention toward the sea.[128] The mariner-hero, Gilliatt, is a 'dreamer' immersed in the night 'of affinities, of antagonisms,' a 'stupendous flow of the universal antithesis,' and in the sea, which 'from the

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[124] Amiel, p. 197.

[125] Ibid., pp. 227, 131.

[126] Ibid., pp. 53, 84. Cf. Hesse, p. 157.

[127] Amiel, p. 92.

[128] A Personal Record, p. 72. Cf. Aubry, Vol. I, p. 15.

abundance of its tempests...attains equilibrium.'[129] The logic is overtly Hegelian. As in the case of Słowacki's heroes and, indeed, of a plethora of romantic heroes, enlightenment carries with it destruction: Gilliatt chooses eternal refuge in the depths of the 'Infinite.'[130] 'Dreams,' Hugo writes, 'are the aquarium of night.'[131]

Comparison of Conrad's vision with that of Baroque writers is further suggested by Conrad's references to works of Shakespeare and Carlyle, both of whom, like Calderón, meditated on dreams. Three epigraphs[132] and numerous allusions[133] evidence Conrad's interest in themes similar to Shakespeare's; and it is Novalis' dictum on the subject of the infinite reflections between souls, taken by Conrad from On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History,[134]

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[129] The Toilers of the Sea (n.d.), Vol. I, p. 38; Vol. II, p. 87; Vol. II, p. 20.

[130] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 20.

[131] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 38.

[132] Tales of Unrest: Henry IV, Part II, IV, v, 213 ff.; Nostromo: King John, IV, ii, 108; Within the Tides: Hamlet, III, ii, 43-44.

[133] See Karl, A Reader's Guide, pp. 253-255.

[134] Sartor Resartus and On Heroes, ed. W. H. Hudson (1908), p. 292: 'It is certain any conviction gains infinitely the moment another will believe in it.'

which provided the epigraph of the novel in which Stein philosophizes. The hero's first distinction, Carlyle tells us, is 'that he looks through the show of things into things.'[135] In what is perhaps a reference to Carlyle's statement, the Russian sailor in "Heart of Darkness" says of Kurtz: 'He made me see things -- things.'[136] Also, a youthful Marlow read Sartor Resartus,[137] in which the 'inspired' Herr Diogenes Teufelsdröckh utters: 'This Dreaming, this Somnambulism, is what we on Earth call Life.'[138] Carlyle's Calderón-like theme finds its source in Shakespeare: "Natural Supernaturalism," Book III, Chapter viii, of Sartor Resartus, concludes with a quotation from The Tempest:

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on; and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.
> (Iv, i, 156-158)

The stream of Calderón-like thought and art which can be traced to Conrad can also be charted backwards in time. Jackson I. Cope has recently brilliantly examined the

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[135] Hudson, ed., p. 289.

[136] "Heart of Darkness," p. 127.

[137] "Youth," p. 7.

[138] Hudson, ed., p. 40.

development of 'the idea of the theater' from the Platonic topos, 'the tragedy and comedy of life,' to the live stage of Baroque drama.[139] His study begins with the philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa and concludes with La vida es sueño. The identification of Cusa as the Spanish playwright's principal antecedent in the history of 'the idea' throws additional light on the nature of the philosophical and literary tradition within which Conrad developed his own art, for it is in Cusa's vision that we find the primary conceptual analogue linking Baroque drama and the logic of dreams so revered in nineteenth-century thought.

Nicholas of Cusa, an influential contributor to a man-oriented vision of the universe in the fifteenth century,[140] rejected traditional formal logic as the means of coming to know the truth lying at the heart of existence. Working within a tradition of negative theology which may be followed through Hugh of Saint-Victor and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite to Proclus,[141] Cusa observed that

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[139] The Theater and the Dream (1973).

[140] Martin Buber, Between Man and Man (1955), p. 130.

[141] Nicolas Berdyaev, Freedom and the Spirit (1948), pp. 64-65.

the sciences, relating as they did all their inquiries to the principle of contradiction, could not account for the existence of 'pôles différents.'[142] The problem of the philosophical synthesis of 'extremes' haunted the Cardinal until, afloat in the Mediterranean, Conrad's future nursery,[143] he saw reflected in 'the mysteries of the deep' the underlying principle of existence, the coincidentia oppositorum.[144]

Relying almost exclusively on an intricate system of optical and geometrical analogies, Cusa elaborated this concept in his master work, De Docta Ignorantia (Of Learned Unknowing).[145] In Cusa's universe, only when man transcends formal logic and enters the boundless space of contradictions does he begin to approach that state of 'learned unknowing' which coincides with the Infinite, the reconciliation of the maximum and the minimum.[146] Using the classical example

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[142] De Conjecturis, II, i, cited by E. Vansteenberghe, Le Cardinal Nicholas de Cues (1920), p. 243.

[143] "The Nursery of the Sea," The Mirror of the Sea, pp. 148-151.

[144] Vansteenberghe, p. 262.

[145] Ibid., pp. 422-423.

[146] Cope, pp. 16-22.

of a circle, Cusa speculates on the logic of the infinite by which opposites coincide, beginning and ending, forwards and backwards, up and down. With this logic as a vehicle, man enters a state where, in the words of Edmond Vansteenberghe, 'one does not reason, but where one sees.'[147] Jean Wenck, a brilliant Aristotelian and Cusa's contemporary, charged him with attempting 'to attain incomprehensibly the incomprehensible.'[148] We might note here a parallel congruence of logic and intellectual assessment in the history of literary criticism as it pertains to a study of Conrad: the works of Słowacki and Mickiewicz were similarly criticized by late nineteenth-century Polish positivists because they were 'sometimes incomprehensible' and because they 'disregarded logic.'[149] The positivist, Antoni Sygietynski, for instance, logically preferred Flaubert as a model for the artist.[150] Conrad, as noted above, while placed by some critics in the tradition of Flaubert,

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[147] Vansteenberghe, p. 284.

[148] Ibid., p. 287.

[149] Czeslaw Milosz, "Positivism," The History of Polish Literature (1969), p. 284.

[150] Ibid., p. 291.

has also been subjected to similar criticism: Conrad, writes Leavis, 'is intent on making a virtue of not knowing what he means. The vague and unrealizable, he asserts with a strained impressiveness, is the profoundly and tremendously significant.'[151]

Analogues of Cusa's philosophy abound in modern German philosophies. Edmond Vansteenberghe discerns correspondences between Cusa's analogies from optics and geometry, and Leibniz's mathematical models;[152] Etienne Gilson sees Cusa's critique of traditional formal logic mirrored in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason;[153] and J.-Roger Charbonnel finds prefigured in De Docta Ignorantia both the Hegelian dialectic and Schelling's principle of 'l'identité des contraires.'[154] Through Schelling, the Cusian and Calderonian principle of the coincidentia oppositorum gained currency in nineteenth-century aesthetics.

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[151] Leavis, p. 180.

[152] Vansteenberghe, pp. 450-451.

[153] History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages (1955), p. 536.

[154] La Pensée Italienne au XVIe Siecle et le courant libertin (1919), pp. 705-707.

Coleridge's conception of the imagination as the faculty which 'reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities,'[155] is borrowed directly from Schelling's On the Relation of the Plastic Arts to Nature (1806).[156] Casimir Brodzinski, professor of Polish literature at the University of Warsaw, based his influential analysis, O Klasycznosci i Romantycznosci (1818), on the same work.[157] In 1834, Slowacki wrote to his mother: 'Je lis beaucoup, je me suis plonge dans la philosophie allemande....'[158] Jean Bourrilly suggests Brodzinski's book as a cause of the plunge. 'L'âme de la Pologne,' as Conrad called him, the young translator and imitator of Calderon, had perhaps found a congenial theoretician.

From the above account, we can see not only that Conrad made explicit reference to Calderon's theme, la vida es

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[155] Chapter XIV, Biographia Literaria, ed. Shawcross, Vol. I, p. 12. See A. Snyder, The Critical Principle of the Reconciliation of Opposites as Employed by Coleridge (1918); and M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (1958), p. 174.

[156] Wimsatt and Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History (1957), pp. 393-396.

[157] Bourrilly, Appendix, pp. 452-454.

[158] Ibid., p. 195.

sueño, in the matter of describing existence, a matter, it seems to me, of considerable consequence for the student of an author dedicated to bringing to light the truth of existence; but also, more comprehensively and thus more importantly in an effort to establish a kinship based on a tradition of dream-logic, that, within this tradition, Conrad's principal literary and philosophical antecedents other than Calderón, established either by direct reference or by parallels, were either directly influenced by Calderón's vision or were preoccupied with parallel themes.

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CHAPTER II: CONRAD'S *ARS POETICA* AND THE *COINCIDENTIA OPPOSITORUM*

'It seemed to him that he must be on fire, then that he had fallen into a cold whirlpool....' -- "The Planter of Malata"

'We carry in us the wonders we seek without us: there is all Africa and her prodigies in us....' -- Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici

'My good friend, I advise before everything else the course in logic. There will your mind be trained; there will you be decked out in good Spanish boots....' Goethe, Faust, Part I

Conrad, like Cusa and Baroque and Romantic writers echoing the fifteenth-century voice of the coincidentia oppositorum, found formal logic a blind guide in the search for the truth underlying existence. This chapter consists of a study of Conrad's rejection of the Aristotelian way and of the positive consequences of that rejection for his thought and art. With an artist who declared that 'the appointed end' of voyages, literary and marine, 'being Truth itself, is One,'[1] and who excelled in both crafts, it is appropriate that such a study begin with the ars poetica with which he launched his first deapsea novel.

'Art,' writes Conrad in the second sentence of the

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[1] A Personal Record, p. 18.

1897 Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, 'may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe,[2] by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect.' Unlike the philosopher, who plunges 'into ideas,' and the scientist, who plunges 'into facts,' the artist, confronting the 'enigmatical spectacle' of the universe, 'descends within himself, and in that lonely region of stress and strife, if he be deserving and fortunate, he finds the terms of his appeal.' In Coleridge's rendition of Proclus, he 'looks at his own Soul,' to find 'hidden worlds within worlds.'[3] This theme, common enough among

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[2]To say that Conrad's fiction is 'true' in the sense that its materials are taken from 'real life,' so called, does not, I think, warrant the suggestion that Conrad's 'truth' is Aristotelian, since what is true or real for Conrad may not be what is true or real for Aristotle. Conrad, as Norman Sherry has demonstrated so well, went to the possible, to the 'visible universe,' to what is generally referred to as 'real life,' for much of his material. But the philosophical question remains: for Conrad, what is 'the visible universe'?; or, to put it in another way, what is life? Conrad's answer -- life is a dream in a universe of conflicting forces -- stands in contradiction of Aristotle. See Norman Sherry, Conrad's Eastern World (1966), Chapter 15 in particular.

[3]Notebooks; cited in the introduction to Carl G. Jung's Memories, Dreams, Reflections (1961), p. v.

Baroque[4] and Romantic authors, has many parallels in Conrad's fiction:

> 'The human heart is vast enough to contain all the world.'[5]
>
> 'I could find in the universe only what was deeply rooted in the fibres of my being.'[6]
>
> 'The mind of man is capable of anything, because everything is in it.'[7]
>
> 'He had carried solemnly within his breast the whole universe.'[8]

For Conrad, there can be no clear separation of the world and the subjective perception of that world.

Conrad then amplifies from a shifted perspective: art, he continues in the Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, is the 'appeal of one temperament to all other temperaments.' Logical discourse is voiceless in this appeal, for temperament

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[4] E.g.: Sir Thomas Browne, in Religio Medici: '...every man is a Microcosm, and carries the whole World about him' -- p. 399.

[5] Lord Jim, p. 323.

[6] "The Tale," Tales of Hearsay, p. 62. The words are spoken by the narrator.

[7] "Heart of Darkness," p. 96.

[8] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 341. The character referred to is Willems.

'is not amenable to persuasion.'[9] Thus the artist descends within himself also to find the universal bond with mankind; and it is to that 'part of being which is not dependent on wisdom' that he addresses himself.

In temperament alone do the artist and (to use a common Conrad analogue) his fellow crewmen[10] share 'the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity,' the simple yet multiple underlying truth. 'Instinct alone is invariable,'[11] Conrad was later to remark; and on yet another occasion he was to write: 'We remain brothers on the lowest side of our intellect and in the instability of our feelings.'[12] And mankind, in turn, creates and suffers 'the moral, the emotional atmosphere of time and place' which is the artist's ambience.

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[9] See "The Ascending Effort," Notes on Life and Letters, pp. 74-75: 'But Mr. Bourne (an 'apostle' of 'Science') seems to forget that "persuasion" is a vain thing. The appreciation of great art comes from within.'

[10] The crew/ship : man/Earth analogy is a Conrad favourite. E.g.: The Nigger of the NARCISSUS: 'Our little world went on its curved and unswerving path carrying a discontented and aspiring population' (p. 103). And the ship is 'the moral symbol of our life' -- Notes on Life and Letters, p. 188.

[11] Author's Note to Notes on Life and Letters, p. vii.

[12] The Mirror of the Sea, p. 29.

Art, as Conrad develops his views in the Preface, must therefore 'make its appeal to the senses,' the channels for the experience of the truth within the artist, mankind and the universe to which all are bound in an 'unavoidable solidarity,' in the desire of reaching 'the secret springs of the emotions.' 'Events,' Conrad had earlier written to Edward Noble (2 November 1895), are 'the outward sign of inward feelings';[13] and later, in the Author's Note to a collection of tales, he was to define the writer as 'the translator of human passions into speech.'[14] In its appeal to the emotions through the senses, the Preface continues, art 'must strenuously aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the colours of painting, and to the magic suggestiveness of music.' Echoing Paul Verlaine's Art poétique, and prefiguring the twentieth-century symbolist novel,[15] Conrad considers music 'the art of arts.' 'The power of sound,' he was to write twenty-two years later,

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[13] Aubry, Vol. I, p. 183. Compare Nicholas Berdyaev on symbol and myth: 'The outward is only the external sign of that which lies within' (p. 82).

[14] Within the Tides, p. ix.

[15] See Vernon Young, "Joseph Conrad: Outline for a Reconsideration," Hudson Review, VII (1949), 5-19.

'has always been greater than the power of sense.'[16] It is on this note that the Preface concludes: the end of art is 'not in the clear logic of a triumphant conclusion;'[17] it is not in the unveiling of one of those heartless secrets which are called Laws of Nature'; it is in making men '_see_' the 'truth of life.'

The significance of the Preface to _The Nigger of the NARCISSUS_, composed in 1897, expressing convictions from which Conrad never deviated thereafter, is deepened and further clarified by the definition of the mutually-reflecting analogues, man and the universe. And since the artist is bound in an unavoidable solidarity with both mankind and Nature, the definitions suggests levels of analogical meaning

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[16] "A Familiar Preface," _A Personal Record_, p. xi. Compare Robert Graves on music and poetry: 'The nucleus of every poem worthy of the name is rhythmically formed in the poet's mind, during a trance-like suspension of his normal habits of thought, by the supra-logical reconciliation of conflicting emotional ideas' -- _The Common Asphodel_ (1949), p. 1. Edward Garnett early noted likenesses between Conrad's and Chopin's life and art: Appendix, Watts' edition of Conrad's letters to R. B. Cunninghame Graham, p. 212. Cf. Edward Crankshaw, _Joseph Conrad_ (1936), pp. 124-133, 173-177. Commenting on Graves' above remark, John Press speculates: 'We are...led back [by such music] to the great Ocean of primitive feeling which lies far away from the land-locked continent of scientific rationalism' -- _The Fire and the Fountain_ (1966), p. 119.

[17] See Aubry, Vol. II, p. 344: Conrad writes to F. N. Doubleday (2 June 1924) that 'a work of art should speak for itself,' yet 'it is clear that a work of art is not a logical demonstration carrying its intention on the face of it.'

of considerable import for Conrad's art and, by extension, for Conrad criticism. Such a critical procedure, grounded on Conrad's text, may offer useful insights into the basic integrity in diversity which, I think, characterizes his fiction.

'This is Nature -- the balance of colossal forces,' 'the mighty Kosmos in perfect equilibrium,'[18] avers Stein. This balance of contradictions is duplicated in man; as Conrad writes in the "Preface to The Shorter Tales," 'humanity' is 'strangely constructed from inertia and restlessness, from weakness and from strength and many other interesting contradictions.'[19] This doubled definition has many parallels in Conrad's fiction. Jewel, in Lord Jim, is 'a curious combination of shyness and audacity,' and Jim and Dain Waris are drawn by 'the very difference of race' into a 'mystic ...sympathy.'[20] Monsieur Georges records in his manuscript: 'If [redacted] could have kept a record of one's physical sensations it would have been a fine collection of absurdities and contradictions'; Dona Rita exists, in Mills' opinion, 'at the mercy of contradictory impulses'; and Captain Blunt is

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[18] Lord Jim, p. 208.

[19] Last Essays, p. 144.

[20] Lord Jim, pp. 282, 261.

described by his mother as 'a being of strange contradictions.'[21] In Nostromo, Decoud declares of the country where 'everything merely rational fails' that its people oscillate between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.[22] Captain Lingard of the LIGHTNING comes to find the universe 'full of contradictions.'[23] In The Secret Agent, Stevie's fits of compassion and rage are described as 'two phases as indissolubly joined and connected as the reverse and obverse sides of a medal';[24] and, duplicating the Platonic man/state analogy, the narrator in "The Anarchist" relates: 'It is a fact that the bitterest contradictions and the deadliest conflicts are carried on in every individual breast capable of feeling and passion.'[25] As with the men in a nameless ship who fight the 'double fight' in a universe of 'horrid logic' -- 'The adverse weather held us in front and the disease pressed our rear'[26] -- so with the landsmen d'Hubert and Feraud, Picardy and Gascony, North and South, who duel in a world beyond 'rational

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[21] The Arrow of Gold, pp. 141, 348, 177.

[22] Nostromo, pp. 315, 171.

[23] The Rescue, p. 188.

[24] The Secret Agent, p. 169.

[25] A Set of Six, p. 169.

[26] The Shadow-Line, pp. 93, 85.

apprehension' 'under the sway of contradictory sentiments.'[27] In Chance, the 'skeptical' Marlow and the 'innocent' Powell come to a quick understanding for the very reason that 'they were exactly dissimilar,'[28] while, in Victory, Jones and Ricardo, also 'well matched in their enormous dissimilarity,' according to Schomberg,[29] are a living antithesis to Heyst and Alma. Falk, that mysterious nautical centaur uniting moral delicacy and brutal instinct, elicits the narrator's observation: 'the logic of our conduct is always at the mercy of obscure and unforeseen impulses.'[30] The principle of the reconciliation of discordant elements has a clear analogue in Under Western Eyes: the English Teacher informs Nathalie Haldin that he cannot conceive of the way in which 'antagonistic ideas' are 'to be reconciled'; she replies: 'The whole world is inconceivable to the strict logic of ideas. And yet the world exists to our senses, and we exist in it.'[31] Cosmo, in Conrad's final and uncompleted

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[27] "The Duel," A Set of Six, pp. 172, 186.

[28] Chance, p. 32.

[29] Victory, p. 130.

[30] Typhoon and Other Stories, p. 205.

[31] Under Western Eyes, pp. 105-106.

fiction, describes the universe in which a logic of contradictories operates as 'a scene of conflicting emotions in which facts appraised by reason preserved a mysterious complexity and a dual character.'[32] In Conrad's own voice, humanity is 'the intimate alliance of contradictions';[33] and it is at this 'unappeasable ocean of human life,' an 'element as restless, as dangerous, as changeable as the sea,'[34] that he aimed his art.

'It is never, never reason which governs men and women'[35] in this 'world of unreasonable resentments,'[36] 'unreasonable sublimities,'[37] the universal context of Conrad's protagonists. Rather, there rules an antithetical logic of contradictions. Marlow, in "Heart of Darkness," defines life as 'the mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose';[38] and, speaking of Jim's fate, he observes: 'there is a profound and terrifying logic in

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[32] Suspense, p. 38.

[33] A Personal Record, p. 36.

[34] "Preface to The Shorter Tales," Last Essays, pp. 142-143.

[35] Chance, p. 206.

[36] "The End of the Tether," p. 221.

[37] Lord Jim, p. 377.

[38] "Heart of Darkness," p. 150.

it.'[39] It may be compared, I think, to the logic of Massy's mathematical 'calculations' in the SOFALA,[40] and of Verloc's 'vortical' odyssey in an 'infernal' London where 37 follows 9 -- [41] the logic of non-linear progression, 'the roundabout logic of emotions,' as Conrad writes of the way in which Charles Gould comes to feel 'that the worthiness of his life was bound up with success.'[42] This circular logic is further suggested in the character of Marlow in Chance, who, according to the narrator, 'I,' is in the habit of 'chasing some notion or other round and round his head';[43] and in the imagery of emotion used in the description of Renouard's state of inner conflict in "The Planter of Malata," for example:

> It seemed to him that he must be on fire, then that he had fallen into a cool whirlpool, a smooth funnel of water swirling about with nauseating rapidity.[44]

Conrad's imagery of emotional turbulence here suggests a

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[39] Lord Jim, p. 342.

[40] "The End of the Tether," pp. 265-268.

[41] The Secret Agent, p. 14.

[42] Nostromo, p. 85.

[43] Chance, p. 33.

[44] Within the Tides, p. 71.

parallel with the perennial philosophical notion which links circular logic with the coincidence of opposites in metaphysical speculation: A implies non-A; non-A implies A; ad infinitum. In this philosophical 'gyre,' we may discern an analogue of Conrad's logic of contradictions.

Of this sort of logic, Conrad spoke directly to R. B. Cunninghame Graham in a letter of 8 February 1899: it is 'la logique suprême,' 'la logique qui mène à la folie' -- the logic of 'existence.'[45] As a formal principle, it may be described as a balance of contradictions: the universe, like emotional mankind, has its own 'unanswerable logic.'[46] As F. H. Bradley, T. S. Eliot's tutor in philosophy, remonstrated in an analysis of the limitations of traditional formal logic in metaphysical inquiry, 'the principle of contradiction...can not and must not attempt to account for the existence of opposites.'[47] Stéphane Lupasco, more recently, has stepped back in time from

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[45] Watts, ed., p. 118. Letter of 8 February 1899.

[46] Notes on Life and Letters, p. 25.

[47] The Principles of Logic (1922), p. 145. First published in 1883. Conrad and Balzac, it seems, were Bradley's favourite novelists: G. R. Mure, "F. H. Bradley," Encounter, XVI (1961), 34.

Hegel to Cusa to draw out the affirmative implication of such a statement: 'Logic...must become the basic science of the dynamic contraries in human experience.'[48] Aristotelian *scientia* casts no light in the universe where such a logic governs: 'Life and the arts,' Conrad writes in an essay of 1910, 'follow dark courses, and will not turn aside to the brilliant arc-lights of science.'[49] Rather, it is by the light of the imagination, the faculty by which opposite or discordant qualities are balanced or reconciled, that the artist follows his 'dark course.' 'Imagination,' writes Conrad, '...is the supreme master of art as of life.'[50] And in the words of his essay, "Poland Revisited," 'the novelist's art of make-believe' takes him into a '*pays du rêve*, where you can travel only in imagination.'[51]

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[48] Stéphane Lupasco, *Logique et Contradiction* (1947); cited by Wylie Sypher, *Loss of Self in Modern Literature and Art* (1962), p. 99.

[49] "The Ascending Effort," *Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 74. See Oscar Wilde on Hegel and art: *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. R. Ellmann (1969): 'A truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true' (p. 432).

[50] *A Personal Record*, p. 25.

[51] *Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 148.

For Conrad, a master mariner and a master craftsman of the imagination, the artist's course through darkness by the light of the synthetic logic of the imagination finds its principal analogue in the seaman afloat in the 'illogical' element.[52] 'I floated in the calm waters of pleasant speculation between the diverging currents of conflicting impulses,'[53] he writes of the composition of Chance. Some eight years later, in a letter to Ford Madox Hueffer (9 May 1905), he records a speculation much less pleasant: 'I am sunk in a vaguely uneasy dream of visions of innumerable tales that float in an atmosphere of voluptuously aching bones.'[54] And referring to the conflicting attractions of two careers[55]

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[52] E.g.: An Outcast of the Islands, p. 12.

[53] Author's Note to Chance, p. vii.

[54] Aubry, Vol. II, p. 19.

[55] In their efforts to clarify the mystery of Conrad, many critics have found the sailor-novelist/Bobrowski-Korzeniowski dialectic useful pivots. See, e.g., Busza, op. cit.; Leo Gurko, The Two Lives of Joseph Conrad (1967); and R. Hodges, The Dual Heritage of Joseph Conrad (1967). As Conrad mentions to K. Walizewski, 'Homo duplex has in my case more than one meaning' -- Z. Najder, Conrad's Polish Background (1964), p. 240. Conrad's fiction, as many critics have noted, reveals a conflict between the 'metaphysical' and the 'practical.' The logic of this balance, while accounting materially for both poles, is incompatible with the 'positivist' strain by itself. See S. Helsztynski, "Joseph Conrad -- czlowiek i tworca," Kwartalnik Neo-Filologiczny, V (1958), 39-60, for an examination of the relationship between the Bobrowski influence on Conrad and positivism.

during the period immediately following the publication of Almayer's Folly, he confesses: 'I was a victim of contrary stresses.... I let my spirit float supine over that chaos.'[56]

An Outcast of the Islands was the immediate result of the swim; and it is in this fiction that the reader is introduced to the optical metaphor, 'the restless mirror of the Infinite.'[57] The nautical masterpiece immortalizing the NARCISSUS and her crew, likened on one occasion to 'raving somnambulists,'[58] was launched shortly thereafter. The trials of the artist are like those of the seaman: the 'writing life' is a

> sunless, starless sort of mental solitude - ...[in] an unruly choppy sea running crosswise in all the endless shifts of thoughts.[59]

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[56] Author's Note to An Outcast of the Islands, p. vii.

[57] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 12.

[58] The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, p. 128.

[59] Joseph Conrad: Letters to William Blackwood and David S. Meldrum, ed. William Blackburn (1958), p. 133. Letter of 26 August 1901. It is noteworthy, in an analogical context, that Edward Garnett, less than five years after Conrad had received his discharge from the master of the TORRENS, recorded finding in Conrad's art qualities 'each hidden & overshadowed by a contradictory quality' -- Watts, ed., Appendix, p. 212; and that Cunninghame Graham recorded three weeks after Conrad's death that he had found the man and his work 'a strange compact...of...conflicting qualities' -- "Inveni Portam: Joseph Conrad," Saturday Review, CXXXVIII (1924), 162-163.

'To see! to see! -- this is the craving of the sailor,'[60] as it is for the artist. Like the seaman, the writer struggles steadfastly to remain afloat in the 'illogical' element, while the sailor, like the artist, when at 'sea' during a prolonged darkness resulting in a loss of bearings, lives in 'a nightmarish state between waking and sleeping,' a state of 'inconsequent thinking.'[61] Failure to float or swim is disastrous.[62] Writing of his struggle in the nautical/literary Mirror of the Sea, Conrad makes the parallel explicit:

> I had, like the prophet of old, 'wrestled with the Lord' for my creation....
>
> . . . . . .
>
> ...a material parallel can only be found in the everlasting sombre stress of the westward winter passage round Cape Horn. For that too is the wrestling of men with the might of their Creator, in a great isolation....[63]

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[60] The Mirror of the Sea, p. 87.

[61] Ibid., p. 88.

[62] See Lord Jim: 'with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up' (p. 214); and The Mirror of the Sea: 'every craft that swims the sea' (p. 98).

[63] A Personal Record, pp. 98-99.

It is only those who strive courageously to come to the appointed of the voyage who are vouchsafed a glimpse of truth.

Conrad adds yet another dimension to the mariner/artist analogy by parallelling the way of the seaman afloat, by analogy, in 'the restless mirror of the Infinite,' and that of the mystic:

> Beyond the line of the sea horizon the world did not exist for me as assuredly as it does not exist for the mystics who take refuge on the tops of high mountains. I am speaking now of that innermost life, containing the best and the worst that can happen to us in the temperamental depths of our being.[64]

Like the mariner sailing in 'Eternity,'[65] the mystic,

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[64] Author's Note to The Mirror of the Sea, p. x. Conrad transfers 'the aesthetics of the infinite' from the mountains to the sea. In this respect, he is a nautical Wordsworth who finds in the visible manifestations of 'tumult and peace, the darkness and the light..../The types and symbols of Eternity,/ Of first and last, and midst, and without end' -- The Prelude, VI, ll. 634, 639-640. See Marjorie H. Nicolson, Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite (1959), Chapter VIII in particular. Conrad alludes to Wordsworth in writing of Youth: 'Emotions remembered in tranquillity' -- Last Essays, p. 144; also, Conrad's phrase, 'the mystic ordering of common events' (A Personal Record, p. 4), suggests comparison with the view of Wordsworth.

[65] Conrad writes of his own experience: 'In my early days, starting out on a voyage was like being launched into Eternity' -- Notes on Life and Letters, p. 182. The true sailors were men 'who knew how to exist beyond the pale of life and within sight of eternity' -- The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, p. 25.

swims, as it were, in the clouds of the 'innermost' self; like the seaman, he is immersed in 'the everlasting night that fills the universe.'[66] Isolated from the world, the mystic undertakes, in the words of William Cowper, 'To dive into the secret deeps within.'[67] And the seaman, as noted above, Conrad likened to the artist. Thus, like the mystic, the artist 'descends within himself' to enter the infinite 'cloud of unknowing'; he floats in the 'mirror of the infinite' in a struggle similar to Marlow's in Lord Jim -- 'to comprehend the Inconceivable.'[68] The artist

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[66] The Rescue, p. 151. Conrad, late in life, read John of the Cross' The Dark Night of the Soul: Watts (ed.), p. 172. Royal Roussel, considering the novel genre 'a history of the soul as it voyages in search of itself,' treats this theme from the point of view of 'the consciousness immanent in language.': The Metaphysics of Darkness (1971). In The Rescue, Conrad explicitly associates the mystical tendency with the Latin temperament: the Spaniard d'Alcacer, 'a true Latin, was not afraid of a little introspection. In the pause, he descended into the innermost depths of his being....'--p. 411.

[67] "Retirement," Table Talk, l. 135. E. M. W. Tillyard has traced the development of this theme in England from Henry Vaughan's translation of seven odes by the popular seventeenth-century Polish poet, Mathias Casimir Sarbiewski, to the poetry of William Cowper: Myth and the English Mind (1962), pp. 68-92. In a letter to Richard Curle (July 1914), Conrad uses the verbs 'plunged' and 'submerged' to describe the experience of writing Victory -- Curle (ed.), p. 23.

[68] Lord Jim, p. 93. 'Every image floats vaguely in a sea of doubt--and the doubt itself is lost in an unexplored universe of incertitudes,' Conrad writes to Garnett (16 September 1899) on the subject of his own struggle in writing. Garnett, ed., p. 135.

strives to make men see the truth of that which is beyond rational comprehension, the core or essence of the self and the universe. The microcosm analogically reflects the macrocosm; the macrocosm, the microcosm; and the artist is reflected in and reflects both:

> Surely in no other craft as in that of the sea do the hearts of those already launched to sink or swim go out so much to the youth on the brink, looking with shining eyes upon that glitter of the vast surface which is only a reflection of his own glances full of fire.[69]

> And the unwearied self-forgetful attention to every phase of the living universe reflected in our consciousness may be our appointed task on this earth.[70]

As Carlyle writes in On Heroes, Hero-Worship and Sartor Resartus, 'to get into the truth of anything is ever a mystic act,' 'a look into a whole inward sea'; it is 'to see into the Deep that is infinite, without bottom and without shore.'[71] And as Boethius (Englished by Chaucer) records in a dialogue with Philosophia, 'mannys resoun

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[69] Lord Jim, p. 129.

[70] A Personal Record, p. 92.

[71] Hudson, ed., pp. 292, 49, 193.

may undirstonde...fewe thingis of the devyne depnesse.'[72] Conrad's art issues from a knowledge akin to that of the mystics; in his own words, from 'unintellectual knowledge.'[73] It may be compared to the knowledge Cusa termed 'learned unknowing,' the state in which opposites are reconciled in the Infinite. As Conrad generalizes in A Personal Record, 'Extremes touch.'[74] Some fourteen years earlier, in a letter of 14 January 1898, he had declared: 'Salvation lies in being illogical.'[75] In positive terms, for the

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[72] "Boece," Liber Quartus, Prosa vi. The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson (1961), p. 369. This same prosa in Chaucer's translation provided Conrad with the epigraph of The Mirror of the Sea: '...for this miracle or this wonder troubleth me right gretly.' The troubled state of soul arises in the discussion of the role of reason in coming to know 'the devyne purveaunce.'

[73] Notes on Life and Letters, p. 73. Conrad writes to Garnett in a letter of 10 March 1897: '...the best kind of knowledge because the most akin to revelation....'-- Garnett, ed., p. 92.

[74] A Personal Record, p. 132.

[75] Aubry, Vol. I, p. 223. See E. Said, Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography (1966), pp. 137-137: 'truth for Conrad was...the negation of intellectual differentiation.' R. Blüth, in an effort to distinguish Conrad from Dostoevski, argues mistakenly, in my view, that Conrad is a 'rationalist' and that Dostoevski is 'mystical': "Joseph Conrad: le problème du crime et du châtiment," Vie Intellectuelle, XII (1931), 320-329. Conrad and the Russian novelist are more accurately distinguished, I think, on the basis of attitudes towards unreason: Dostoevski delights in it, while Conrad approaches it with ironic reservation.

artist, it lies in being analogical. The circular logic of dreams, uniting opposites by similitude or analogy, provides the artist with a means of looking into the truth of himself and the universe, and of incorporating that truth in fiction.

This non-rational knowledge or learned ignorance finds its literary expression in symbols, as the artist, 'swimming' in the 'mirror of the Infinite,' translates into verbal analogues the essential truth of a universe where, in Amiel's words, 'everything repeats itself by analogy.'[76] Looking within himself, he sees reflected the images of the visible universe by which he is able to express his vision. Conrad, who would not join any 'school,'[77] himself, in a letter to Barrett Clark, gives us warrant to liken his ars poetica to that of the disciples of 'la pensée analogique':

> A work of art is seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion. And this for the reason that the nearer it approaches art, the more it acquires a

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[76] Amiel, p. 205. Cf. G. Michaud, "La Doctrine Symboliste," Message Poetique du Symbolisme (1947), Chapitre II.

[77] E.g.: Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, pp. x-xi; and "Books," Notes on Life and Letters, p. 8.

symbolic character.[78]

The word 'conclusion' here may recall the rejection twenty-one years before, in the Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, of 'the clear logic of a triumphant conclusion.' The artist's aim finds its realization in multiple meaning ('My thought is always multiple,' Conrad writes to Garnett in October 1907)[79] and resonant suggestion: 'Explicitness...is fatal to the glamour of all artistic work, robbing it of all suggestiveness, destroying all illusion,' as Conrad states in a letter of 24 April 1922 to Richard Curle.[80] Conrad's art is founded, in the words of Paul Claudel, who first introduced Conrad's work to André Gide, on

> ...une nouvelle logique. L'ancienne avait le syllogisme pour organe, celle-ci a la métaphore..., l'opération qui résulte de la seule existence conjointe et simultanée de deux choses différentes.[81]

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[78] Aubry, Vol. II, p. 205. Letter of 5 April 1918.

[79] Garnett, ed., p. 208.

[80] Curle, ed., p. 113.

[81] Art poétique, p. 51. Cf. Paul Adam, "Préface," L'art symboliste (1889).

It is by means of the symbol that the artist is able, in the words of Barbara Seward, 'to suggest either a complex of discordant ideas or a fundamental harmony between apparent discords.'[82]

Claudel's announcement of a 'new logic' linking antitheses or 'things which are different' is hardly new, however. The mode of thought can be traced well beyond Baudelaire, Amiel, Hegel, Schelling, and Słowacki, to Calderón, and, even further beyond, to Cusa, who saw, while at sea, the underlying truth of existence, 'la fin sans fin, où paraissent coïncider les contraires, où l'on voit la réalité infinie.'[83] The logic of the infinite, also expressed as the logic of dreams and the vortical logic of emotions, as I have defined these terms in this chapter, provides the basic formal groundwork of the artist's way of seeing and expressing truth, the way of analogy.

Thus the way to the vision of the essential truth of the universe, manifold and one, finds its rationale

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[82] The Symbolic Rose (1960), p. 3.

[83] De Docta Ignorantia; cited by Vansteenberghe, p. 243.

in the rejection of the way of the traditional formal logician and the scientist, whose inquiries into ideas and facts, respectively, are predicated on the principle of contradiction ; and in the adoption of the way of the symbolist, akin, as we have seen, to that of the sailor and mystic, seeking a learned unknowing of the Infinite by virtue of the synthetic logic of contraries. For Conrad, in his own words, 'an habitual pursuer of dreams.'[84] the 'supreme logic,' with the power of 'uniting what is exclusive,' is the logic of dreams. With the aim of triggering infinite reflections in innumerable other temperaments ('It is certain any conviction gains infinitely the moment another will believe in it'), the artist descends within himself, a universe of diverging impulses mirrored in and mirroring mankind and the universe, there to translate into word-analogies the truth of that which is beyond rational conception. The artist's aim, as Marlow's tortured utterance in "Heart of Darkness" suggests, is difficult if not impossible to realize fully:

Do you see the story? Do you see anything?

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[84] "Poland Revisited," Notes on Life and Letters, p. 148.

> It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream -- making a vain attempt; because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams.[85]

The above account of Conrad's ars poetica affords the critic a perspective which, it seems to me, avoids the basic problem attending figurative interpretations of Conrad's fiction which Douglas Hewitt points to in the preface to the second edition of his Conrad: A Reassessment:

> Such criticism directs attention primarily to the symbolic rather than the literal sense of Conrad's works; sometimes it brushes aside the literal sense. Usually in the process of relentless symbolisation one novel is replaced by another.[86]

Hewitt, quite accurately, notes the frequent tendency among critics of a Freudian or Jungian turn in particular to take perhaps excessive liberties with Conrad's text. Though salutary and timely -- the preface is dated 1968 --, Hewitt's warning itself allows for misconstruction in that it does not seem to allow for the significant possibility that

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[85] "Heart of Darkness," p. 82.

[86] Hewitt, pp. xi-xii.

while the 'facts' in Conrad's fiction, as we read in "Typhoon," 'can speak for themselves with overwhelming precision;'[87] such 'facts appraised by reason,' as Cosmo reflects in Suspense, preserve 'a mysterious complexity and a dual character.'[88] It is perhaps significant that, in examining "Typhoon," for example, not only some of those who find congenial the discernment of archetypes, but also many critics reluctant to go beyond the literal sense of Conrad's tales seem not to take into account a nautical fact of central importance; it is made explicit in the text, as we shall see later, that is MacWhirr's plain duty to avoid 'the circular storm,' a fact which lends the tale an ironic subsurface. The critical problem in distinguishing fact and illusion, irony and direct statement, literal sense and analogical relation in Conrad's fiction might be likened to that of Willems, who sees his wife, Joanna, actually present, only to conclude that he is having a hallucination: 'he had half a suspicion that he was dreaming.'[89] Seeming to struggle

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[87] Typhoon and Other Stories, p. 9.

[88] Suspense, p. 38.

[89] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 345.

'in the toils of complicated dreams,' he endeavours 'to shape out some intelligible theory of events.'[90] The world as perceived and the world as it is, the surface sense and underlying truth of things, events and people, are not entirely discrete in Conrad. They are linked by dream-logic or analogy, which, as I have noted before, is never to be confused with sameness. The best that the critic can hope for, I think, is to avoid oversimplifying the complex perceptions of a writer whose 'thought is always multiple,' while remaining true to the text as the given literal fact.

There are not a few advantages to the reading of Conrad's fiction within the frame of dream-logic. To begin with, such a framework allows the critic to do justice to the fact that in Conrad 'the visible universe' and the subsurface 'truth' of that world are reflections of each other, and thereby avoiding what appears to me the unsatisfactory tendency among many critics, either of symbolist conviction or literalist persuasion, to dissociate the underlying from the surface sense of

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[90] An Outcast of the Islands, pp. 346-347.

Conrad's fiction by omitting either one or the other. In addition, the concept of dream-logic, since it takes in a complex of ideas central to Conrad's vision, makes for a coherent reading of his works without sacrificing the integrity of each tale to the levelling effect of symbol hunting and to the oversimplifications of merely surface interpretations. And, lastly, the reading of his fiction within the context of logic goes some way, I think, towards offering an 'answer' to a common problem in Conrad criticism. It is illustrated in Busza's useful study, Conrad's Polish Literary Background, for example: contrasting the 'metaphysical' Korzeniowski strain in Conrad's art and life with the 'positivist' Bobrowski strain, Busza concludes by setting these contradictories next to each other. No integration is offered for the meditation of the reader. A 'logical' view may be of use here. By examining Conrad within the tradition of the coincidentia oppositorum, this conflict may be viewed within a much wider perspective which coherently relates this conflict to substantive aspects of his art and thought. Analysis of the underlying formal patterns of dream-logic, variously manifested, for example, in

Conrad's double and reverse structures, irony, imagery, and plot, his fondness for privatives, and his recurring theme of enlightenment, allows the reader to see the unity in the diversity of Conrad's art, without suggesting uniformity, since these patterns, which are found in each work and which cut across the separate works, though similar formally, do not take in the same things materially. The failure of a good number of critics to perceive the centrality and pervasiveness of Conrad's logic of contraries suggests that the conceptual framework of this study may offer useful additional insights to the reader, insights which present an integrating yet not homogenizing overview of a complicated writer who professed as his artistic intention to make men see the truth and who saw that truth as both manifold and one.

CHAPTER III: SEA-DREAMERS (I)

'They wanted facts. Facts! They demanded facts from him, as if facts could explain anything.' -- Lord Jim

'Hither the poet come. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
Of that still fountain.'
-- Shelley, Alastor

'I knew no more than may be inferred from analogy....' -- Chance

Conrad, by analogy, takes Calderón to sea in the words of the 'inspired' German philosopher, Stein, to Marlow: 'A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea.'[1] The statement provides, in compressed form, Conrad's metaphysic and furnishes a code for the deciphering of his analogical thought. In the life-as-dream motif and in the symbol of the sea, 'the restless mirror of the Infinite,'[2] 'the mirror of heaven's frowns and smiles;'[3] Conrad found the principal metaphors for the expression of his vision of truth.

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[1] Lord Jim, p. 214.

[2] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 12.

[3] Author's Preface, The Secret Agent, p. xii.

analogies which link him with writers of the Baroque and Romantic period. Calderón, for example, dramatized mythological doubles of the dream-life in Eco y Narciso, as noted in the first chapter of this study, and Novalis saw in a 'mirror' reflecting the 'contents of the heart' (Disciples of Sais) the corresponding image of the night-dream (Hymns to the Night).[4] It is significant, I think, that the reader finds striking prefigurations of Conrad's central complex of theme and symbol in French symbolist poetry, which, as Albert Béguin has shown in his encyclopedic study of romanticism and dreams, owes the core of its aesthetic to nineteenth-century German idealist philosophy, which found Cusa's logic and Calderón's drama so useful in examining the contradictions of existence:[5]

> La mer est ton miroir; tu contemples ton âme
> Dans le déroulement infini de sa lame,
> Et ton esprit n'est pas un gouffre moins amer.[6]
>
> O miroir!
> Eau profonde par l'ennui dans ton cadre gelée,

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[4] Jean Chevalier, et al., Dictionaire des Symboles (1969), p. 510. See Novalis, Hymnen an die Nacht, trans. G. Banquis (1943), Bilingual Edition, p. 95.

[5] Béguin, pp. 50, 401, passim.

[6] Baudelaire, "L'homme et la mer," Dantec, ed., p. 94.

> Que de fois et pendant des heures, désolée
> Des songes et cherchant mes souvenirs qui sont
> Comme des feuilles sous ta glâce au trou profond,
> Je m'apparus en toi comme une ombre lointaine,
> Mais, horreur! des soirs, dans ta sévère fontaine
> J'ai de mon rêve épars connu la nudité![7]

The endless or infinite sea as a mirror of the soul, the mirror and the dream as vehicles of profound introspection, the knowledge of the naked truth of the self, resulting in a cry of horror, the sea as a bitter abyss, and the mirror as a well or a deep hole -- the themes and images may trigger a set of echoes in the reader of Conrad, the sharpest being perhaps Jim's celebrated leap into 'a well -- an everlasting deep hole'[8] and Kurtz's 'The horror!'[9] upon coming to enlightenment.

In this chapter and the next, I shall examine the varied manifestations of dream-logic in Conrad's course of enlightenment and the corresponding imagery and symbolism of that logic as it pertains to seamen; in the subsequent, to landsmen. Such a division, I suggest, helps to clarify our understanding of Conrad's vision, for it reveals that

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[7] Stéphane Mallarmé, "Hérodiade," Oeuvres complètes, eds. Mondor and Jean-Aubry (1945), p. 45.

[8] Lord Jim, p. 111.

[9] "Heart of Darkness," p. 149.

the sea-course and the land-course run parallel, and thus that Conrad did not, as commonly charged, sentimentalize in his main nautical protagonists what Albert Guerard has termed 'the seaman-self';[10] such a division reveals the underlying unity of Conrad's art based on the coincidence of opposites. While Towson's An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship provides a sane counterpoint to the danse macabre and a text for a mariner's examen de conscience in "Heart of Darkness," for example, it also serves as an instrument of escape from self-knowledge. Marlow, in so far as he retains a modicum of seaman-like 'sobriety,' does not share Kurtz's enlightenment; in so far as he is a sober seaman, he remains in the brotherhood of 'ignorant hearts that know nothing of life.'[11]

In the craft of the sea, Conrad's nautical protagonists may on occasion seek 'occupation, protection, consolation, the mental relief of grappling with concrete problems, the sanity one acquires from close contact with simple mankind.'[12] But, as Conrad mentions in 1918, 'work will

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[10] Guerard, p. 24.

[11] The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, p. 31.

[12] The Arrow of Gold, p. 242.

overcome all evil, except ignorance,'[13] a view similar to that expressed earlier in Nostromo: 'All action is consolatory. It is the enemy of thought and the friend of flattering illusions.'[14] And Conrad's fictions focus on the process of enlightenment. Bob Stanton and the French Lieutenant in Lord Jim, Franklin in Chance, Captain Davidson in Victory, Ransome and the crew in The Shadow-Line, Carter in The Rescue, and Captain Beard in "Youth," for example, are true to 'the seaman-self,' but they are not the 'subject' and centre of the tales. Captain Allistoun's advice to his penitent crew in The Nigger of the NARCISSUS -- 'And you men try to walk straight for the future'[15] - must, I think, be read in the light of Conrad's earlier observation in An Outcast of the Islands: men of 'steadfastness of purpose,' who

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[13] Notes on Life and Letters, p. 194.

[14] Nostromo, p. 66. Cf. Marlow's observation in Chance: 'Luckily, people, whether mature or not mature (and who really is ever mature?) are for the most part quite incapable of understanding what is happening to them: a merciful provision of nature to preserve an average amount of sanity for working purposes in this world' (p. 117).

[15] The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, p. 137.

walk 'the road of life' with 'firmness,' are 'invariably stupid' and attain 'great length without any breadth.'[16] As Conrad writes in "A Familiar Preface":

> 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.[17]

True to 'the seaman-self,' some mariners are indeed models of duty and fidelity; but it is by being taken out of the temporal world and into the timeless world of the infinite that they are variously disabused of their ignorance. Also, Conrad's ingenuous profession on the subject of fidelity should not completely disarm the reader. General T___, the anarchistic suppressor of lawlessness in Under Western Eyes, confesses to Razumov: 'My existence has been built on fidelity.'[18] And as the narrator reveals explicitly in "The Tale" (Tales of Hearsay), 'the word..."Duty"...contains infinities.'[19]

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[16] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 197.

[17] A Personal Record, p. xix. My italics.

[18] Under Western Eyes, p. 51.

[19] Tales of Hearsay, p. 61.

The principle of fidelity, on close inspection, is not without its own equivocations: 'the faithful henchman,' Ricardo, for example, in Victory, is sincerely appalled by the thought that Heyst has violated 'the elementary principle of loyalty to a chum,' whereas, in fact, Heyst has been self-betrayed into life and action by his loyalty to Morrison: 'I had to be loyal to the man.'[20] Since Heyst had saved Morrison from the impending catastrophic loss of his ship, he had then felt an obligation to help make of the man a financial success; and, in having been faithful to that felt obligation, Heyst had indirectly contributed to Morrison's death, a result of a business trip to raise financing for the coal company established by Heyst and Morrison. Also, as Alvan Hervey's sermon on duty in "The Return," counterpointed by his wife's withering laughter,[21] suggests, the principle of duty may sometimes serve as sham armour against truth. Unlike Lingard in An Outcast of the Islands, an unlettered man, Conrad does not seek 'the clear effect of a simple cause.'[22]

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[20] Victory, pp. 269, 203.

[21] Tales of Unrest, pp. 156-157.

[22] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 239.

For Conrad, as a writer of fiction, fidelity is fidelity to truth.[23]

The parallel nature of the courses of enlightenment for landsmen and seamen is reflected in the analogical relationships based on the sea, which enters all of Conrad's novels and all but four of his tales -- "The Informer," "The Duel" (both published in A Set of Six, 1908), "An Outpost of Progress" (Tales of Unrest, 1898), and "The Warrior's Soul" (Tales of Hearsay, 1925). Even confirmed landsmen such as Razumov and Verloc are figuratively set afloat: Razumov's plight is likened to that of 'a man swimming in the deep sea',[24] and Verloc, in the manner-to-be of the earthy Sweeney Agonistes, becomes a metaphorical double of 'the wandering Odysseus.'[25] As Douglas Hewitt, making reference to Calderón, observes of Conrad's protagonists, 'They may be said to have lost their bearings',[26] and, in more general terms, as Morton D. Zabel remarks, Conrad's works 'finally given an effect

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[23] See Notes on Life and Letters, p. 5.

[24] Under Western Eyes, p. 10.

[25] The Secret Agent, p. 183.

[26] Hewitt, p. 44.

of repeating a single theme.'[27] The sea is the primary and virtually omnipresent referent in Conrad's symbolism; and thus, it is in relation to Conrad's seamen-protagonists that we begin an examination of his dream-logic.

Conrad's opus presents us with a host of seamen who, much like Basilio and Segismundo in the Jornada Primera of La vida es sueño, are ignorant of the truth of existence. Jim, son of a parson possessed of 'certain knowledge of the Unknowable,' lives in a 'certitude of unbounded safety' in his dreams of heroism.[28] Marlow recalls of himself as second mate of the JUDEA: 'I knew very little then.'[29] Captain Whalley, at one time the 'dare-devil' master of the clipper CONDOR, finds in his later years security in clock-like routine; he had never lost a ship.[30] And Captain MacWhirr of the steamer NAN-SHAN is 'tranquilly sure of himself,' 'ignorant of life' before a typhoon.[31] The nameless captain-narrator in "A Smile of Fortune" is

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[27] "Introduction," Tales of East and West, ed. M. D. Zabel (1950), pp. ix-xxx.

[28] Lord Jim, pp. 5, 17.

[29] "Youth," p. 6.

[30] "The End of the Tether," pp. 168, 171-172.

[31] "Typhoon," pp. 4, 19.

introduced to us as one who finds 'life...not a fairy tale.'[32] In a ship anchored at the head of the Gulf of Siam, an 'untried' captain meditates on his ignorance of himself and of his ship.[33] Dreams of Arcadian happiness fill the head of Captain Jasper Allen of the brig BONITO.[34] In Chance, Captain Anthony, master of the FERNDALE, enters as one whose soul is stamped, like Powell's, with 'a certain prosaic fitness.'[35] In The Shadow-Line, a youth who 'knows no introspection' takes his first command and enters the twilight region between early youth and maturity.[36] Monsieur Geroges, a gentleman-sailor, enters Marseilles 'in a state of sobriety' not in harmony with 'the bedlam element in life'; for him, 'life...[is] a thing of outward manifestations.'[37] 'A man ready for the obvious,' 'blind to the mysterious aspects of the world,' describes Captain Lingard of the brig LIGHTNING at the beginning of The Rescue.[38] And the sea, to Master-Gunner Peyrol, appears

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[32] 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 7.

[33] "The Secret Sharer," 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 93.

[34] "Freya of the Seven Isles," 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 210.

[35] Chance, p. 47.

[36] The Shadow-Line, p. 3.

[37] The Arrow of Gold, pp. 8, 87.

[38] The Rescue, p. 11.

'full of smiling security,' a reflection of the coins close to his heart.[39] By way of immersion in dream-like states, these mariners are variously enlightened. Their sham and their reality are tried by the logic of existence.

In this chapter and the next, we shall focus on the following tales, listed in chronological order of publication in book form: Lord Jim (1900); "Youth" and "The End of the Tether" (1902); "Typhoon" (1903); "A Smile of Fortune," "The Secret Sharer," and "Freya of the Seven Isles" ('Twixt Land and Sea, 1912); Chance (1913); The Shadow-Line (1917); The Arrow of Gold (1919); The Rescue (1920); and The Rover (1923). The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, on one level, as Guerard has observed, 'a symbolic comment on man's nature and destiny,'[40] will enter frequently by way of comparison. We shall not be considering the novels written in collaboration with Ford Madox Ford -- The Inheritors (1901), Romance (1903), and The Nature of a Crime (1924) -- because they are not

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[39] The Rover, p. 40.

[40] Guerard, p. 100.

entirely Conrad's. If we are to believe Ford in this matter, he himself wrote all of the first, all the second, and much of the third.[41] While Ford's claims have been shown to be exaggerations,[42] they suggest that these works may not even be mainly Conrad's. In addition, considerations of Ford's influence on Conrad's literary theory,[43] though certainly useful, should be qualified by the fact that collaboration began in late 1898; Conrad wrote the Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS in 1897.

Throughout this study, works are selected for analysis of varying intensity and thoroughness on the basis of their value in clarifying core patterns of logic, analogy and theme. Conrad's major works are included, since it is in these works that the 'density' and quality of his art of dream-logic are most evident; and, while most of his minor tales are excluded from this study, some are not, for the reason that they throw additional light on the

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[41] F. M. Ford, "Working with Conrad," Yale Review, N.S. XVIII (1929), 699-715.

[42] See J. A. Meixner, "Romance: Collaborating with Conrad," Ford Madox Ford's Novels: A Critical Study (1962), pp. 27-30.

[43] E.g., F. R. Karl, "Joseph Conrad's Literary Theory," Criticism, II (1960), 317-335.

development of these patterns in the major works. There may appear to be a danger in such a study; it is, in the words of Jocelyn Baines, 'the temptation to impose artificial patterns...through convenient selection and suppression.'[44] With such a sound general warning no critic would disagree; yet it may suggest a principle which seems perilously to beg the question it assumes, I think, that any case for a pattern is invalid by the very fact that it is a pattern, which, by implicit definition, is something imposed. The perception and articulation of patterns -- one of the main functions of literary criticism, it seems to me -- are not synonymous with the imposition of pattern. The fallacy involved in confusing perception with imposition need not be dwelt on here, since it is not restricted to literary criticism and involves at least two millennia of debate between philosophers as to the relationships between inductive and deductive logic. If a critic will include everything materially, he has the task of reproducing Conrad's work. And, as I have noted above, one aspect of the usefulness in considering Conrad's

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[44] Baines, p. 439.

fiction in the frame of the logic of contraries lies in the fact that, since it is of a formal nature, based on and underlying a multiplicity of separate material expressions, it does not suggest any disregard for the integrity of the separate tales and the contents of each tale.

Lord Jim begins with our introduction to a dreamer living in certitudes: son of a parson confident in his knowledge of the infinite ('certain knowledge of the 'Unknowable'),[44] Jim rests secure in his dream-life as a sea-story hero. A chance missed to actuate his dream while aboard a training-ship during a hurricane ('The air was full of flying water.... It seemed to him he was whirled around')[45] leaves his illusion intact, while ironically prefiguring in reverse an actual leap which will shatter this illusion, his jump from the PATNA. Fate, in the form of a falling spar, by disabling Jim, further conspires to spare his dream from the test of the 'imagination,'[46] made concrete in the form of a

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[44] Lord Jim, p. 5.

[45] Ibid., p. 7.

[46] Ibid., p. 11.

savage storm during his first voyage as a chief officer; but, again ironically, it is this accident which leaves him in an Eastern port and which leads him to a berth as chief mate of the PATNA, a steamer chartered to carry some 800 pilgrims west to Mecca and Jim to enlightenment in a dream-like world.

The full panoply of Conrad's major symbols accompanies the PATNA's and Jim's voyage west. Likened to 'a crowded planet speeding through the dark spaces of ether,' the PATNA glides serenely as though on a 'sheet of ice.'[47] She remains 'everlastingly in the centre of 'the perfect circle' of the horizon, as she traces the diameter and the sun, the circumference perpendicular to the plane of the sea.'[48] This illusory serenity within a circle in which motion and non-motion coincide fosters in Jim dreams of valorous deeds; these dreams 'were the best parts of life, its secret truth, its hidden reality.'[49] Aboard the PATNA, he lives

> in certitude of unbounded safety and peace

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[47] Lord Jim, pp. 22, 17.

[48] Ibid., pp. 16-17. Cp. The Nigger of the NARCISSUS: 'A great circular solitude moved with her, ever changing and ever the same...' (p. 29).

[49] Ibid., p. 20.

> that could be read on the silent aspect of nature like the certitude of fostering love upon the placid tenderness of a mother's face.[50]

But beneath the placid surface of the sea lies a capsized hulk. Jim is awakened from a sleep-like meditative trance ('The line dividing his meditation from a surreptitious doze on his feet was thinner than a thread in a spider's web')[51] by a shock which plummets him into a nightmarish state, a shock described quizzically as an optical illusion in a shifted perspective: 'Had the earth been checked in her course?'[52]

Subject to the terrors of the imagination -- Jim vividly pictures the events subsequent to the anticipated bursting of the bulkhead -- he becomes disoriented and confused. Immobile as a 'cold stone' and with a 'hot dance' of thoughts in his head, he observes the captain and the white men of the crew lowering a boat in a burlesque scenario, then he himself becomes an 'actor' in what he later terms a 'farce.'[53] It is during this

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[50] Lord Jim, p. 17.

[51] Ibid., p. 25.

[52] Ibid., p. 26.

[53] Ibid., pp. 94-96, 104.

'farce' that he jumps into the boat and, metaphorically, into infinity, 'a well -- an everlasting deep hole' -- 'a jump into the unknown,' as Marlow later observes.[54] The immersion is made literally complete as an 'infernal' squall turns the very air about the PATNA's boat to water: 'the end of the world had come through a deluge in pitchy blackness.'[55] The squall 'confounds sea and sky into one abyss of obscurity. And all is still.'[56] The motif of the 'abyss' if echoed in Marlow's observation on the subject of men in an open boat:

> When your ship fails you, your whole world seems to fail you; the world that made you, restrained you, taken care of you. It is as if the souls of men floating on an abyss and in touch with immensity had been set free for any excess of heroism, absurdity, or abomination.[57]

Such a condition brings out 'the Irrational that lurks at the bottom of every thought, sentiment, sensation, emotion.'[58] An empirical improbability (the PATNA's forward bulkhead

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[54] Lord Jim, pp. 111, 229.

[55] Ibid., p. 112.

[56] Ibid., p. 102.

[57] Ibid., p. 121.

[58] Ibid., p. 121.

holds, 'a 'chance' not 'one in a thousand,' according to Jim)[59] and an optical illusion (the PATNA's lights become 'invisible' when her stern -- she is canting on her bow -- blocks Jim's view) are further manifestations of the unreason of the events which Jim describes as 'a joke hatched in hell.'[60] 'His ideal of conduct,' in the words of Marlow, undergoes 'the trial of a fiendish and appalling joke.'[61] From the point in time when he deserts the PATNA, Jim figuratively joins Amphiaraus in Malebolge: 'He gazes backward and advances backward.'[62] His dream of heroism is shattered; and he begins a somnambulistic soliloquy with 'an antagonistic and inseparable partner of his existence.'[63] As Marlow relates of Jim's condition immediately before the inquiry:

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[59] Lord Jim, p. 92.

[60] Ibid., p. 108.

[61] Ibid., p. 121.

[62] 'Diretro guarda, e fa retroso calle,' Inferno, Canto XX, l. 39. La Divina Commedia, ed. Louis Biancolli (1966), p. 80.

[63] Lord Jim, p. 93. Here, Jim, as on several other occasions, bears likeness to Hamlett. Echoing Hamlet's words to Horatio -- 'the readiness is all' (V, ii, 233)--, Jim relates to Marlow: 'It is all in being ready. I wasn't...' (p. 81).

> for days, for many days, he had spoken to no one, but had held silent, incoherent, and endless converse with himself, like a prisoner alone in his cell or like a wayfarer lost in a wilderness.[64]

Stein, in Chapter XX, the centre of Lord Jim, offers, by analogy, an 'explanation' of dreams and of Jim's plight. And, significantly, it is in this chapter that the mirror symbol is most explicitly deployed. 'A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea,'[65] Stein advises Marlow. And how is a man 'to be' in this sea-dream? Stein offers: '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.'[66] Man must keep swimming and dreaming usque ad finem.[67] 'Deep, deep sea' here carries the analogical significance of a mirror, a kinship clearly underlined by Conrad. Within a page of usque ad finem, we read of Marlow and Stein:

> (They) glided along the waxed floors, sweeping

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[64] Lord Jim, p. 33.

[65] Ibid., p. 214.

[66] Ibid., p. 214.

[67] Ibid., p. 215.

> here and there over the polished surface of the table, leaping upon a fragmentary curve of a piece of furniture, or flashed perpendicularly in and out of distant mirrors, while the forms of two men and the flicker of two flames could be seen for a moment stealing across the depths of a crystalline void.[68]

It is through immersion in this 'void' that knowledge comes, knowledge in this instance associated with Jim:

> ...but his [Jim's] imperishable reality came to me with a convincing, with an irresistible force! I saw it vividly, as though in our progress through the lofty silent rooms among fleeting gleams of light and the sudden revelations of human figures within unfathomable depths, we had approached nearer to absolute Truth, which, like Beauty itself, floats elusive, obscure, half submerged, in the silent still waters of mystery.[69]

The mirror as a medium of enlightenment flashes throughout the novel. Marlow, for example, Jim's 'secret sharer,'[70] sees Jim's face as a 'magic mirror' reflecting 'unearthly shapes' within not only Jim, but also himself.[71] It is in this 'mirror,' perhaps, that Captain Brierly of the

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[68] Lord Jim, p. 216.

[69] Ibid., p. 216. Cp. "The Planter of Malata," Within the Tides: a mirror appears within Renouard's dream (p. 31).

[70] Zabel, "Introduction," Lord Jim (1958), pp. xxxix-xlvii.

[71] Lord Jim, p. 154.

OSSA, a nautical assessor at the PATNA inquiry, comes to see the unknown within himself, a revelation which leads to suicide.[72] Jim thus provides an image which both attracts and repels Marlow. After a meeting with Jim on a dark, rainy night, during which Jim finally comes to realize that Marlow has confidence in him and is trying to help him, Marlow, who had earlier likened Jim to 'a dry leaf imprisoned in an eddy of wind,' recollects his feelings on Jim's departure from the room:

> But as to me, left alone with the solitary candle, I remained strangely unenlightened. I was no longer young enough to behold at every turn the magnificence that besets our insignificant footsteps in good and evil. I smiled to think that, after all, it was yet he, of us two, who had the light.[73]

On another occasion, Erasmus-like, Marlow can praise ignorance to his 'masters': 'Let no soul know, since the truth can be wrung out of us only by some cruel, little, awful catastrophe,'[74] while dreading immersion in the

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[72] Lord Jim, Chapter VI.

[73] Ibid., pp. 185-186.

[74] Ibid., p. 325.

'crystalline void.' 'I...felt myself losing my footing in the midst of waters, a sudden dread, dread of the unknown depths,' 'I wasn't going to dive into it,' he recalls on two occasions.[75] While taking refuge in words, which 'belong to the sheltering conception of light and order,'[76] he cannot resist joining Jim in the sight of an 'inverted image' reflected in the 'mirror' of the sea.[77]

The mirror image, a reversed picture of the object reflected, is duplicated in the plot, as Jim is given a second chance to actualize his ideal conception of himself. His voyage to the wilderness of Patusan, likened to 'a heavenly body' in its 'irregularity of...conduct' and 'aberrations...of light,'[78] a place where 'pure exercises of imagination'[79] rule, where 'the haggard utilitarian lies of our civilization wither,'[80] and where

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[75] Lord Jim, pp. 312, 330.

[76] Ibid., p. 313.

[77] Ibid., p. 332.

[78] Ibid., p. 218.

[79] Ibid., p. 282.

[80] Ibid., p. 282.

wrestle 'antagonistic forces,'[81] is given full symbolic significance:

> At the first bend [of the River Pantai] he lost sight of the sea with its labouring waves for ever rising, sinking, and vanishing to rise again -- the very image of struggling mankind -- and faced the immovable forests rooted deep in the soil, soaring towards the sunshine, everlasting in the shadowy night of their tradition, like life itself.[82]

Images of a cyclic struggle and darkness and light, reflections of mankind and life, mark this point in Jim's journey. During the trip upriver under a blazing sun, Jim experiences 'fits of giddiness' which he endeavours to combat by trying to distinguish between alligators and logs.[83] The shock of landing near Rajah Allan's stockade abruptly rouses him from a half-somnolent state, only to introduce him to a moonlit world, an analogical-moral reflection of the world of daylight. As Marlow speculates on seeing Jim in moonlight:

> 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

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[81] Lord Jim, p. 228.

[82] Ibid., p. 243.

[83] Ibid., p. 244.

> to live by, what the echo is to the sound: misleading and confusing whether the note be mocking or sad.[84]

And the moon itself, like Jim, suggests a union of opposites: Jim appeals

> 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 in perpetual darkness.[85]

A leap over the fance of the Rajah's stockade, in which Jim is held captive, then takes the prisoner, by way of an optical illusion, into a motionless, and therefore timeless, state -- 'The earth seemed fairly to fly backwards under his feet'[86] --, a state akin to that of the NARCISSUS sailing beneath 'the moon rushing backwards with frightful speed over the sky,'[87] a prelude to the coming furor, and to the voyage of Marlow travelling against the current of a river, of time, to a land created, as it were, before light itself.[88]

Within this timeless world of contrast, conflict and

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[84] Lord Jim, p. 246.

[85] Ibid., p. 93.

[86] Ibid., p. 253.

[87] The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, p. 55.

[88] "Heart of Darkness," p. 92.

optical illusion, Jim comes to actualize the illusion of his heroic exploits. Under his generalship, Doramin's men defeat Sherif Ali; peace is established under the supervision of 'Lord Jim.' But even in this realized dream, Jim remains within a larger dream. His is an existence of 'total and utter isolation.'[89] Even his woman, the emerald-like Jewel, literally related to Stein and symbolically associated with a mirror,[90] may be seen as a reflection of his soul; their conversation Marlow describes as 'a self-communion of one being carried on in two tones.'[91] Yet another reflection, in the form of Gentleman Brown's 'subtle references,'[92] carries Jim backwards to the PATNA episode, and brings about his death and final triumph. Brown's intimations, expressed partly in nautical terms, to the effect that he and Jim are 'brothers,' ironically blind Jim to the pirate's

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[89] Lord Jim, p. 272.

[90] Ibid., p. 347.

[91] Ibid., p. 284.

[92] Ibid., Chapter XLII.

treacherous intentions. The trust Jim places in Brown leads to Jim's unwitting betrayal of the Bugis. True to his word, Jim forfeits his life in payment of that betrayal. It is only immediately before death that he is released from Malebolge: 'He did not look back.'[93] In death, he follows his dream usque ad finem, a fate which lends, in Marlow's terms, 'little meaning' to the distinctions between 'truth' and 'illusion.'[94] Jim, Marlow observes, 'always...appeared to me symbolic...; like a shadow in the light.'[95]

Like a mirror which reveals 'absolute Truth' within an optical illusion of endless depth, the tale of Jim's fate conveys 'the truth disclosed in a moment of illusion.'[96] The tale is also 'a dream';[97] and in that dream, we see a man come to realize the truth of his illusion in a life which is also a dream. In mirrors as in dreams and in life, truth and illusion are inseparable companions.

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[93] Lord Jim, p. 414.

[94] Ibid., p. 222.

[95] Ibid., p. 265.

[96] Ibid., p. 323.

[97] Ibid., p. 320.

Gerald Morgan and C. B. Cox also have noted the mirror as a central symbol in Lord Jim in particular and in Conrad in general. Morgan, in his brilliant Sea Symbol and Myth in the Works of Joseph Conrad, treats the mirror as a 'polydimensional' symbol of the 'self,' an analogue of Dante's 'ocean of being,' and a device for expressing the Platonic and Existentialist via interiora ('truth as interiority'); in Conrad's mirror, specifically as found in Lord Jim, 'we may divine by contraries so as to take world and soul, or reality and illusion, together in a single comprehension.' 'The mirror,' Morgan concludes, 'is therefore a perfect symbol for Conrad's conviction that life is a dream of the ego. In dividing, it unites, and in uniting it separates the object and its contemplation.' 'Aflont in the universal ocean;' 'the restless mirror of the infinite,' the soul sees its multiple reflections in 'being,' 'images' at once separate from and united with Atself. Conrad's mirror thus paradoxically resolves and does not resolve the Platonic dichotomy: it unites and does not unite inner and outer, appearance and reality.[98] In a

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[98] Morgan, Sea Symbol and Myth, pp. 170 ff.; and his "Narcissus Aflont," pp. 47 ff.

complementary and more 'literary' (though less imaginative) vein, Cox's stylistic and psychological examination of Conrad's hovering

> between contradictions, light and darkness, motion and stillness, personality and anonymity, nothingness and substance, speech and silence, meaning and meaninglessness, servitude and freedom, time and eternity,

and generally, between nihilism and commitment, similarly treats the mirror as a symbol of 'being,' 'the void,' and the 'self,' sub specie aeternitatis. By means of this device, Cox argues, Conrad is able 'to explore the conflicts in his personality between seaman and artist, loyalty and betrayal, sanity and insanity.'[99] Though each working within different contexts, both critics and I agree on the ambivalence of 'reality' and 'illusion' in Lord Jim. As Cox notes of Marlow and some critics of Lord Jim, 'With justification, he foresees how the critics of the novel will label and categorize where he has remained satisfied to seek the grain of truth in the 'illusion'.'[100] and, more specifically in relation to this

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[99] Cox, pp. 12, 13, 40, 137-158.

[100] Ibid., p. 138.

study, Morgan's 'divine by contraries' offers a formula suggestive of Conrad's logic in Lord Jim.

Conrad's mirror, analyzed mainly as a thematic device by the critics noted immediately above, has otherwise been overlooked in studies of Lord Jim; and no critic has examined it as a structural device for the expression of dream-logic within an Aristotelian context. Wilfrid S. Dowden, for example, on the basis of images of fog, mist, moonlight and shadow, concludes that Jim's dream is 'unreal.'[101] But, in so doing, Dowden tells but half the tale, quite a serious shortcoming, I think, since he treats imagery as a structural device. More importantly, Elliott B. Gose, Jr., in an ingenious study of symbols of light and darkness, discerns in Lord Jim a mythic unity based on the 'sun myth' as described by Jung.[102] Gose describes in mythical terms what may also be described in a framework of logic: Jim first travels a course plotted by the sun from East to West, then follows the same course

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[101] "Almayer's Folly and Lord Jim: A Study in the Development of Conrad's Imagery," Rice University Studies, LI (1965), 13-27.

[102] "Pure Exercise of the Imagination: Archetypal Symbolism in Lord Jim," PMLA, LXXIX (1964), 137-147.

in reverse; he comes full circle by uniting inverted semi-circles. Contrasting images of darkness and light parallel this reversal; it is in darkness that Jim is enlightened, that his dream is reborn in death.

The image of a circle in this novel, which illustrates, as a number of critics have astutely perceived, Conrad's 'circling method of narration' by shifts in the narrative time sequence,[103] is included in Marlow's comment on Jim's geographical and moral wanderings as he tries to escape his past:

> To the common mind he became known as a rolling stone, because this was the funniest part; he did after a time become perfectly known, and even notorious, within the circle of his wanderings (which had a diameter of, say, three thousand miles), in the same way as an eccentric character is known to a whole countryside.[104]

In view of Marlow's 'deep-rooted irony'[105] and the refernce to a circle, the reader may, I think, interpret a punning meaning in 'rolling' and 'eccentric.' The imagery here recalls the account of the PATNA inquiry, during which

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[103] E.g.r Karl, A Reader's Guide, pp. 75 ff.

[104] Lord Jim, pp. 197-198.

[105] Ibid., p. 108.

Jim seeks futilely to escape the circle of facts related to his desertion -- summarized bluntly by the French Lieutenant, 's'est enfui avec les autres'[106] -- in an effort to make the authorities see the truth of what he believes to be an uncommon event:

> He wanted to go on talking for truth's sake also; and while his utterance was deliberate, his mind positively flew round and round the serried circle of facts that had surged up all about him to cut him off from the rest of his kind; it was like a creature, that, finding itself imprisoned within an enclosure of high stakes, dashes round and round, distracted in the night, trying to find a weak spot, a crevice, a place to scale, some opening through which it might squeeze itself and escape.[107]

Jim comes to make a similar escape, but then enters, as we have noted, another solitude. The board of inquiry, concerned solely with facts, itself 'was beating futilely round the well-known fact,'[108] a metaphor which may suggest Marlow's observation in "Heart of Darkness" that life is 'the mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose.'[109] The association of truth, illusion

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[106] Lord Jim, p. 145.

[107] Ibid., p. 31.

[108] Ibid., p. 56.

[109] "Heart of Darkness," p. 150.

and circular or non-linear logic is suggested once again in the account of Marlow's meeting during the period of the inquiry with a doctor and his patient, the PATNA's chief engineer, suffering from the D.T.'s. The doctor tells Marlow that he is trying to make some sense of the engineer's delirious ravings:

> The head, ah! the head, of course, gone, but the curious part is there's some sort of method in his raving. I am trying to find out. Most unusual -- that thread of logic in such a delirium.[110]

This case of the 'jim'jams'[111] intrigues the doctor. The truth of the engineer's hallucinations -- he has the best eyes east of the Persian Gulf, so he claims --, like the hidden truth of Jim's illusions and his dereliction of duty, is not open to rational, surface inquiry. His is the subjective truth of moral and optical illusions, of horrifying visions of toads and reptiles. To the surgeon's query -- 'Is his evidence material, do you think? --, Marlow gives the equivocal reply: 'Not in the least.'[112] On the

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[110] Lord Jim, pp. 54-55.

[111] Ibid., p. 55.

[112] Ibid., p. 55.

next page, we return to the trial of the man dashing 'round and round,' to read that 'the examination of the only man able and willing to face' the truth, 'some essential disclosure as to the strength, the power, the horror, of human emotions,' 'was beating futilely round the well-known fact.'[113] The judges themselves, in attempting to reduce to facts the non-material or emotional truth of the event, are not exempt from the merciless logic of life, the logic of a delirium. Like the engineer's, Jim's evidence and its logic are not 'material.'

Studies by Stanton de Voren Horrman[114] and Tony Tanner[115] of the obvious animal imagery in Lord Jim provide a useful addendum to considerations of Conrad's logic. As John A. Palmer observes, such imagery relates clearly to the motif of 'moral inversion,' to the conflict between the 'animal self' and the 'ideal conception of

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[113] Lord Jim, p. 55.

[114] "Conrad's Menagerie: Animal Imagery and Theme," Bucknell Review, XII (1964), 59-71.

[115] "Butterflies and Beetles -- Conrad's Two Truths," Chicago Review, XVI (1963), 123-140.

the self.'[116] In Gentleman Grown, likened to 'some man-beast of folklore,'[117] for example, Jim sees a reflection of himself.

The mirror symbol, also expressed analogically as sea and dream, provides a device particularly apt for the reconciliation of the commonplace patterns of imagery suggesting inversion and contrast generally noted by Conrad critics. These patterns function as secondary reflections in a novel which is itself a dramatization of the circular logic of contraries, a dream-mirror in which we see the moral conflicts of Conrad's perhaps most complex character. As a result of the PATNA catastrophe, Jim enters a world of unreason; his two 'odysseys,' like 'truth' and 'illusion;' 'animal' and 'ideal,' 'light' and 'dark,' are each the reverse-reflection or mirror-image of the other. We are invited to look into the mirror of Jim's life to see the truth of this 'optical' illusion.

Lord Jim may be described as a tale of the double

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[116] Palmer, pp. 39-42. See Daniel J. Schneider, "Symbolism in Conrad's Lord Jim: The Total Pattern," Modern Fiction Studies, XII (1966-67), 427-438.

[117] Lord Jim, p. 372.

odyssey of a dreamer. The protagonist's voyage west towards Mecca in the PATNA is duplicated in reverse in ~~the PATNA is duplicated in reverse in~~ the intermittent flight east from Bombay to Patusan. The leap into one of the PATNA's boats somewhere within the Gulf of Aden and the leap over the fence of Rajah Allang's stockade in Patusan may be seen as marking in time and space the moral points through which the circle of Jim's 'spiritual' journey is figuratively drawn. As Conrad writes in "Geography and Some Explorers":

> The earth is a stage, and though it may be an advantage, even to the right comprehension of the play, to know its exact configuration, it is the drama of human endeavour that will be the thing, with a ruling passion expressed, by outward action marching perhaps blindly to success or failure, which themselves are often indistinguishable from each other at first.[118]

At the centre of this circular tale of Jim's voyage to triumph coinciding with catastrophe are Stein's disquisition on dreams and illusions, and mirrors reflecting 'sudden revelations of human figures within unfathomable depths.'

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[118] Last Essays, p. 1.

Metaphorically and morally immersed in such depths, Jim 'swims' usque ad finem; he realizes his dream, his ideal conception of himself, in death.

"Youth," composed during the period dominated by Lord Jim, is a recollection of the glorious illusions of youth told in ironic counterpoint, a song of innocence and experience, not, as Lawrence Graver contends, a mere lyric tribute, 'an amusing song of innocence mingled with notes of sadness and loss.'[119] It is a narrative of dreams, regrets and learning, beginning and ending in a mirror:

> We were sitting around a mahogany table that reflected the bottle, the claret-glasses, and our faces as we leaned on our elbows....[120]
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> . . . . . .
>
> ...we all nodded at him over the polished table that, like a still sheet of brown water reflected our faces.[121]

Within this mirror works a dream-logic uniting contraries, a logic antithetical to mere sentiment.

A forty-two year old Marlow recalls his first voyage

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[119] Conrad's Short Fiction (1969), p. 71.

[120] "Youth," p. 3.

[121] Ibid., p. 42.

to the East as a twenty-year old second mate of the barque JUDEA, assigned to carry a 600-ton cargo of Tyne coal to Bangkok. In a narrative punctuated by 'Pass the bottle,'[122] we learn of a youth knowing little of life,[123] a young man delighting in adventure and romance, oblivious to the logic of existence, a logic perceived retrospectively by the wryly reminiscing Marlow. As rendered by a man who has experienced the 'stealthy Nemesis' awaiting Western purveyors of 'knowledge,'[124] the tale of the JUDEA's voyage is one of accidents, reversals and disaster in a universe where rats are the most acute logicians.[125] Rats remain aboard an unsound ship (which remains afloat), and abandon her once she has been made sound (later to burn). "Youth" is a tale of a 'hell for sailors',[126] of 'vultures' waiting to feed on a ship's carcass, of metaphorical grave-

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[122] "Youth," pp. 10, 12, 16, 21, 24.

[123] Ibid., p. 6. 'I knew very little then, and I know not much more now.'

[124] Ibid., pp. 41-42.

[125] Ibid., pp. 17, 21. Cp. Lord Jim, p. 195. Egstrom chides Jim: 'You haven't as much sense as a rat; they don't clear out from a good ship.'

[126] Ibid., p. 12.

diggers; of a man seeking water and finding smoke; of a rescue attempt that increases hazard; of sailors shivering in a burning ship; of singed mariners wandering through clouds of smoke; of men's bravado instantly exploded; of mariners feasting in a ship while she burns; and of men pumping water out of a ship to avoid drowning and pumping water into a ship to avoid burning. John Donne treats of a similar coincidence of opposites in the epigram "A Burnt Ship":

> Out of a fired ship, which, by no way
> But drowning could be rescued from the flame,
> Some men leaped forth, and ever as they came
> Near the foes' ships, did by their shot decay;
> So all were lost, which in the ship were found,
> They in the sea being burnt, they in the burnt
> ship drowned.[127]

The congruence of logic in Conrad and Donne suggests that 'metaphysical comedy'[128] captures more accurately the tone or 'inscape' of the tale than 'an amusing song.'

"Youth" is a 'metaphysical' tale of a voyage 'that

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[127] The Complete English Poems, ed. A. J. Smith (1971), p. 149. C. V. Wedgwood, interestingly enough, notes Calderon's popularity in English literary circles during the period of Donne's literary ascendancy: Seventeenth-Century English Literature (1961), p. 122.

[128] Oates J. Smith is one of the few critics to have perceived Conrad's logic in this tale: "The Existential Comedy of Conrad's 'Youth,'" Renascence, XVI (1963), 22-28.

might stand for the symbol of existence,'[129] that might be likened to 'an absurd dream.'[130] And yet, it is a voyage which ends successfully for the youth. He reaches the East, precise landfall unnamed, the figurative landfall marked by mirrors and dreams. His first 'command' ends in a 'state of somnambulism,' as the smallest of the JUDEA's boats floats in a bay 'smooth as glass and polished like ice, shimmering in the dark,' a sea which in daylight appears 'blue like the sea of a dream.'[131]

The time-ravaged Marlow regrets the loss of the illusions and romance of youth, while looking upon the ignorance of youth with knowing irony. His state is analogous to that of the Assistant Commissioner in The Secret Agent, who in the East has come to know something of existence, but remains attached to an illusion. The dream continues, for Marlow and the old salts, gazing into a mirror, are still 'looking anxiously for something out of life,'[132] a something

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[129] "Youth," p. 4.

[130] Ibid., p. 24.

[131] Ibid., pp. 39, 37, 41.

[132] Ibid., p. 42.

already gone. Past events acquire for them, as for the Romantic celebrant of memory, 'the liveliness of dream.'[133] The counterpoint, we are reminded, exists, after all, only in terms of the illusion.

Conrad suggests comparison with Wordsworth in this ironic reminiscence. In the "Preface to The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad," as noted above, he refers to "Youth": 'Emotions remembered in tranquility.' Early in the narrative, Marlow relates:

> You may imagine her [the JUDEA's] state. She was all rust, dust, grime -- soot aloft, dirt on deck. To me it was like coming out of a palace into a ruined cottage.[134]

Wordsworth's Wanderer relates an analogous transition as a youthful 'dreamer in the woods'[135] in Book I of The Excursion, "The Tale of Margaret," initially entitled "The Ruined Cottage." Conrad's tale, as a whole, suggests an ironic dramatic analysis of the Wordsworthian question: 'Where is it now, the glory and the dream?'[136]

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[133] The Excursion, Book I, l. 148. The Poetical Works of Wordsworth, ed. Hutchinson (1904), p. 593.

[134] "Youth," p. 5.

[135] The Excursion, Book I, p. 410. Hutchinson, ed., p. 595.

[136] "Intimations Ode," l. 57. Hutchinson, ed., p. 460.

From a tale of youth, we pass to a tale of age. "The End of the Tether," first published in book form with "Youth" and "Heart of Darkness," a tale of shifting optical and moral perspectives, blind sight and seeing blindness in a universe governed by la logique qui mène à la folie. With the notable exceptions of William Moynihan[137] and Lawrence Graver,[138] critics have overlooked the irony implicit in this coincidence of opposites, and have tended to make a sentimental hero of the tale's protagonist. Oliver Warner describes him as 'one of Conrad's noble portraits.... No flaw marks Whalley's character or intentions. Conrad portrayed many good men, but none who appeal more directly to the heart.'[139] Paul Wiley asserts that Whalley's betrayal of his crew is 'due to circumstance rather than to any inherent weakness of nerve or will.'[140] And Thomas Moser considers the entire tale 'sentimental.'[141] Conrad's

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[137]"The End of the Tether," Modern Fiction Studies, V (1958), 186-191.

[138]"Critical Confusion and 'The End of the Tether,'" Modern Fiction Studies, IX (1963-64), 390-393.

[139]Joseph Conrad (1951), p. 143.

[140]Wiley, p. 64.

[141]Moser, p. 218.

untypically blunt remark to Garnett on the subject of readers' reactions to "The End of the Tether" lends little support to such interpretations: 'Touching, tender, noble, moving.... Let us spit!'[142] The following analysis is perhaps more in tune with Conrad's intention; it may serve to extend the observations of the above critics by taking into account the opposite poles of Conrad's dialectic.

In "The End of the Tether," we are presented with a complex, interrelated network of inversions, symbolically doubled in the Northward and Southward runs of the Malacca Strait steamer SOFALA. As we read on the third page, she follows her course 'in inverse order,' seeing 'the same shores from other bearings',[143] eventually, she brings her captain, 'Dare-Devil' Harry Whalley, ageing pioneer of the China Sea, to an insight which coincides with his self-destruction. The SOFALA floats in a sea likened on one occasion to a 'silvered plate-glass of a mirror' reflecting objects 'upside-down'; and, near her end, she moves 'as if floating detached in empty space.'[144] Aboard the

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[142] Garnett, ed., p. 184. Letter of 22 December 1902.

[143] "The End of the Tether," p. 167.

[144] Ibid., pp. 245, 318.

SOFALA, Whalley is emotionally and morally engulfed in an infinite world of contradictions.

Captain Whalley begins his figurative voyage to Capharnaum morally blind. "Lead us not into temptation" is his constant prayer,[145] but a financial disaster (the bankruptcy of the Travancore & Deccan Banking Corporation) and a domestic tragedy (his son-in-law becoming an invalid) eventually lead Whalley to the sale of the beloved barque of his retirement, the FAIR MAID, and to 'a radically new view of existence,'[146] an existence in which the barque's three chronometers will never again tick him to sleep. 'A matter of feeling,'[147] an unknowing well-intentioned suggestion by an old friend, Ned Eliott, one-time captain of the clipper RINGDOVE, and a deliberate deception worked on Massey, chief engineer and owner of the SOFALA (Whalley gives Massy the impression that he is well off), result in Whalley's becoming part-owner and commander of that ship.

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[145] "The End of the Tether," p. 167.

[146] Ibid., p. 184.

[147] Ibid., p. 211.

Whalley's entry into this new dimension is ironically marked by the 'light' of Venus reflected in the 'roadstead as level as a floor made of one dark and polished stone,'[148] a symbolic union reflected in the rosace of a cathedral[149] and redoubled in the 'fire' and 'stone' lying beneath the earth's crust and men's appearances.[150] By way of an optical illusion, Whalley and the SOFALA, afloat in a 'mirror,' will descend, like Marlow in "Heart of Darkness," 'into the very bosom of the earth.'[151] In the dark mirror of the roadstead is reflected and prefigured Whalley's descent into a state analogous to Massey's, described as 'a sort of inferno,'[152] in which love and torment coincide.

Three years pass, and we find Whalley, out of pride

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[148] "The End of the Tether," p. 213. The image of the light of Venus reflected in a dark mirror is repeated in Nostromo, p. 531: Linda Viola's eyes serve as the mirror.

[149] Ibid., p. 198.

[150] Ibid., p. 228.

[151] Ibid., p. 245; cp. "Heart of Darkness," p. 60: 'I felt as though, instead of going to the centre of a continent, I were about to set off for the centre of the earth.'

[152] Ibid., p. 269. The infernal dimensions of the tale are overlooked by M. C. Bradbrook, for example: 'the old man, simple, heroic in his integrity, is ruined only in a material sense' -- Joseph Conrad: Poland's English Genius (1942), p. 27.

and love of his daughter Ivy, keeping secret the fact of his growing physical blindness. The man who prayed for long life now, ironically, prays for death,[153] a prayer, unlike that regarding temptation, soon to be answered. His life has 'fallen into the abyss.'[154] But with this 'visitation,'[155] come 'illuminating moments of suffering,' during which Whalley sees 'life, men, all things, the whole earth with all her burden of created nature, as he had never seen them before.'[156] A well-intentioned expressed lie (Van Wyk tells Sterne that there is something wrong with Whalley's legs) and an ill-intentioned truth kept secret (Sterne does not tell Massy the truth) make possible an act of treachery that brings Whalley a final 'flash of insight.'[157] Presented with a final (and, ironically enough, formally perfect) dilemma, he carries his point to the end, 'to the very verge of a

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[153] "The End of the Tether," p. 302.

[154] Ibid., p. 319.

[155] Ibid., p. 301.

[156] Ibid., p. 324.

[157] Ibid., p. 332.

crime.'[158] If Whalley leaves the sinking ship, he must either acquiesce in Massy's dishonesty or expose him to the insurance people. If Whalley exposes him, Whalley loses the money meant for Ivy; if he does not expose him, he commits a crime. Whalley choses to escape the dilemma by remaining aboard the sinking SOFALA, but, even in so doing, he conceals from the authorities the fact of his blindness, and he tacitly validates Massy's lie to the insurance people in order that Ivy might receive a final gift from her loving father.

The logic of Whalley's actions, mirrored in a universe of optical and moral inversions, lies outside mathematical probability. The gambling 'calculations' of Massy, chief engineer and part-owner with Whalley of the SOFALA, provide a precise model of existence in 'a sort of inferno.'[159] Massy's search for 'some logic lurking somewhere in the results of chance' concludes not in a mathematical ratio, but in a 'dreamed number,'[160] a 'vision' which parallels the solution of his financial

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[158] "The End of the Tether," p. 333.

[159] Ibid., pp. 266, 269.

[160] Ibid., p. 320.

problem, derived from the ravings of the SOFALA's second engineer, an 'imaginative drunkard': arrange to have the ship strike rock and collect the insurance.[161] But, by inversion, this logic also blinds Massy to Sterne's revelation of a possibly mutually-satisfying (and legal) solution to two problems: his need for money to repair the SOFALA's boilers, and Sterne's ambition to command. Significantly, it is Sterne, the first mate, possessed of a 'prying imagination,' who first solves the enigma of Whalley's treacherous behaviour. By analogy (Serang is to Whalley what a pilot-fish is to an old whale),[162] he infers that Whalley is, for all practical purposes, blind. But, by the same logic (taking into account the 'incalculable factor'),[163] this disloyal chief mate, likened on one occasion to a 'somnambulist,'[164] also concludes that he had best temporarily keep this secret from Massy, a conclusion which ultimately ends in futility: the ship

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[161] "The End of the Tether," pp. 312-313.

[162] Ibid., pp. 249-252. In terms of zoology, the referents are inaccurate. Pilot-fish accompany sharks. Whalley is shark-like in feeding on Massy's credulity?

[163] Ibid., p. 255.

[164] Ibid., p. 252.

sinks, ergo he does not become her captain.

In consonance with the logic of moral inversion, Van Wyk, a tobacco-grower and the only white man on Batu Beru, a man irritated by the 'absurd' timetable of the SOFALA, enters this 'nightmare' and temptation by way of compassion for Whalley.[165] Knowing of Whalley's blindness, he lies to Sterne, induces him to feign acceptance of the lie as truth, and reveals nothing of this to Massy, thus seconding Whalley's deception and contributing to the sequence of events leading to the final catastrophe. As a soul newly arrived in Capharnaum, the 'hermit' Van Wyk comes to see, through Whalley's fate, that man cannot escape temptation, a theme which Conrad will develop in an explicitly philosophical context in Victory. Appropriately, the omniscient narrator's tone is one of mingled irony and pity. Ivy's reaction to Whalley's final letter, evoking simple pathos -- 'She read no more that day'[166] -- suggests, as Gerald Morgan has noted,[167] an echo of Dante's Francesca

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[165] "The End of the Tether," pp. 282, 303, 307-310.

[166] Ibid., p. 338.

[167] Sea Symbol and Myth, pp. 92-93.

da Rimini dwelling with her lover in the second circle of the Inferno: 'Quel giorno piu non vi leggemmo avante' Canto V, l. 138) ('We read no more that day'); and the entire tale may be read as Conrad's adaptation of Francesca's theme:

> Nessun maggior dolore,
> Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
> Nella miseria. (Canto V, ll. 121-123)[168]

(There is no greater pain than, in our misery, to remember a happy time.)

Such a reading of "The End of the Tether" offers us a Whalley far removed from the heroes of sentimental fiction. Viewed in the context of the logic of contraries, it is a subtler and a more complex work than "Youth." This is not to suggest, however, that the tale of Whalley's enlightenment is without fault. As is generally noted, "The End of the Tether" is 'uneconomical.' There are pages of narration, particularly in the first half of the tale, which contribute proportionately little to its overall development. And, in terms of concentration of focus, "The End of the Tether" is diffuse when compared to its companion-pieces, "Youth" and "Heart of Darkness."

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[168] Biancolli, ed., p. 21.

Of Conrad's fictions, "Typhoon," composed shortly after "The End of the Tether," is perhaps the one most seriously misinterpreted for want of an understanding of Conrad's dream-logic, the 'doubleness' of his thought. On the surface, Captain MacWhirr of the steamer NAN-SHAN is a literal-minded 'logician' of simple cause-and-effect who, dauntless in the midst of a typhoon in the China Sea, performs his duty heroically, and thereby saves ship, crew and two hundred passengers. His command, parallelling his verbal expression, is a model of 'perfect accuracy.'[169] 'Having just enough imagination to carry him through each successive day'[170] (so it would seem), he eminently qualifies as a writer of 'Notices to Mariners.' As Conrad notes in "Outside Literature," an imaginative mariner 'would simply...be not fit for his job'; the 'ideal of perfect accuracy' is captured only 'by a steady, prosaic mind.'[171] MacWhirr, on the surface, is possessed of such a mind. 'Keep a cool head,'[172] he admonishes

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[169] "Typhoon," p. 15.

[170] Ibid., p. 4.

[171] Last Essays, pp. 39-40.

[172] "Typhoon," p. 89.

Jukes. A Belgian craniologist had offered similar advice to Marlow in "Heart of Darkness": Du calme, du calme.[173] 'Images in speech'[174] and the logic of contraries MacWhirr finds exasperating. For example, when his foil, Jukes, the imaginative first mate, speaks of 'saints swearing,' the captain offers a formally impeccable rebuttal:

> Saints are holy.
> No swearers are holy.
> Therefore, no swearers are saints.[175]

But earlier in the tale, the reader finds a parody of MacWhirr's epistolary style which eschews the colours of rhetoric: 'And then they died,' the narrator concludes his biography of MacWhirr's parents.[176] MacWhirr's use of words, it would seem, contrasts sharply with Conrad's: the captain of the NAN-SHAN uses words 'as if...worn-out things, and of a faded meaning,'[177] whereas Conrad, in the Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, states as his aim: 'that the light of magic suggestiveness may be

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[173] "Heart of Darkness," p. 58.

[174] "Typhoon," p. 25.

[175] Ibid., p. 25.

[176] Ibid., p. 6.

[177] Ibid., p. 15.

brought to play...over the commonplace surface of words: of the old, old words worn thin....'[178] And the irony of this antithesis is mirrored in MacWhirr himself, for immediately after chiding Jukes for using images and abusing logic, the 'angelic' (the adjective is supplied by Jukes) MacWhirr, using a highly appropriate image, swears: 'Damne! I'll fire him out of the ship if he doesn't look out,'[179] he reacts to the language of the second engineer, an expert at keeping up steam. This discrepancy between MacWhirr's theory (rational calm) and practice (an emotional outburst) prefigures, as we shall see, his unreasonable common sense in deciding to steam through the typhoon.

Following MacWhirr's professed logic, I suspect, a number of critics have found "Typhoon" a masterpiece of surface clarity only. 'It is without mystifying elements,' writes Lawrence Graver in praise of its 'obvious directness of language.'[180] Jocelyn Baines contends that 'Typhoon... has none of the ambiguous moral and philosophical overtones

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[178] Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, p. ix.

[179] "Typhoon," p. 25.

[180] Graver, Conrad's Short Fiction, p. 95.

with which "Heart of Darkness" or Lord Jim reverberates.'[181] Contrasting Jim and MacWhirr, Moser describes the latter as 'faithful, simple,'[182] a view shared by Hermann Weiand.[183] According to Albert Guerard, the tale reveals an 'explicit even transparent ethic.'[184] As one commentator would have it, MacWhirr is an ideal mariner: 'He has dismissed the possibilities of evading the typhoon not just because he is lacking in imagination. He sees first his duty -- to face it!'[185] Neville Newhouse makes a similar assertion: 'Captain MacWhirr is not the man to evade anything which lies in what he regards as the plain path of duty.'[186]

But to read "Typhoon" on this level is to share MacWhirr's logic, not Conrad's.[187] Beneath the surface

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[181] Baines, p. 257.

[182] Moser, pp. 13, 145-146.

[183] "Typhoon," Insight II: Analyses of Modern British Literature, eds. Hagopian and Dolch (1964), pp. 49-58.

[184] Guerard, p. 299.

[185] "Commentary," Typhoon and Youth (1954), p. 128. The commentator is unnamed.

[186] Joseph Conrad (1966), p. 114.

[187] Ironically enough, it is partly for want of the precision of formal logic that Conrad fails to create a moving atmosphere of moral tension in a tale of the 'infinities' in the word 'duty.' The Commander in "The Tale" offers an apparently insoluble moral problem. The fact that the Northman did not know where he was indeed 'proves nothing. Nothing either way.' But the apparently unseen hypothetical arguments -- if the Northman is lying in this one matter, he will escape; if he is not lying, he will die -- explode the final 'I shall never know.'-- Tales of Hearsay, pp. 80-81.

flows a powerful cross-current. MacWhirr's plain duty as master of the ship is to avoid the typhoon, not face it: 'before he could be considered fit to take charge of a ship,' MacWhirr had been examined 'on the subject of circular storms...; and apparently he had answered them.... But if he had answered he remembered nothing of it.'[188] Thus, Jukes, whose imagination will almost betray him the forthcoming trial of his courage, is perfectly correct in requesting that he head the ship eastward. The imaginative man, in this instance, is the one true to 'the seaman-self.' In a comic reduction to absurdity of his logic, prefigured in the Siamese-flag 'joke,' MacWhirr responds to the request: 'How can you tell what a gale is made of till you get it?'[189] MacWhirr's logic, it is interesting to note, parallels that of the White Knight in Through the Looking-Glass: responding to the Knight's invention of a new way of getting over a gate (by standing on his head), Alice asks: 'but don't you think it would be rather hard?,' to which the Knight

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[188] "Typhoon," p. 20. The procedures for avoiding typhoons continue to be required knowledge for a master's ticket. See S. D. 400 The Mariner's Handbook (1957), pp. 52-58; referred to in The China Sea Pilot (1958).

[189] Ibid., p. 33.

logically replies: 'I haven't tried it yet..., so I can't tell for certain....'[190] By way of a surface logic gone mad, this ostensibly sensible Captain MacWhirr senselessly exposes his ship and its inhabitants to a terrifying ordeal. He heads the NAN-SHAN into 'a wild scene of mountainous black waters lit by the gleams of distant worlds.'[191] Here, even MacWhirr's soul is tested; but, in an extraordinary double-reversal, he recovers from a brief moment of introspection -- 'He spoke out in the solitude and the pitch blackness of the cabin, as if addressing another being awakened in his breast' [192] -- to restore order within himself and among the crew and passengers.

Thus, "Typhoon" is not a simple tale of surface logic and 'mere facts,' but a double tale of the struggle of opposites -- logic and imagination, betrayal and heroism, order and confusion. The appreciation of Conrad's clarity, precision of fact, and power of description is certainly

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[190] Chapter VII, p. 184, of D. J. Gray's edition of Alice in Wonderland (1971).

[191] "Typhoon," p. 83.

[192] Ibid., p. 86.

warranted, but it does not, in my view, go far enough, for facts themselves seem to have their own ambiguities in Conrad's tale. And MacWhirr, a man of facts, is among those men whose 'uninteresting lives...so entirely given to the actuality of the bare existence have their mysterious side.'[193] In Chance, Marlow will find in the 'pedestrian' Fynes a similar mysteriousness.

Conrad's logic is the logic of dreams. The moral pivot of the tale is the simple fact that MacWhirr first neglects his plain duty, then performs his duty heroically, while Jukes, his antithesis, first performs his duty, then loses control of his imagination. Entering the centre of a whirlwind, the 'ignorant' captain for a moment is 'made to see all' that life 'may contain of perfidy, of violence, and of terror.'[194] And the imaginative Jukes, who finds the apparently sensible captain 'stupid,' that is, not sufficiently imaginative, and who would sensibly follow established marine procedure in face of a typhoon, as a result of the captain's imaginative decision to enter the whirlwind, is made to see the weaknesses of his own

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[193] "Typhoon," p. 4.

[194] Ibid., p. 19.

imagination. Such a reading of the literal facts of the tale reveals the ironic twists of Conrad's imagination and the underlying logic which governs facts and the emotional and moral lives of men in Conrad's universe.

CHAPTER IV: SEA-DREAMERS (II)

'To meet her black stare was like looking into a deep well....' -- "A Smile of Fortune"

'"Edith, where's the truth in all this?"
"It's on the surface, I assure you."'
--The Rescue

'It is only the Devil, they say, that loves logic.' --The Arrow of Gold

For almost a decade following the publication of Typhoon and Other Stories (1903), sea-dreamers do not play central rôles in Conrad's fiction.[1] Nostromo (1904), The Secret Agent (1907), A Set of Six ("Gaspar Ruiz," "The Informer," "An Anarchist," "The Duel," and "Il Conde") (1908),[2] and Under Western Eyes (1911) are concerned primarily with land (the mine as a spiritual and material force in Nostromo) and landsmen and women. It it in a collection of three tales, 'Twixt Land and Sea, published in 1912, that Conrad returns the reader to seamen and their dreams.

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[1] I.e., in terms of dates of publication. "The Secret Sharer" antedates "A Smile of Fortune" and "Freya of the Seven Isles" in terms of composition; and The Rescue occupied Conrad intermittently for over two decades.

[2] "The Brute," a tale of the sea included in A Set of Six, is an exception of little consequence.

Since the dreams in two of the tales, "A Smile of Fortune" and "Freya of the Seven Isles," take the form of women, and since, women, land-jungle dwellers, will come to share with mariners the centre stage in many of the works of Conrad's final decade, a consideration of the analogical relationships between woman, the sea, mirrors, dreams and jungle provides a useful complementary introduction to a study of Conrad's sea-dreamers, and serves to underline the basic continuity and development of his analogical thought.

Flotation is the sea is akin, in the manner of a 'metaphysical' conceit, to immersion in the 'glasses' (also expressed as the 'well') of a woman's eyes. Conrad, in a general way, suggests the analogy in his second novel, An Outcast of the Islands (1896). On the same page as the optical metaphor, 'the restless mirror of the Infinite,' we read:

> like a beautiful and unscrupulous woman, the sea...was glorious in its smiles, irresistible in its anger, capricious, enticing, illogical, irresponsible; a thing to love, a thing to fear.[3]

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[3] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 17.

And in Almayer's Folly, (1895), Conrad's first novel, Dain Maroola, an adventurous Malay mariner, declares in the manner of a Renaissance sonneteer: 'The sea, O Nina, is like a woman's heart.'[4] The analogy is repeated in explicitly optical terms in Chance (1913):

> He [Anthony] plunged into them (Flora's eyes)...like a mad sailor taking a desperate dive...into the blue unfathomable sea so many men have execrated and loved at the same time.[5]

In Lord Jim (1900), the protagonist 'plunge[s]' his 'gaze to the bottom of an immensely deep well,' Jewel's eyes, an action analogous to an earlier jump 'into a well -- an everlasting deep hole.'[6] Commenting on his having surrendered to passion, the narrator in "A Smile of Fortune" uses a similar comparison: 'To meet her [Alice's] black stare was like looking into a deep well....'[7] Monsieur Georges confesses in The Arrow of Gold (1919): 'Woman and the sea revealed themselves to me together';

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[4] Almayer's Folly, p. 174.

[5] Chance, p. 332.

[6] Lord Jim, pp. 307, 111.

[7] 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 70.

and the young mariner's comparison -- in love, he had 'fallen as into a vague dream'[8] -- echoes Stein's analogy, 'A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea.'

This reverie is also associated with jungle and woman. It is in the jungle that Nina's 'dreamy eyes' and Aissa's apparition to Williems evoke a 'dream' behind a 'veil woven of sunbeams and shadows.'[9] Eyes, jungle and dreams are media of emotional knowledge, analogous to the state Cusa termed 'learned unknowing.' By extension, the 'wilderness' becomes a mirror of the Infinite, a jungle which closes upon Conrad's protagonists 'as the sea closes over a diver.'[10] The savage woman in "Heart of Darkness," for example, offers a mirror-image of this jungle-sea:

> And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense

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[8] The Arrow of Gold, pp. 88, 93. In the same novel, we read of a 'woman's soul' offering a sight of one's 'own reflection' (p. 85).

[9] Almayer's Folly, p. 16; An Outcast of the Islands, p. 70. Conrad here suggests comparison with Shelly; see "Alastor; or The Spirit of Solitude."

[10] "Heart of Darkness," p. 92.

> wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemd to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its tenebrous and passionate soul.[11]

And it is significant, I think that, as Willems in a jungle surrenders to his desire for Aissa, he is likened to a 'swimmer' in unreason; he falls 'into the darkness,' there to be granted 'a vision of heaven -- or hell.'[12]

Thus, woman becomes a mirror of infinity, expressed as sea, well, dream, and jungle. Like the mirrors in Stein's darkened House, women reflect 'unfathomable depths,' in which men come to see 'Truth' and, at times, 'Beauty,' as in the 'mirror' of La-Gioconda-like Dona Rita, bearer of an 'arrow of gold' reflected in a mirror, both mirror and artifact symbolically reconciling primitive savagery and civilization. Extended to reflect mirror, well, dream, and jungle, the common-place sea-woman analogy takes on a more complex significance in Conrad's work, one which, perhaps for the very reason that it is common-place and appears simple, has received little consideration in studies of Conrad's achievement.

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[11] "Heart of Darkness," p. 136.

[12] An Outcast of the Islands, pp. 81, 89.

Though a full analysis of Conrad's women warrants a separate study in itself, we must now consider the oft-raised issue of whether Conrad's treatment of them is simply sentimental -- and, by extension, whether the sea-woman analogy in realtion to men, particularly seamen, and to their enlightenment, is also simply sentimental. The charge that Conrad tended to sentimentalize women and seamen, particularly in his later work, is sound, but only if the reader overlooks Conrad's dream-logic and its ironic mirror-like inversions. Thomas Moser, for example, a critic who considers Conrad 'most convincing when he is most ironic,'[13] finds "Freya of the Seven Isles" sentimental and melodramatic; the "'fact' that Freay 'implausibly becomes anemic and dies suddenly of pneumonia' offers final proof.[14] This critic, it seems to me, shares her unseeing father's diagnosis. As Nelson relates to the narrator:

> "So I wanted to tell you myself -- let you know the truth. A fellow like that! How could it be? She was lonely. And perhaps

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[13] Moser, p. 138.

[14] Ibid., p. 101.

> for a while.... Mere nothing. There could never have been a question of love for my Freya -- such a sensible girl --."[15]

The 'truth' for the father is that Freya died of pneumonia. The narrator's immediate reply places the critic's analysis in perspective: '"Man!," I cried, rising upon him wrathfully, "don't you see she died of it."'[16] In the hope of curing Freya's anemia, clearly a love-sickness, father and daughter left the plantation for Hong Kong, an action ironically doubling Allen's departure from the plantation out of love for Freya. Since Moser's work is the only full-length study of Conrad's women, since it has generally received much acclaim,[17] and since Moser is most severely critical of the psychological temper and literary quality of the works considered in this chapter, we shall return frequently to his interpretations.

The captain-narrator in the sardonically entitled "A Smile of Fortune" is the first of Conrad's marine

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[15] 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 238.

[16] Ibid., p. 238.

[17] According to Marvin Mudrick, 'Thomas Moser has written authoritatively on Conrad's misogyny' -- "Introduction," Conrad: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 5. Teets and Gerber, in their annotated bibliography of works about Conrad, note: 'This is one of the few indispensable critical books on JC.'--p. 381.

protagonists to come to self-knowledge by way of immersion in erotic impulse. Having experienced a 'dream-like vision' of the island, the young, inexperienced captain arrives at Pearl (Mauritius on factual charts), likened to a 'fairy-tale' island of 'improbability.'[18] An initial self-deception (he assumes that Alfred Jacobus is Ernest Jacobus, the prominent merchant and charterer with whom it has been suggested he do business) and subsequent efforts to disengage himself from Alfred (efforts which have a reverse effect) serve to transform him metaphorically into a 'somnambulist.'[19] He becomes like 'a man lost in a dream,'[20] there to find, as does one critic, 'the mysteries' of Alice Jacobus 'beyond credibility.'[21] While a reader might allow the criticism of insufficient verisimilitude, such a judgment should, I think, take into account the central dramatic importance of unreason or improbability in this tale.

Images of massed foliage and mazes of flowers, redolent of the jungle-plant imagery in Almayer's Folly

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[18] 'Twixt Land and Sea, pp. 3, 7.

[19] Ibid., p. 26.

[20] Ibid., p. 26.

[21] Graver, Conrad's Short Fiction, p. 161.

and An Outcast of the Islands, in conjunction with a mirror reflected in a woman's eyes, accompany this untried captain's emotional voyage. Thomas Moser astutely points to the importance of the plant imagery in "A Smile of Fortune,"[22] but does not take into consideration any analogical or ironic relationships such imagery might have with mirrors and Alice. In a fin-de-siècle atmosphere,[23] the young mariner is introduced by Alfred to his semi-savage bastard daughter by a circus horseback-rider (a Swinburnian fantasy come true). The captain is enthralled by the wild, reticent, voluptuous Alice and the 'scent of massed flowers' which 'breathe her special and inexplicable charm.'[24] 'This scented air of the garden,' he confesses, 'came to us in a warm wave like a voluptuous and perfumed sigh.'[25] A 'captive' of a garden ironically redolent of Swinburne's 'Garden of Proserpine,' Alice is painted somewhat in the Pre-Raphaelite manner; and, to the painting, Conrad adds

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[22]Moser, p. 98.

[23]Arthur Symons provided the epigraph of the 'Twixt Land and Sea volume.

[24]'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 62.

[25]Ibid., p. 54.

a mirror:

> I looked at her rounded chin, the Jacobus chin; at the full, red lips pouting in the powdered, sallow face; at the firm modelling of the cheek, the grains of white in the hairs of the straight sombre eyebrows; at the long eyes, a narrowed gleam of liquid white and intense motionless black, with their gaze so empty of thought, and so absorbed in their fixity that she seemed to be staring at her own lonely image, in some far-off mirror hidden from my sight amongst the trees.[26]

And Alice, in a house that seems 'fast asleep,'[27] is always dressed in sleeping garb.

Subsequent to this meeting during which the mariner has looked into the mirror of Alice's eyes, his 'awakened imagination' brings 'the irritating hint of a desire,' and, with the desire, a 'moral poison.'[28] In this union of opposites, sensuous delight and poison, we are reminded of the Baudelairian fleurs du mal, whose mystery, as Conrad writes in An Outcast of the Islands, 'holds the promise of joy and beauty, yet contains nothing but poison and decay.'[29] The captain is now fully immersed in a

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[26] 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 63.

[27] Ibid., p. 42.

[28] Ibid., pp. 56, 65.

[29] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 70.

universe of contradictions; he cannot make up his mind whether to kiss or beat her; and he comes to see Alice as 'tragic and promising, pitiful and provoking.'[30]

The mariner's enlightenment in a series of ironic reversals results from surrender to erotic impulse. His brusque attempt to realize his desire compromises him before Alfred; and, as a result, he is made to purchase seventeen tons of potatoes from the scheming father. This unwanted cargo and the 'catastrophic revelation' of the truth of his 'self,' reflected in the confession of the primitive femme fatale -- 'I love nothing' -- lead him to sea, where, like Marlow in "Heart of Darkness" and Roderick Anthony in Chance, he seeks in work refuge from 'self-examination,' 'self-knowledge.'[31] The confession and revelation result immediately from the protagonist's own action. But the 'awful smell' of the cargo, 'as if by a satanic refinement of irony,'[32] reminds the captain of the 'perfumed sigh' emanating from Alice's garden. The irony is further intensified as the rotting potatoes, believed by the captain to be a financial disaster, come

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[30] 'Twixt Land and Sea, pp. 70-78.

[31] Ibid., pp. 78, 79, 82; cp. "Heart of Darkness," p. 75, and Chance, p. 340.

[32] Ibid., p. 82.

to command a handsome price; but they are also the cause of misfortune, for, as a result of this 'smile of fortune,' the captain's projected flight from Alice and self-knowledge is blocked. The ship's owners direct him to remain in the sugar-trade and, therefore, near Alice. Unable to face the consequences of this new-found knowledge, the truth of which his ignorant first mate cannot perceive, the captain resigns his command in preparation for returning home to England. His plans are destroyed, his career in jeaporday.

As Jerome Zuckerman has noted, "A Smile of Fortune" is an 'interesting failure.'[33] The tale's shortcomings, however, lie not in sentimentalized or melodramatic characterization, but, as the above reading of the tale suggests, in the awkward balancing of contradictory tones -- light comedy and sardonic irony. Though the themes and motifs of the tale are morally and aesthetically profound, Conrad never quite succeeds here in reconciling conflicting attitudes in an over-riding irony which probes below the surface.

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[33] "'A Smile of Fortune': Conrad's Interesting Failure," Studies in Short Fiction, I (1964), 49-54.

"Freya of the Seven Isles," the more loosely-contructed of the two companion-pieces to "A Smile of Fortune," has attracted much adverse criticism, some of it warranted, though based at times on certain critical conventions which are not substantiated by the facts of the tale. Graver has judged it 'the most clumsily protracted of all Conrad's stories,'[34] but does not demonstrate his point; and Moser, examining the tale in a Freudian framework, offers in an aside the view that it is 'much too long for its simple subject.'[35] Both critics find the tale melodramatic.[36] The following reading of "Freya of the Seven Isles" offers a reverse criticism: the tale is excessively burdened with complex ironies which neither its brief length nor its slight subject will bear. As Conrad suggests on the first page, the tale is, at least in part, an exercise in wit: Nelson, we are told, travelled the Eastern Archipelago 'in an eminently pacific way.'[37] Though the quality of

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[34] Graver, Conrad's Short Fiction, p. 163.

[35] Moser, p. 100.

[36] Conrad's Short Fiction, p. 163; Moser, p. 101.

[37] 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 147.

this pun and yet another -- since Allen had bought his brig, 'his heart (had been) in the brig'[38] -- leaves much to be desired, we are thereby advised of an 'odyssey' during which we shall travel 'transversely, diagonally, perpendicularly, in semi-circles, and zigzags, and figures of eights.'[39]

The coruscations of 'satanic irony' in a universe governed by the upside-down logic evident in "A Smile of Fortune" are reflected and multiplied in "Freya of the Seven Isles." In this tale of but ninety pages, beginning with a comic rendition of sturm und drang (playing Wagner to the accompaniment of storm and lightning, the siren Freya calls to Jasper Allen, her generous knight), and ending with three deaths (Allen becomes a living 'skeleton in dirty white clothes';[40] Freya dies of loneliness and sorrow; and Schultz commits suicide), Conrad takes the reader through a convoluted series of reversals and contradictions: (1) Freya, likened to the

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[38] 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 156. 'Brig,' in its meaning of 'prison,' originated aboard US ships and became international currency among sailors c. 1850.

[39] Ibid., p. 147.

[40] Ibid., p. 236.

'Scandinavian Goddess of Love,' is cool, resolute, self-possessed;[41] (2) Freya, who, like a ship's master, would have a sober 'mate,' does everything in her power to arouse his imagination; (3) because, through the eyes of love, he sees the world as 'safe, resplendent, and easy,'[42] Allan is reckless; (4) Freya, angry with Allen on one occasion for a risky manoeuvre in narrow waters, indirectly cuases the BONITO to be cast adrift onto a reef; (5) in provoking Heemskirk, commander of the Dutch gunboat NEPTUN and a rival suitor, Freya, sure of her power, is reckless of possible consequences for Allen and herself; (6) Allen, who identifies the ship with Freya, by losing the BONITO gains power over Freya; (7) Freya loses Allen when Allen loses the BONITO; (8) Allen's generosity in signing on as first mate a notorious thief of ships' stores, Schultz, is rewarded by a catastrophic betrayal by that thief; (9) Schultz, grateful to Allen for rescuing him from a macabre life ashore, betrays his Good Samaritan and maroons him in a death-like trance ashore; (10) Nelson

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[41] 'Twixt Land and Sea, pp. 195, 197.

[42] Ibid., p. 168.

(Nielsen), Freya's father, who endeavours to retain possession of his plantation by having Freya reject Allen in order to placate Heemskirk, in the end sells his land as a result of Freya's 'illness,' caused by Allen's absence; (11) an able singer, Schultz commits suicide by cutting his own throat; (12) the dashing and optimistic Allen finally is marooned, a walking 'skeleton' sunk in sorrow; and (13) the 'sensible' Freya, who had dismissed (not rejected) Allen out of deference to her father's wishes and who had believed that men are 'absurd,'[43] dies absurdly, out of love and sorrow, and leaves a bereaved and unseeing father.

Thus, a siren and her mariner, both initially living in a world likened on one occasion to 'a delicate dream,'[44] both initially ignorant of potential treachery in themselves and others, unknowingly come to reap the fruits of their illusions in a 'nightmarish'[45] world of reversals and

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[43] 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 193. [44] Ibid., p. 212.

[45] Ibid., p. 218. The reference to a nightmare links Freya, the BONITO and Allen: 'To see her, his cherished possession, animated by something of his Freya's soul..., to see this beautiful thing embodying worthily his pride and love, to see her captive at the end of a tow-rope was not indeed a pleasant experience. It had something nightmarish in it, as, for instance, the dream of a wild sea-bird loaded with chains.'

contradictions. Allen's generosity and Freya's common sense are as instrumental as Heemskirk's jealousy in bringing about this revelation in catastrophe. Such ironic equivocation on good and evil is hardly consonant with melodrama and sentimentality. As an exercise in dream-logic, the tale is not totally without merit, though, as mentioned above, the reader might wish for more substance to the wit.

The pivotal tale in 'Twixt Land and Sea, "The Secret Sharer," offers a 'spectacular' counterpoint to "A Smile of Fortune" and "Freya of the Seven Isles," tales of enlightenment coincident with catastrophe. Earlier in composition than its two companion-pieces, it plots a course of instruction without the agency of Eros. But, as suggested by the contrary conclusions of some critics anent the 'morality' and/or 'immorality' of actions in the tale,[46] "The Secret Sharer" reflects the ironic logic of its two companions.

A young, 'untried'[47] captain in an unfamiliar ship

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[46] See, for example, Guerard, pp. 21-29; and J. L. Simmons, "The Dual Morality in 'The Secret Sharer,'" Studies in Short Fiction, II (1965), 209-220.

[47] 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 93.

anchored at the head of the Gulf of Siam, wonders, much like Jim, how faithful he will be to the 'ideal conception' of his own 'personality' which he has secretly established for himself.[48] A capricious dismissal of the anchor watch, the taking of that duty himself, combined with another interference with established routing -- a rope side-ladder, at his command, had not been hauled in --, open the floodgates of unreason. During the watch, the captain, wearing a sleeping-suit, looks into the 'darkly glassy shimmer of the sea,' to see there a 'floating mystery,' the optically-headless body of a swimmer;[49] and thus he enters the Calderón-like dream of Narcissus and Echo.

Having secreted the swimmer in his cabin, the captain gives him a similar sleeping-suit; and, of the ensuing conversation, in which Leggatt, first mate of the SEPHORA, relates how by his sang froid (ironically manifested in a hot-blooded act of manslaughter per accidens) he had saved his ship in a gale and had

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[48] 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 94; cp. Lord Jim, p. 202.

[49] 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 97.

escaped confinement, the then-untried shipmaster confesses:

> It was...as though I had been faced by my own reflection in the depths of a sombre and immense mirror.[50]

The dialogue is likened to a soliloquy in unreason: a 'double captain' talks in whispers 'with his other self.'[51] Leggatt, unlike his 'double' in appearance, functions analogically as a mutually-reflecting 'double' of the soul speaking with itself. In contrast, the chief mate, like the novice Conrad in the TREMOLINO, a 'nautical casuist,' cannot read the double meaning of a captain's utterance.[52] The man true to the seaman-self cannot imagine that his captain is capable of an unlawful act. Subsequent to a lie to the captain of the SEPHORA, which further bonds the criminal and the shipmaster, the latter risks ship and crew for the sake of the former, who had saved a ship and crew. A 'favourable accident'[53] at a critical moment -- Leggatt's white hat on black water -- returns the gift of freedom and a new life with 'silent

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[50] 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 101.

[51] Ibid., p. 105.

[52] Ibid., p. 123.

[53] Ibid., p. 142.

knowledge,'[54] for in this crisis the inexperienced captain comes to know something of himself and his ship.

While Conrad's key motifs -- a 'sleeper' gazing into a mirror, reversals of anticipated effects, the soul's conversation with itself, and the coincidence of opposites -- are incorporated with striking effect in this masterful evocation of non-rational enlightenment, "The Secret Sharer" offers to the student of Conrad a reversal of anticipated effect vis-à-vis his entire work, for immersion in unreason proves in this instance felicitous for all parties. Thus, even to the reader who would clearly distinguish morality from immorality, good from evil in "The Secret Sharer," the tale must appear a nightmare of equivocation, for her, as elsewhere in Conrad, the truth of the self is the truth of mirrored inversions. Seen in this perspective, questions as to the morality or immorality of the actions leading to the captain's enlightenment, while of considerable ethical interest in themselves, are superfluous to an understanding of the tale, based as they are on the

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[54] 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 143.

assumption that good and evil, like reality and illusion, self and other, are exclusive.[55]

Within a little more than a year of the publication of 'Twixt Land and Sea, Conrad's popular success was established by Chance. A love interest and what readers perceived as simple Dickensian melodrama readily account for the reception. 'Figures from Dickens -- pregnant with pathos,'[56] act their parts on stages similar to those of Bleak House and Little Dorrit.[57] A serio-comic trial; a niggardly relative (a cardboard manufacturer) and his vulgar, unfeeling family; a kind, simple and sympathetic middle-aged couple; a heartless father; a motherless child put upon by a cruel world; and a rescue of a Damsel in distress by a Knight in shining armour -- all are here in what appears to be simply the tale of Flora's journey from riches to rags to happiness.

A good number of critics have focussed attention on this ostensibly simple, and, thus, melodramatic, aspect.

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[55] Porter Williams, Jr., "The Matter of Conscience in Conrad's 'The Secret Sharer,'" PMLA, LXXIX (1964), 626-630, writes of Conrad's refusal to make ethical judgments in 'an ambivalent realm.'

[56] Chance, p. 162.

[57] Wiley, p. 142; Karl, A Reader's Guide, pp. 244-245.

Douglas Hewitt, for example, finds in Chance, a 'division of mankind into the camp of good and bad.'[58] Thomas Moser judges that the 'hero' and the 'heroine' are 'sinned against, themselves unsinning,' and that the novel offers 'an intended moral of a rather dubious nature: love between man and woman is the most important thing in life.'[59] And Flora, according to Laurence Lerner, is 'the simple and chivalrous idealization of the sailor.'[60] The complex facts of the tale, however, suggest another view. Flora, though she initially does not love Anthony, marries him for two contradictory motives: out of selflessness (generosity to Anthony) and out of selfishness (to provide a home for herself and her father once he leaves jail). Her presence on board the FERNDALE is nothing short of disastrous for Anthony and her father. Also, Anthony's generosity is difficult to distinguish from folly. His absurd 'goodness,' like MacWhirr's logic, is equivocal; in the words of Marlow, his 'simplicity...wears the aspect of perfectly satanic conceit.'[61] Furthermore, to consider

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[58] Hewitt, p. 89.

[59] Moser, pp. 141, 105.

[60] "Conrad the Historian," Listener, LXXIII (1965), 555.

[61] Chance, p. 351.

Chance as but another example of heightened Victorian melodrama is to ignore the central position of Marlow's intellect in the novel;[62] to overlook Conrad's overt pre-occupation with the 'doubleness' of words as analogues of the self and of experence, a concern signalled by the ambivalent title; and to render senseless the epigraph provided by the Baroque 'metaphysical' physician, Sir Thomas Browne, on the subject of fortune, chance and 'the Providence of God.'[63]

Chance is, from one perspective, a witty dramatization of the power of words. We are invited early (p. β) to sharpen our wits, as Marlow inverts the philosophical meaning of 'substance' and 'accident' in speaking of

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[62] R. Hudspeth, in a complex article, shows the manifold ways in which Marlow's mind shapes the novel: "Conrad's Use of Time in Chance," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XXI (1966), 383-389.

[63] 'Those that hold that all things are governed by fortune had not erred, had they not persisted there' -- Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici, Part I. This epigraph, like that provided by Boethius for The Mirror of the Sea, is found in a critique of 'man's reason' as an instrument for the knowing of 'the Providence of God'--The Religio Medici and Other Writings (1952), p. 22. B. Harkness interprets the epigraph to mean 'chance does not govern life,' and thus overlooks the ambivalence of Chance: "The Epigraph of Conrad's Chance," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, IX (1954), 209-222. See Farinelli, pp. 153-154, for an account of Calderón analogues in Browne's Religio Medici.

accidental similarities between Powell's namesake, one of the five shipping-masters presiding in the basement of St. Katherine's Dock House, and Socrates:

> I mean he resembled him genuinely: that is in the face. A philosophical mind is but an accident,[64]

And Marlow, who on at least four occasions explicitly distinguishes the literal from the figurative sense of a word,[65] revels, much like a Renaissance poet, in puns on 'start' and 'pedestrian,' and in oxymora such as 'brightly dull' and 'sober imagination.'[66] On one occasion, he becomes a bilingual punster: 'à propos des bottes' ('without rhyme or reason') offers a literal transfer to 'à propos of some lace.'[67]

In not quite so lightly playful a vein ('horribly merry,' 'grimly playful'),[68] the reader is reminded: 'We live at the mercy of a malevolent word.'[69] It is by virtue of the word 'Thrift' that de Barral builds

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[64] Chance, p. 8.

[65] Ibid., pp. 56, 73, 282, 251.

[66] Ibid., pp. 37, 70, 42, 93.

[67] Ibid., p. 165.

[68] Ibid., pp. 171, 242.

[69] Ibid., p. 264.

a comic economic empire,[70] which, in failing, deposits him in jail and leaves Flora vulnerable. 'Tiff,' 'convict,' 'pauper,' 'odious,' 'unlovable,' and 'unfortunate' are designated 'words' with power over Flora's destiny.[71] 'That hostile word "jailer",' doubly applicable (to de Barral as well as Captain Anthony), gives the absurd situation aboard the FERNDALE 'an air of reality,' according to Powell.[72] The words of Flora's letter to Mrs. Fyne, a feminist, in the view of Marlow, 'as guileless of consequences as any determinist philosopher,'[73] when misread, wreak havoc on shore and at sea, while the empty, dangerous 'words' ('poisonous pills')[74] of Mrs. Fyne's feminist manifesto find their consequences in Flora's actions:

> no scruples should stand in the way of a woman...from taking the shortest cut towards securing for herself the easiest possible existence.[75]

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[70] Chance, pp. 74 ff.

[71] Ibid., pp. 167, 263, 385.

[72] Ibid., p. 407.

[73] Ibid., p. 63.

[74] Ibid., p. 61.

[75] Ibid., p. 59.

Flora writes to the Fynes that she does not love Anthony and is marrying him for security for herself and her father; Fyne relays this information to Anthony, who proposes marriage to Flora by saying that he will marry her for her father's sake, a proposal which confirms Flora in her feeling of being unlovable. Other words singled out for treatment as words -- 'sagacity,' 'duplicity,' 'compunction,' 'enthusiastic,' 'hopelessly,' 'intoxicated,' and 'marriage'[76] find their multiple meanings illustrated in human action. And the failure of Fyne and Flora to distinguish between 'generosity' and 'folly'[77] ironically prefigures the foolish generosity ('imbecility' or 'innocence')[78] of Captain Roderick Anthony of the FERNDALE. The Damsel and her Knight, like the novelist, are immersed in a 'grey sea of words, words, words,'[79] there to experience the ambiguities of 'good' and 'evil,' 'chance' and 'design'; as Marlow reflects, 'the incapacity to achieve anything distinctly

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[76] Chance, pp. 146, 157, 407, 146, 261, 209.

[77] Ibid., p. 251.

[78] Ibid., p. 158.

[79] Blackburn, ed., p. 133. Letter of 26 August 1901 to William Blackwood.

good or evil is inherent in our earthly condition,'[80] a view not shared by a number of Conrad critics.

At the core of the tale lie 'chance' and 'accident,' verbal analogues of the fate of Flora and Anthony. Marlow, the skeptical lexicographer, with Powell and 'I' one of the three narrators, offers the pivotal definition: 'I don't mean accident in the sense of a mishap...,' he specifies to Powell. 'By accident I mean that which happens blindly and without intelligent design.'[81] Like its partial synonym 'chance,' 'accident' is 'incalculable.'[82]

The significance of this definition for the entire tale becomes clear, as Marlow, echoing a distinction in the Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, discriminates between 'information' and 'knowledge': the former is a deliberate acquisition of 'facts; the latter, 'a chance acquisition.'[83] Like belief in 'the consoling

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[80] Chance, p. 23.

[81] Ibid., p. 36. [82] Ibid., p. 100.

[83] Ibid., p. 206. Cardinal Newman had drawn a similar distinction in An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent (1870). See J. Holloway, The Victorian Sage (1953), Chapter I.

mysteries of Faith,' 'knowledge' never comes by way of 'reason.'[84] It is 'by chance' that Flora's 'ignorance' of the ways of the world is shattered, that she suffers 'a sort of mystic wound,' and that she comes to an 'informed innocence.'[85] But it is also ironically by 'chance' (now in the sense of 'good luck' or 'opportunity') that, by two misfortunes (her father's suicide and her husband's death in a marine mishap), Flora comes to a happy ending. 'Accident,' in her case, may not have been 'without intelligent design.'

The absurdly virtuous Anthony's fate provides a reverse image. It is 'not by chance' ('good luck' and 'accident' as defined by Marlow) that he meets Flora, and enters, out of selfishness (he is lonely) and generosity (Flora is an orphan), a 'whirlwind'[86] of passion analogous to MacWhirr's typhoon. Though saved by 'chance' ('good luck' and/or 'intelligent design') from death by mishap and murder (both related to Flora's selfishness), he dies in an accident.

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[84] Chance, p. 206; see p. 88.

[85] Ibid., pp. 99, 118, 196.

[86] Ibid., pp. 216, 331.

'Chance,' like 'accident,' may also be blind. Significantly, 'chance,' in its ambivalent meaning of 'good luck' and 'accident,' is twice repeated on the final two pages of the tale.

Thus, like the FERNDALE, by analogy a 'world... launched into space,' afloat in 'a sheet of darkling glass crowded with upside-down reflections,'[87] Flora, twice immersed in a mirror,[88] and Anthony, a once-'doubled' captain, plunging into the 'sea' of Flora's eyes,[89] are immersed in 'the complicated bad dream of existence'[90] populated by somnambulists, and come to their respective ends, reversed reflections of 'Chance,' expressed in equivocal words. Their 'plunge' is as much the result of inner compulsion as it is of external circumstances: they are part of the dream-life. As Conrad notes, 'events are the outward sign of inward feelings.'[91] Immersed in this 'doubleness' ourselves,

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[87] Chance, pp. 273, 274.

[88] Ibid., pp. 265, 384.

[89] Ibid., pp. 276, 332.

[90] Ibid., pp. 443, 303, 348, 358, 433, 223.

[91] Aubry, Vol. I, p. 183.

we may, in the manner of Marlow, a man given to 'chasing some notion or other round and round his head,'[92] both confirm and deny (the narrator 'I' observes: 'with Marlow one could never be sure')[93] the Elder Brother's assertion in Comus:

> Of...that power
> Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm:
> Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,
> Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled;
> Yea, even that which Mischief meant most harm
> Shall in the happy trial prove most glory.[94]

To share with Moser the view that Chance has 'an intended moral of a rather dubious nature: love between man and woman is the most important thing in life,' is merely to confirm the assertion made in Comus. Marlow's 'sermon' on love and life is in part ironic:

> Of all the forms offered to us by life it is the one demanding a couple to realize it fully, which is the most imperative. Pairing off is the fate of mankind. And if two beings thrown together, mutually attracted, resist the necessity, fail in understanding and voluntarily stop short of the -- the embrace, in the noblest

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[92] Chance, p. 33.

[93] Ibid., p. 94.

[94] The Portable Milton, ed. Douglas Bush (1949), p. 94. Comus provided the epigraph of Victory.

> meaning of the word, then they are comitting a sin against life, the call of which is simple. Perhaps sacred. And the punishment of it is an invasion of complexity, a tormenting, forcibly tortuous involution of feelings, the deepest form of suffering from which indeed something significant may come at last, which may be criminal or heroic, may be madness or wisdom -- or even a straight if despairing decision.[95]

The irony implicit in this passage is drawn out some twenty pages later as Marlow queries Powell on his intentions toward Flora: 'And the science of life consists in seizing every chance that presents itself.... Do you believe that?,' to which Powell replies: 'Oh, quite!'[96] The reader will recall that Powell's start, his initial 'chance' or 'opportunity,' came as a result of an act of duplicity (the two Powells gave Anthony the impression that they were nephew and uncle). The entire novel illustrates the ambivalence of 'chance.' The mirror of 'Chance,' like the mirror of Flora's eyes, the mutually-reflecting mirrors of de Barral and Anthony, and the doubling mirror of Flora's and Anthony's fate, reflects complex ambiguities.

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[95] Chance, pp. 426-427.

[96] Ibid., p. 446.

The novel itself Conrad likened to a 'dream,'[97] a metaphor which might be extended, analogically, to the sea, "a sheet of darkling glass crowded with upside-down reflections.'[98] If there is a 'message' in this tale of 'equivocal situations,'[99] it is that within every thesis there is reflected an inseparable antithesis. As Curtis C. Smith observes, Chance is 'a dialectical novel.'[100] In dramatic terms, it may be described as 'a tragi-comedy,' 'slipping between frank laughter and unabashed tears,'[101] an appropriate coincidence of opposites in a tale controlled by the intelligence of a character fond of 'chasing some notion or other round and round his head.'[102]

Negative criticism of Chance is more appropriately and more accurately based on the issue of words. For the reader who does not find solving cryptograms congenial

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[97] Author's Note to Chance, p. viii.

[98] Chance, p. 274.

[99] Ibid., p. 328.

[100] "Conrad's Chance: A Dialectical Novel," Thoth, VI (1965), 16-24.

[101] Chance, pp. 272, 310.

[102] Ibid., p. 33.

the novel is certainly unsatisfying (unless, of course, the reader fond of sentimentality finds only melodrama in Chance). There are many words about experience, relatively few portraying it. With the 'metaphysical' punster Marlow as its controlling wit, Chance is a refined verbal puzzle. While some readers may derive pleasure from this sort of complexity,[103] others may find it a sterile exercise. Regardless of the decision the reader may reach as to the quality of the complexity, its presence removes the novel far from mere melodrama.

The Shadow-Line (1917) does not share the puzzle-like intricacy of structure and verbal play of Chance, published four years earlier. Like Conrad's 'simple' narratives of sea voyages -- The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, "Youth," and "Typhoon" --, The Shadow-Line is 'a complex piece of work'[104] that in its narration of experience, both 'universal' and 'one's own,'[105] mirrors mutually-reflecting aspects of truth, which, in the words of the

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[103] See, for example, Jerome Zuckerman, "Contrapuntal Structure in Conrad's Chance," Modern Fiction Studies, X (1964), 49-54.

[104] Author's Note to The Shadow-Line, p. v.

[105] The Shadow-Line, p. 3.

Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, is 'manifold and one.'[106] The naif mate's exit from the 'enchanted garden' of youth and his crossing 'a shadow-line' into a 'twilight region,'[107] like "Youth," may be read as one of 'those voyages that seem ordered for the illustration of life, that might stand for the symbol of existence.'[108] Like a single symbolic fact, the tale suggests of complex of discrete and coinciding meanings.

Itself 'a confession'[109] revealing secrets within a man, in which is set the mirror-like device of a diary,[110] The Shadow-Line provides an outstanding example of Conrad's use of dreams and mirrors in the charting of a protagonist's enlightenment. As is typical, the odyssey begins with a 'caprice'; a young mate, knowing 'no introspection,' throws up a comfortable berth on 'impulse.'[111] Acting once again on impulse, he takes

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[106] Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, p. v.

[107] The Shadow-Line, Chapter I.

[108] "Youth," p. 4.

[109] Subtitle of The Shadow-Line.

[110] Cp. Under Western Eyes, p. 214: Razumov looks within his diary 'as a man looks at himself in a mirror.'

[111] The Shadow-Line, pp. 2-4.

the advice of an 'expert in intricate navigation,' Captain Giles, and, as a consequence, is suddenly invested with command of a ship, 'as if by enchantment.'[112] His 'passports for Hades'[113] in order, he begins, in the words of J. G. Hamann, a 'descent into Hell..., the knowledge of the self.'[114] Steaming to Bangkok in the MELITA to take command of his ship, his past becomes a 'dream'; he first sees her 'as in a dream.'[115] No sooner aboard his barque and in her saloon, the novice captain enters 'a day-dreaming state' in which he sees himself in a mirror:

> It struck me that this quietly staring man whom I was watching, both as if he were myself and somebody else, was not exactly a lonely figure.[116]

Time appears to stand still while he is immersed in this doubling mirror with a clock set in its frame: 'its long hand had hardly moved at all.'[117] Subsequently,

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[112] The Shadow-Line, pp. 12, 39.

[113] Ibid., p. 7.

[114] Nouvelle Heloise, cited by Beguin, p. 53.

[115] The Shadow-Line, pp. 49-50.

[116] Ibid., p. 53.

[117] Ibid., p. 54.

the captain becomes 'self-conscious'; he begins to 'taste of that peace and that unrest in a searching intimacy with ... [his] own self.'[118]

The mirror-dream, as suggested by the above textual references and by traditional association, may be read as both a symbol of and a medium for the captain's narcissistic descent within, and an appropriate device by which Conrad can objectify multiple facets of the protagonist's soul. Looking within a mirror, the protagonist sees himself, while he meditates on the 'line of men ... whose souls in relation to their humble life's work had no secrets for him.'[119] In this inner microcosm of sea-mirror and sea-dream reflecting the macrocosm of a tradition, time stands still. Here, the mariner's sextant is of no use, for without time, he lacks an essential referent for determining his position in space. Thus the sea-mirror becomes an infinite element, a medium of relativity in which 'here,' 'there,' 'before,' and 'after' are indistinguishable because absent, an analogical

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[118] The Shadow-Line, p. 53.

[119] Ibid., p. 53.

reflection of the soul with referents in neither time nor space. Conversely, the presence of time suggests security in limitation; it provides refuge from infinity. Conrad's clocks, like Evgeny Zamiatin's, break infinity into 'rational differentials.'[120] The narrator of "Karain: A Memory," for example, reflects:

> the firm, pulsating beat of the two ship's chronometers ticking off steadily the seconds of Greenwich Time seemed to me a protection and a relief.[121]

Captain Whalley tunes his life to the beat of the FAIR MAID's chronometers, secure in his ignorance, before descending into an abyss of torment; Captain Mitchell strives desperately (and comically) to retrieve his stolen watch in the midst of political confusion in Nostromo; Captain Brierly in Lord Jim leaves his watch behind before leaping into the sea; Jim, caught in mud, wishes he were back in Rajah Allang's stockade, there mending a nickel clock of New England make; Lingard, in The Rescue, half-awake, for a moment believes that his chronometer has stopped shortly after a secret meeting with Edith Travers; again in The

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[120] Zamiatin, We, trans. G. Zilboorg (1924), Record Twelve.

[121] Tales of Unrest, p. 40.

Rescue, Mr. Travers, suffering from hot and cold fits, remarks that the hands of his watch have been broken off during a conflict with savages; in Under Western Eyes, Razumov's watch stops shortly after his dream of an ordered life is shattered; and, in The Secret Agent, the symbolic destruction of time reflects cosmic chaos, Eternity.

In a mistaken belief that the sea will provide a refuge from and a cure for shore diseases (prefigured in a moral sense in Hamilton's treachery), the captain in The Shadow-Line takes his command to sea:

> The splash of our shore-fasts falling in the water produced a complete change of feeling in me. It was like the imperfect relief of awakening from a nightmare.[122]

Subsequent events reveal that he escapes from one nightmare to enter another. The cosmic import of the barque's voyage is suggested by an analogy linking her with the NARCISSUS, the PATNA, the SOFALA, and the LIGHTNING; she is like 'a planet flying vertiginously on its appointed path in a space of infinite silence.'[123] Her voyage is also her

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[122] The Shadow-Line, p. 72. The Polish poet Stanislaw Lec offers a parallel irony in Unkempt Thoughts (1957): 'I had a dream about reality. It was such a relief to wake up' (cited by Milosz, The History of Polish Literature, p. 521).

[123] Ibid., p. 74. Cp: The Nigger, p. 103; Lord Jim, p. 22; "The End of the Tether," p. 318; The Rescue, Chapter III.

captain's. Paradoxically, it is a voyage without motion, for suddenly, as if by magic, the ship is made captive within an 'enchanted circle' about Koh-Ring, an island (not shown on actual charts) in the Gulf of Siam above latitude 8°20" North. Likened to 'a model ship set on the gleams and shadows of polished marble,'[124] she (with her captain) is a captive in a state analogous to infinity. The sea, in which the solitary ship is captive, is symbolically a 'grand miroir' reflecting disease within, the captain's growing 'désespoir';[125] it is at once a symbol and a reflection of immersion in moral and optical illusion, a prelude to self-knowledge. Pinning his faith to quinine as a remedy for fever ('the fever-devil'),[126] and, by association, as a homeopathic cure for the diseased elements, the captain is self-deceived and betrayed, for the bottles are filled not with the drug but with a 'sweetish, saltish' white powder (perhaps cocaine -- dream-stuff?).[127]

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[124] The Shadow-Line, p. 76.

[125] Baudelaire's "La Musique" provided the epigraph of The Shadow-Line:

'...D'autres fois, calme plat, grand miroir
De mon désespoir....'

--Le Dantec, ed., p. 202.

[126] The Shadow-Line, p. 103.

[127] Ibid., pp. 94 ff.

Thus 'robbed of reason,' he becomes a double of his insane predecessor, an introspective dreamer with an oriental paramour and a violinist, whose 'ghost,' an infernal 'secret sharer,'[128] holds the barque within the Gulf of Siam. In this state, analogous to a fever, 'burning' and 'shivering' are 'pretty much the same thing.'[129] And, as Guerard has suggested, the 'rational' Ransome and the 'irrational' Burns serve as antithetical 'doubles' of the captain's 'soul';[130] his predecessor is yet a third reflection.

In this test, the young commander proves too introverted, too full of remorse, and too faint-hearted 'to meet the horrid logic of the situation'; his 'imagination' not 'properly under control,' he loses 'self-possession' and 'the notion of time,' to enter alone the mirror of his diary.[131] He enters an inner world with no boundaries in time and space, there to see, like his introspective

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[128] The Shadow-Line, pp.89, 119. The Gulf of Siam links The Shadow-Line and "The Secret Sharer."

[129] Ibid., p. 78.

[130] Guerard, p. 32. Moser is mistaken when he argues that The Shadow-Line is melodramatic: 'The only evil lies at the bottom of the ocean' (p. 139).

[131] The Shadow-Line, pp. 93, 100, 102, 105.

predecessor, the truth of his 'self.' In this mirror are reflected at once both 'gleams' and 'shadows,' 'good' and 'evil,'[132] mutual reflections in a world of coinciding opposites. Now isolated in the self, he neglects his duty, only to be recalled on deck by the heroic cook, Ransome, a double of his rational self; always alert and self-possessed by reason of knowledge of the 'deadly enemy in his breast,' a literally weak heart.[133] Reawakened, wearing a sleeping-suit, the shipmaster now enters, like the NARCISSUS, Jim, MacWhirr and Lingard, for example, another dream-mirror, a deluge, 'the darkness before creation,' a timeless element of 'inconceivable depths,' 'a bottomless black pit.'[134] In such a darkness, analogous to the darkness within, the mariner has no referents in time and space. 'I was alone,' he confesses.[135] But, by inversion, a reverse mirror-image of previous inaction, this episode matures and tempers his character: 'Remorse

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[132] The Shadow-Line, pp. 73, 112-113.

[133] Ibid., p. 68.

[134] Ibid., pp. 110-116. Compare: The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, Chapter III; Lord Jim, p. 112; "Typhoon," p. 83; The Rescue, Chapter III.

[135] Ibid., p. 113.

must wait. I had to steer.'[136]

Having experienced a glimpse of truth in the mirror within, 'one's own' reflection of the 'universal' truth without, the captain partially re-establishes his solidarity with his crew and the tradition of the sea. The test has taught the young man something of the evil in himself, in mankind, and in the secret depths of the universe. As John A. Palmer notes, The Shadow-Line is 'morally archetypal.'[137] But this moral knowledge is always provisional. The captain has taken but the introductory course of instruction delivered by existence in the period framed by the youthful Marlow and the reminiscing (and still partly ignorant) narrator in "Youth." 'God only knows,' he replies to Captain Giles query: 'Why -- you aren't faint-hearted?'[138] Perhaps, like Prince Segismundo, he sees that his knowledge is itself an illusion within a more comprehensive dream.

Conrad's next two publications after The Shadow-Line (1917), The Arrow of Gold (1919) and The Rescue (1920),

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[136] The Shadow-Line, p. 126.

[137] Palmer, p. 245.

[138] The Shadow-Line, p. 132.

mark the completion of tales begun in the years immediately following An Outcast of the Islands (1896).[139] Genetically linked in terms of dates of conception, the novels dramatize in westery and easterly locations, centered on Marseilles and Carimata Strait, respectively, the 'initiation' of two sailors 'into the life of passion,'[140] each involved in clandestine operations for the taking of a kingdom. While Monsieur Georges, by way of Dona Rita, and Captain Lingard, by way of Edith Travers, are carried to disaster and disillusionment in a sea of cross-currents, dreams of kingdoms in Spain and Celebes are exploded. As we read in The Rescue, Lingard 'would go with the mysterious current; he would go swiftly -- and see the end, the fulfilment both blissful and terrible.'[141] The Psychomachia lost by two dreamers in the 'Garden of the Rose' is doubled in

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[139] The Arrow of Gold is a reworking of The Sisters, a fragment the length of forty pages in his collected works, treating of a young Ukrainian in search of art and truth among Carlists. This tale, along with the piece begun as The Rescuer's, was put aside in the late 1890's.

[140] Author's Note to The Arrow of Gold, p. ix. Conrad's remarks here are applicable to Lingard's 'initiation' as well.

[141] The Rescue, p. 219.

the body politic: 'the madness of battle' is like 'the madness of love.'[142] Georges and Lingard share the fate, not of Guillaume de Lorris' Dreamer, but of his Narcissus gazing into a mirror:

> for when he knew
> Such passion must go e'er unsatisfied,
> Although he was entangled in Love's snare,
> And that never could sure comfort find...,
> He lost his reason in but little space.[143]

Immersed analogically in the mirror of the Infinite expressed as woman, both Lingard and Georges leave the world of logic and surface fact, and enter a world of contradiction and illusion.[144]

The Arrow of Gold is generally considered the worst of Conrad's novels. It is, in the opinion of Douglas Hewitt, 'a work which his admirers do well to overlook';[145] 'material for the gossip of biographers,' according to Albert Guerard;[146] 'a tedious best seller,' in the judgment

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[142] The Rescue, p. 224.

[143] The Romance of the Rose, trans. H. W. Robbins (1962), p. 31. Cf. The Rescue: '...something has happened which has robbed him of his power of thinking' (p. 414).

[144] Chaucer's Franklin's Tale, a rhetorical and logical tour de force of moral and optical illusions, provided the epigraph of The Rescue.

[145] Hewitt, p. 2.

[146] Guerard, p. 284.

of Lawrence Graver.[147] Frederick Karl,[148] Thomas Moser,[149] and Neville Newhouse[150] concur in the reason for the verdict: Conrad's melodramatic, sentimental treatment of love.

While the final verdict on this novel's literary value in relation to Conrad's other long fictions is sound, the reason adduced for the verdict is not, I think, quite as sound. Georges is not, in Moser's phrase, 'the impeccable hero,'[151] nor is Rita the innocent heroine. As Ortega's grotesque paroxysm of anguish (in which there is 'truth...enough to move a mountain')[152] reveals, Rita 'is more than fit to be Satan's wife',[153] and as the reader is reminded throughout the novel, Rita is 'both flesh and shadow,' a 'real' being and a mimesis.[154] She

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[147] Graver, Conrad's Short Fiction, p. 170.

[148] Karl, A Reader's Guide, pp. 277-279.

[149] Moser, pp. 185, passim.

[150] Newhouse, pp. 73, 138.

[151] Moser, p. 149.

[152] The Arrow of Gold, p. 318.

[153] Ibid., p. 318.

[154] Ibid., p. 135.

is a femme fatale (not innocente), a living double of La Gioconda,[155] 'the principle of life charged with fatality.'[156] And Georges' naïveté is indistinguishable from ignorance; he lacks 'knowledge of evil,'[157] an ignorance which, as Conrad noted a year before the publication of The Arrow of Gold, is itself 'evil.'[158] Georges is a double of 'Young Ulysses,'[159] to be enlightened by immersion in the contradictions mirrored and reconciled in Rita. His ignorance of the 'dreadful order' 'in the darkest shadows of life,'[160] his blindness to the nightmare-logic of existence, betrays Rita to Ortega; his naivete is itself part of this dark order. Unlike a number of his critics, Conrad does not draw simple distinctions between good and evil in his fiction.

A reading of The Arrow of Gold within the frame

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[155] The Arrow of Gold, p. 211.

[156] Ibid., p. 268.

[157] Ibid., p. 70.

[158] Notes on Life and Letters, p. 194.

[159] The Arrow of Gold, p. 12.

[160] Ibid., p. 283.

of dreams, analogical thought, and enlightenment in infinity suggests another reason for the novel's failure. Conrad's attempt to work into this one piece virtually every major motif found in his other works, in the hope, it would seem, of multiplying levels of meaning and of broadening ranges of effects, results, unfortunately, in an overall impression of super-added symbolism. The Arrow of Gold reads like a compendium of Conrad motifs. In addition, the use of an extended diary as a narrative device too easily leads to the discursive rendering of emotional states. The diarist tends to write about his experience. Correspondingly, the symbols thus rendered are entirely too obtrusive. But it is also for the above reasons that The Arrow of Gold is useful to the student of Conrad: the pattern of Conrad's analogical thought as it relates to the enlightenment of a protagonist is more explicitly articulated here than in any other of his novels.

Georges' spiritual odyssey (his nickname is 'Young Ulysses')[161] begins with his introduction to unreason.

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[161] The Arrow of Gold, p. 12.

A young gentleman-sailor 'in a state of sobriety' and of 'refreshing ignorance,' for whom 'life...[is] a thing of outward manifestations,'[162] enters the Cannebière in Marseilles at carnival time; it is a 'street,' like Marlow's river in "Heart of Darkness," 'leading into the unknown.'[163] In a scene of bedlam and masks, he enters by analogy a 'jungle,' in which he meets 'Night' and 'Faust.'[164] This hell-like atmosphere serves as a prelude to the mariner's experience of a world akin to that portrayed in the Goncourts' journal. During a drinking bout in the midst of decaying splendour, Georges comes to learn of Dona Rita, a Basque peasant converted into an objet d'art by the aesthete Henri Allègre and now an heiress and a Carlist agent. Leaving the house of mirrors reflecting 'fantastic' plants, the mariner passes through a chequered 'black-and-white hall';[165] he is in a state akin to that of Decoud 'afloat' in the Placid Gulf, his 'head...full.

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[162] The Arrow of Gold, pp. 31, 87.

[163] Ibid., p. 7.

[164] Ibid., pp. 9, 13.

[165] Ibid., p. 60.

of confused images.'[166]

The mutually-reflecting symbols of mirror, jungle, woman and sea, analogues of infinity, are all obviously deployed as Georges descends further into unreason. The significance of his first meeting with Dona Rita is marked by a mirror: they walk on a 'floor inlaid in two kinds of wood..., reflecting objects like still water.'[167] Double inverted images are reflected in a mirror itself consisting of a union of doubles. At once, Georges feels a 'stranger' in the 'moral region' of 'incomprehensible emotions.'[168] He becomes, like Renouard in "The Planter of Malata," an 'explorer' of 'an undiscovered country',[169] also, somewhat like Marlow in "Heart of Darkness," he is compared to a 'stranger...stumbling upon a hut of natives' possessed of secret 'knowledge of evil.'[170] In addition, like Pearl in "A Smile of Fortune," this 'country' is the land of 'fairy tale,' a place entered 'for good or evil.'[171]

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[166] The Arrow of Gold, p. 61.

[167] Ibid., p. 68.

[168] Ibid., p. 69.

[169] Ibid., p. 69; Within the Tides, p. 79.

[170] Ibid., pp. 69-70.

[171] Ibid., pp. 96, 87.

Meeting Rita, the young mariner enters an 'infinite reverie,' 'a vague dream,' in which he is at once both 'hot' and 'cold like ice.'[172] (The logic and imagery here suggest comparison with Donne's in "Sonnet 19" of Divine Meditations: 'contraries meet in one,' 'cold and hot,' as the poet contemplates his relationship to the Infinite as in a 'fantastic ague.'[173]) 'Immortal art,' in which are reconciled 'gleams' and 'shadows,' is reflected in Dona Rita's 'enigmatic eyes,' which, like the sea, are 'unfathomable,' 'illimitable.'[174] Under the spell of an 'Enchantress' 'as old as the world,'[175] Georges enters a timeless element similar to the jungle in "Heart of Darkness."

Georges learns of the tension of opposites at work in Dona Rita and art. Unlike an objet d'art, Dona Rita posses a personal history which she relates, a history focussing on a series of brushes of savage passion; the

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[172] The Arrow of Gold, pp. 77, 86, 105, 93, 106, 99.

[173] Smith, ed., pp. 317-318.

[174] The Arrow of Gold, pp. 88, 93.

[175] Ibid., pp. 105, 101.

initial episode is prefaced by a gaze in a mirror, symbol not only of self-knowledge, but also of art as a reflection of life. With the light of love for Rita, 'both flesh and shadow,'[176] comes over his life 'a shadow, the inseparable companion of all light'[177] a union of opposites reflected in Rita herself. Georges is ensnared in this contradiction. Like the crew of the NARCISSUS and the chief mate of the PATNA, he finds himself 'hot and trembling' in the midst of 'absurdities and contradictions.'[178] Thus 'enchanted' by 'a fateful figure seated at the very source of the passions that have moved men from the dawn of ages,' he experiences 'unspeakable bliss and inconceivable misery.'[179] Love, art and savage passion are mutual reflections, all three reconciled in the mirror of the infinite which is a woman's eyes: 'She was that which is to be contemplated to all Infinity.'[180]

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[176] The Arrow of Gold, p. 135. The Pygmalion myth enters explicitly in The Rover, p. 212.

[177] Ibid., p. 125.

[178] Ibid., pp. 151-142.

[179] Ibid., pp. 146, 151.

[180] Ibid., p. 288.

This phase of enlightenment ends with Georges gazing into the 'enigmatical' 'black' 'glass' of Rita's eyes.[181]

Like Willems in a jungle, Georges is left as if 'wrestling with a nightmare,' during which he meditates on his feelings before a looking-glass. And, like Willems, he yearns for an escape from 'dreams,' only to see within the mirror of the self that he is in love with La Giocondn, the femme fatale of the 'inscrutable smile.'[182] In the arms of Rita, he lives in 'a dream-like state,' 'that warm and scented infinity, or eternity.'[183] This dream is shattered as his love is rejected by Dona Rita. As a consequence, Georges suffers 'inner destruction' in a timeless state, signalled, as in The Nigger of the NARCISSUS and Lord Jim, for example, by a reversal of optical perspective: 'The small flame had watched me letting myself out.'[184] His state approaches madness as he shivers violently in a warm night.

The next phase of enlightenment finds Georges

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[181] The Arrow of Gold, pp. 144, 152.

[182] Ibid., pp. 154, 163, 169, 211.

[183] Ibid., p. 219.

[184] Ibid., pp. 229, 230.

seeking refuge from the Infinité. He returns to sea in the hope of finding in the

> occupation, protection, consolation, the mental relief of grappling with concrete problems, the sanity one acquires from close contact with simple mankind.[185]

The young mariner finds comfort in the sight of 'perfectly sane' shipwrights.[186] But the sea itself, as Captain Anthony and the captain-narrator of The Shadow-Line had learned, is an equivocating mirror, for it reflects, like Rita's eyes, 'the brilliance of sunshine together with the unfathomable splendour of the night,'[187] 'la splendeur de l'Inconnu,' in Conrad's words to Mme. Angèle Zagorska.[188] And following a shipwreck, Georges returns to Marseilles and a carnival of bedlamites, an objective manifestation of his own loss of 'lucid thinking.'[189] He has come full circle in a twelve-month period likened to 'a day-dream,' containing the extremes of exultation, full of careless

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[185] The Arrow of Gold, p. 242.

[186] Ibid., p. 245. The association of sanity and carpenters is inverted in The Shadow-Line: 'I was like a mad carpenter making a box' (p. 101).

[187] Ibid., pp. 242-243.

[188] Aubry, Vol. I, p. 217. Letter of 20 December 1897.

[189] The Arrow of Gold, p. 272.

joy and of an invincible sadness.'[190] For Georges there is no refuge from unreason on land or at sea.

Having returned to land, Georges now enters the final phase of his enlightenment. And it is only in this part of The Arrow of Gold that Conrad avoids a pastiche effect. Georges descends 'into the abyss,' where he comes to perceive:

> ...I had given up the direction of my intelligence before the problem; or rather that the problem had dispossessed my intelligence and reigned in its stead side by side with a superstitious awe. A dreadful order seemed to lurk in the darkest shadows of life.[191]

As a result of his accident at sea, he had met Baron H., who, in turn, had put him in touch with the courier Ortega, a double-agent seeking the destruction of Rita and the Carlists, who, in turn, thanks to a letter -- 'a mirror' in which 'she could see her own image'[192] from Georges to Rita, has a chance to contact her. The perception of this 'design' suggests to Georges a satanic logic: 'It is only the Devil, they say, that loves logic.'[193] Though

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[190] The Arrow of Gold, p. 62.

[191] Ibid., p. 283.

[192] Ibid., p. 264.

[193] Ibid., p. 283.

he does not see himself as 'a victim of the Devil,'[194] the sequence of events in which he and Rita are ensnared suggests a dark order: 'all that was enough to make one shudder -- not at the chance, but at the design.'[195] This insight proves futile to Georges, however, as he takes Ortega to Rita's house, where, unknown to the unexpected visitors, she is hiding. On entering the house 'full of disorder,' Georges is cast 'adrift in the black-and-white hall as on a silent sea'; he then crosses 'an enchanted place' of mirrors and crystal to the mutually-surprising discovery of Rita, ironically, 'an insensible phantom' of the 'real' Rita that is in him -- the physical Rita is an 'image.'[196] In an extraordinary stroke of artistic expression, Conrad has her 'arrow of gold,' a delicate pin, an objet d'art and, symbolically, a deadly weapon and a sign of love, reflected in a mirror.[197] The images suggest a union of savagery and refinement in the Infinite expressed

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[194] The Arrow of Gold, p. 283.

[195] Ibid., p. 283.

[196] Ibid., pp. 284-288, 296, 299.

[197] Ibid., p. 307.

metaphorically as art and love, manifestations of the coincidence of opposites.

Next, Thérèse, Rita's sister, likened to a 'sleep-walker' in the grip of passion,[198] reveals Rita's location to Ortega, who, armed with a primitive weapon, would kill the object of his lust. Georges, for a moment a 'drowning man,' his brain 'in a whirl,' regains command of himself, 'working in a logical succession of images',[199] but, ironically, the self-possession proves unnecessary, as Ortega, the mad, primitive 'warrior' surrounded by art, seriously wounds himself. And, soon after, in a double objectification of the coincidence of savagery and refinement in love and art, Georges hurls the arrow of gold at Rita, and she returns it. In the end, Georges retains the arrow, like Karain's Jubilee sixpence, a counterfeit yet true talisman for the prevention of 'dreaming.'[200] Thus armed, Georges returns to the sea, his 'other love.'[201] He has come to experience 'art' and 'truth' in an odyssey

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[198] The Arrow of Gold, p. 279.

[199] Ibid., pp. 289, 308, 309.

[200] Ibid., p. 350; "Karain: A Memory," Tales of Unrest, pp. 47-48.

[201] Ibid., p. 351.

likened to 'a day-dream.'[202]

The stage shifts to the East (Carimata Strait, the setting) for the tale next published, The Rescue (1920),[203] under way in 1896 and not completed until the year of the publication of The Arrow of Gold (1919). While the political complexity of this novel may suggest comparison with Nostromo, the action here is focussed on one character, Captain Lingard of the brig LIGHTNING. It is significant that Conrad's only comment on the subject matter of The Rescue in a letter to William Blackwood has to do with Lingard and, specifically, with his enlightenment: 'It is only at the very last that he is enlightened.'[204] And it is a woman who provides the medium of this knowledge.

In The Rescue, as in Lord Jim and The Shadow-Line, the full Conradian complex of dream-motif, mirror-symbol, and the ironic logic of contradiction or inversion coincide in the expression of a voyage to enlightenment in a timeless state. On the first page of the first chapter,

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[202] The Arrow of Gold, p. 62.

[203] Its action ante-dating Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, The Rescue forms with these two early works a Lingard trilogy.

[204] Blackburn, ed., p. 10. Letter of 6 September 1897.

we read of the LIGHTNING in Carimata Strait:

> ...the brig floated tranquil and upright as if bolted solidly, keel to keel, with its own image reflected in the unframed and immense mirror of the sea.[205]

Her thirty-five year old captain, Lingard, 'in dreamy stillness,' gazes on 'the image of the brig.'[206] He also sees the upside-down image of his head and shoulders in this mirror of the Infinite, but he is 'blind to the mysterious aspects of the world.'[207] Albeit ignorant of life and its logic of contradictions, he is not insensitive. Much to the consternation of his painfully useless first mate, Shaw, Lingard is also susceptible to 'absurd fads,' moments of 'awakened lyrism' when his heart is uplifted 'into regions charming, empty, and dangerous'--'bottom-upwards notions,' in the estimation of Shaw.[208] This susceptibility to unreason is the root cause of coming catastrophe and enlightenment. And such a notion

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[205] The Rescue, p. 5.

[206] Ibid., pp. 6, 10.

[207] Ibid., pp. 6, 11.

[208] Ibid., pp. 11, 12.

takes possession of Lingard shortly after his being startled by an improbability, the sudden meeting in pitch darkness with a boat commanded by Carter, second mate of the HERMIT, a British schooner-yacht gone aground off the coast of Borneo.

The significance for Lingard's enlightenment of the decision to rescue the HERMIT is marked analogically by immersion in a pitch black deluge, in which men, by an optical illusion, fall 'out of the universe,' and in which 'words' and 'every sound' are effaced, leaving 'nothing free but the unexpected.'[209] In the past, the rescue of Hassim and Immada had been prefaced by a similar encounter with a messenger in a 'dream,' a deluge of fire and water, in which Lingard had been 'deafened and blinded.'[210] Suspended in a boundless world, Lingard now experiences the loss of his external senses, a prefiguration of the coming descent within himself.

Now, with the rescue of the HERMIT, both still and moving, again by an optical illusion,[211] Lingard comes

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[209] The Rescue, Chapter III.

[210] Ibid., Part II, Chapter III.

[211] Ibid., p. 53.

to enter another deluge, the abyss of Edith Travers' eyes, reflected in and reflecting the sea, in which 'the whole universe and even time itself apparently come to a standstill'; he comes to 'the contemplation vast distances.'[212] Thus enthralled, like Georges, in a 'mystic grip,'[213] he becomes, by analogy, a 'swimmer' being taken to sea by an 'undertow' of 'dark and inscrutable purpose flowing to the end, the fulfilment both blissful and terrible.'[214] The sensation of being immersed in contradictions is also expressed as a whirlwind -- Lingard has 'the sensation of being whirled high in the midst of an uproar'[215] and as a 'destroying flood,' 'an obscurity...without limit in space and time.'[216] He enters the boundless universe of unreason, twice referred to as 'a world of improbabilities.'[217] Here,

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[212] The Rescue, pp. 124, 144, 148.

[213] The Arrow of Gold, p. 140.

[214] The Rescue, p. 219.

[215] Ibid., p. 179.

[216] Ibid., p. 241.

[217] Ibid., pp. 244, 352.

he cannot distinguish between reality and illusion, waking and reaming. Waking from a brief sleep, he thinks, 'So it was only a deception; he had seen no one.'[218] In fact, he had returned from a meeting with Edith some few moments before. To Lingard, caught in the intrigues of politics and love, the entire universe seems to glide smoothly through space as the tide stands still: 'The ebbing of the sea athwart the lonely sheen of flames resembled the eternal ebb-tide of time.'[219]

Immersion in an obscurity, expressed as woman and deluge-sea, is disastrous for Lingard. The good seaman-like sense of Carter ('I am a sailorman: My first duty was to the ships,' he writes to Lingard),[220] now first mate of the LIGHTNING, in the sinking of Daman's praus, an action made possible by Lingard's imprudent decision to leave the brig on Edith's request that he rescue d'Alcacer and Travers, seriously compromises Lingard before his would-be allies, and awakens him to the 'truth':

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[218] The Rescue, p. 171.

[219] Ibid., p. 200.

[220] Ibid., p. 327.

looking within himself, he sees that "he did not know his mind himself,"[221] that he has been decoyed from his purpose by a 'conflict within himself':

> Conflict of some sort was the very essence of his life. But this was something that he had never known before. This was a conflict within himself. He had to face unsuspected powers, foes that he could not go out to meet at the gate. They were within, as though he had been betrayed by somebody, some secret enemy. He was ready to look round for that subtle traitor. A sort of blankness fell on his mind and he suddenly thought, "Why! It's myself."[222]

Thomas Moser's assertion that Conrad 'considers evil to be external' to Lingard[223] is mistaken. In this conflict between allegiance to Hassim and infatuation with Edith, Lingard can no longer distinguish between truth and illusion. An actor in an objectified Psychomachia ('the madness of battle' is like 'the madness of love'),[224] an "exotic opera," he meditates on this conflict; he comes to ask himself the Calderón-like questions: 'Who could tell what was real in this world?,' 'Am I dreaming? Am I in a fever?'[225] 'I

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[221] The Rescue, p. 210.

[222] Ibid., p. 329.

[223] Moser, p. 145.

[224] The Rescue, p. 224.

[225] Ibid., pp. 295, 431, 229.

thought I was dreaming,' he muses near the end of the tale.[226]

In this dream-performance, Lingard is deceived and betrayed by Edith, who, selfishly, to retain him (whom, ironically, she does not actually possess), does not relay a vital message to him from Hassim and Immada. Contrary stresses produce in Lingard as in Belarab, his ally, a stillness, a kind of 'mystic syspense between the contrary speculations...disputing the possession of his will.'[227] And, at a critical moment, when his personal action is imperative for the salvaging of Hassim's and Immada's fortune and of his own plans, he is paralyzed by a dream-vision of his beloved, who is once likened to 'a creature of darkness.'[228] Lingard is literally and figuratively awakened only by the explosion of the EMMA, to the destruction of his dreams of political success and the loss of many lives, including Hassim's and Immada's. Moser's claim that Conrad 'sses man's greatest good as complete repose' 'in a love that will blot out all awareness

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[226] The Rescue, p. 396.

[227] Ibid., p. 281.

[228] Ibid., p. 313.

of the world'[229] seems not to take into account this critical fact. Love 'exalts or unfits, sanctifies or damns.'[230] In itself, it is equivocal; and, in Lingard's case, it unfits and damns: he is 'undone by a glimpse of Paradise.'[231] Nor is Lingard's self-deception and betrayal of his allied and Edith's deception and betrayal of Lingard the stuff of sentimental melodrama. His partner, Jorgenson, a 'dead' captain of a 'dead' ship, a 'somnambulist of an eternal dream,'[232] has provided an objective manifestation of the coup de foudre of love.

The truth of Shaw's observation -- 'Women are the cause of a lot of trouble'[233] has ironically been visited upon the heart of Lingard, a reader of the Iliad.[234] The captain of the LIGHTNING, whose cabin is ironically dominated by a 'gilt sheaf of thunder-

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[229] Moser, pp. 145, 143.

[230] The Rescue, p. 415.

[231] Ibid., p. 449.

[232] Ibid., p. 382.

[233] Ibid., p. 22.

[234] Ibid., p. 22.

bolts darting between the initials of his name,'[235] the man who had 'calculated every move,' and who had 'guarded against everything,'[236] by way of another Helen, has come, in a manner similar to d'Alcacer's, a Spaniard fond of 'musical glasses' and French poetry, to descend 'into the innermost depths of his being,'[237] there to learn something of himself. While The Rescue is admittedly neither as complex nor as subtle as Lord Jim, nor, on a political plane, as comprehensive as Nostromo, the tale possesses more artistic integrity than critics have generally been willing to grant. The tale conveys, in its own words, 'an effect of a marvellous and symbolic vision.'[238]

With its simple plot, in contrast to that of The Rescue, The Rover (1923) presents a picturesque and peaceful surface. But, as elsewhere in Conrad, appearances are deceptive, for this tale, in the form of an historical

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[235] The Rescue, p. 171.

[236] Ibid., p. 104.

[237] Ibid., p. 411.

[238] Ibid., p. 320.

romance set in southernmost France in the period following the Reign of Terror, provides yet another variation on Calderon's theme, 'life is a dream.' The Rover is a tale of the struggle of contrary impulses -- to repose and to action -- in a world of improbabilities.

Master-Gunner Peyrol is introduced as a seeker of security. Upon arriving at Toulon with an English prize, the fifty-eight year old pirate (hardly an impeccable hero), girt with booty and the illusion of forthcoming tranquillity, returns to the scene of his childhood to retire from the sight of men on Escampobar Farm. He finds comforting the sight of the 'gemlike surface' of a 'tideless sea,' 'so full of smiling security.'[239] Moser's description of Peyrol as a seeker of repose is much to the point; however, the inference that Conrad judges death-like 'repose' as 'man's greatest good'[240] does not follow. The blessings of retirement, as the tale reveals, are illusory.

The retired pirate is an unsentimental man: 'all

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[239] The Rover, pp. 30, 31.

[240] Moser, p. 201.

Peyrol had ever done was to behave rationally.'[241] Significantly, the epithet 'old skimmer of the sea,'[242] which attaches to Peyrol, recalls Captain Hagberd of THE SKIMMER OF THE SEAS, a deranged lover of security,[243] and Captain MacWhirr, who 'had sailed over the surface of oceans as some men go skimming over the years of existence.'[244] A 'skimmer' suggests one 'ignorant of life,'[245] one who resists immersion in the Infinite. And Peyrol's once blood-soaked tartane, moored in a narrow place, reflects his delight in security and repose: 'She was as safe from the tempests there as a house ashore.'[246] Like Captain Whalley's FAIR MAID and Captain Hermann's DIANA,[247] the tartane is an analogue of a mariner's illusion of security; she is a symbol of Peyrol's

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[241] The Rover, p. 34.

[242] Ibid., pp. 4, 43.

[243] "To-morrow," Typhoon and Other Stories, pp. 249, 265.

[244] "Typhoon," p. 19.

[245] Ibid., p. 19.

[246] The Rover, p. 99.

[247] "The End of the Tether," Chapter II; "Falk," Typhoon and Other Stories, pp. 156-158.

moral ignorance. The epigraph from Spenser -- 'Sleep after toyle, port after stormie seas, / Ease after warre, death fater life, does greatly please'[248] -- must be taken ironically rather than sentimentally.

The illusory nature of this tranquillity is revealed to Peyrol as in a dream. With the floweing of secrets within the breast of Réal, a naval lieutenant -- his plan to decoy Nelson's fleet and his love of Arlette, literally and figuratively a 'sleep-walker'[249] and the accidental discovery of the secured tartane by a former member of the Brotherhood, a discovery followed by an event of 'no visible, conceivable or probable reason'[250] (the discovery of that former member by one of the AMELIA's boats), come to Peyrol a 'sense of the endangered stability

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[248] The Faerie Queene, Book I, Canto ix, Stanza 40. No Conrad critic, to my knowledge, has noted that these are treacherous, seductive words spoken by 'A man of hell, that calls himselfe Despayre' (I, ix, 28), in an effort to have the Redcross Knight give up the struggle of the quest and of life. Una saves the Knight from killing himself by calling on him to face death bravely in combat. Peyrol, like the Knight, proves true to his call. Both finally resist the temptation to evade the conflicts of life.

[249] The Rover, p. 62, passim.

[250] Ibid., p. 204.

of things' and a sequence of 'dreadful complications.'[251] Having finished shaving before his reflection in a window, Peyrol meditates: 'Dream left astern. Dream straight ahead.'[252] Like the Polish Prince Segismundo, he comes to see that 'life was a dream.'[253] Realizing that the lieutenant, for want of knowledge of the craft of the sea, cannot make the planned illusion appear real, and realizing that only he can gull the captain of the patrolling English corvette into believing that the counterfeit documents are authentic, Peyrol loses rational control and enters 'a state of confusion,' in which he experiences an 'internal conflict' between opposing forces: retirement in repose as against death in action.[254] He comes to see that his belief in retirement is not a true reflection of his own impulses.

Having thus come to the insight that conflict and illusion are the essential condition of existence, Peyrol, on impulse, takes command of the tartane from the hands

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[251] The Rover, pp. 121-122, 229.

[252] Ibid., p. 201.

[253] Ibid., p. 233.

[254] Ibid., p. 237.

of the lieutenant; and, after a feat of brillian seamanship, he is killed by musket fire from the pursuing corvette. His skill authenticates for the English the false documents; and his death, sealing the deception, validates the utterance which is, for Captain Whalley, a dark prefiguration: 'The best thing for some of us would be to die at the oar.'[255] Afloat in 'the hard blue gem of the sea,'[256] Peyrol, by way of death in skillful action, has worked a heroic deception of a captain trusting surface appearances. While lacking the density of Conrad's other long fictions, this tale of an old pirate's enlightenment in a dream is not unworthy of the nautical heir to Calderón.

Thus are Conrad's chief nautical protagonists enlightened. From Jim to Peyrol, they are set afloat by analogy in an infinite sea-dream, an element of 'inconceivable' depth. They drop through 'dark holes' in time and space in coming to experience the truth of existence: the coïncidentia oppositorum. Immersed in an element 'created before light itself,'[257] they are

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[255] "The End of the Tether," p. 201.

[256] The Rover, p. 280.

[257] The Mirror of the Sea, p. 71.

made to see the truth within themselves, a reflection of the conflict of opposite forces within mankind and the universe. Like the crew of the NARCISSUS afloat in what Conrad analogically termed 'the restless mirror of the Infinite,' they resemble 'raving somnambulists,' who, when in the midst of a storm, 'the stormy solitude of the sea,' 'in an unendurable and unending strain,' work 'like men driven by a merciless dream to toil in an atmosphere of ice or flame.'[258] And in this coincidence of opposites, we may see Conrad's path of enlightenment in relation not only to Donne,[259] Calderón,[260] and Cusa,

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[258] The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, pp. 128, 82, 93. In a letter to Henry James on The Nigger, Conrad comments on the difficulty of communicating to readers 'la realité poignante des illusions'--Aubry, Lettres françaises (1960), p. 34.

[259] See "Sonnet 19" of Divine Meditations: 'contraries meet in one,' 'cold and hot,' in the contemplation of the Infinite.

[260] 'fuego y hielo,' Jornada Primera of La vida es sueno. Morgan, writing of the dream motif in Conrad as a manifestation of 'the mysteriousness of the sensible world' as subjectively perceived, a major Platonic theme in the literature of seventeenth-century Spain and nineteenth-century Poland, also notes this analogue -- Sea Symbol and Myth, p. 166.

but also to Dante[261] and glosses of Dante by anti-rationalist writers. As J. G. Hamann, an eighteenth-century follower of Nicholas of Cusa and an ardent opponent of rational positivism, notes in Nouvelle Héloise, 'Seule la connaisance de soi, cette descente aux Enfers, nous ouvre la voie de la divinisation.'[262] It is in infinity, expressed analogically as sea, abyss or well, dream, mirror, woman, and, on occasion, as jungle, interchanging analogues and reflections of the self, that mariners are disabused of their ignorance. Their descent into the mirror of the self, a microcosmic reflection the universe, where good and evil are inverted images of the underlying truth of existence, the circular, ironic logic of dreams, partakes essentially

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[261] 'in caldo e in gelo,' Inferno, Canto III, l. 87; Biancolli, ed., p. 11. Dante's LASCIATE OGNI SPERANZA VOI CH'ENTRATE, from the same canto, provides the invisible inscription sealing Bessie Carvil's fate in "To-morrow," Typhoon and Other Stories, p. 276. And, in "The Warrior's Soul," Tales of Hearsay, Conrad compares fleeing French troops to 'spectral sinners across the innermost frozen circle of Dante's Inferno.' (p. 1). The medieval idea of hell consisting of fire and ice is a commonplace allusion in Baroque literature (e.g., Measure for Measure, III, i, 122-128; The Duchess of Malfi, II, iii, 21-28; Paradise Lost, II, 595).

[262] Cited by Béguin, p. 53.

neither of sentimentality nor of melodrama. As William Blake comments on his illustrations to Dante, 'In Equivocal Worlds Up & Down are Equivocal.'[263] Similarly, in Conrad's world, distinctions between good and evil are ambiguous and obscure once the reader sees beneath the surface of the tales. Marlow's words in Lord Jim, seeming to anticipate the tack of some future critics, are perhaps appropriate here:

> All this may seem to you sheer sentimentalism; and indeed very few of us have the will or the capacity to look under the surface of familiar emotions.[264]

Conrad's tales of sea-dreamers represent a continuous effort to probe below such a surface.

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[263] The Portable Blake, ed. Kazin (1968), p. 594. Blake, however, unlike Conrad, rejoices in the infernal: for example, in "A Memorable Fancy," The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, he writes: 'As I was walking among the fires of hell, delighted with the enjoyments of Genius.' W. B. Yeats inverts the association of fire and ice with hell in the poem "The Cold Heaven": heaven is a place of insanity where 'ice burned.'

[264] Lord Jim, p. 222.

CHAPTER V: LAND-DREAMERS

'True wisdom...is not certain of anything in this world of contradiction.' -- The Secret Agent

'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone;
All just supply, and all relation.'
-- Donne, "The First Anniversary"

'Let us descend into the bosom of the earth,
Let us flee the empire of light.'
-- Novalis, Hymns to the Night

Almayer's Folly (1895) and An Outcast of the Islands (1896), Conrad's first two novels, reverberate with 'voices that we hear in dreams.'[1] Almayer and Willems, civilized actors on primitive stages and seamen demoted to landsmen, struggle as if 'in the toils of complicated dreams,'[2] in a world which includes 'warm shadows' and 'cool light'[3] and 'fire and water...monstrously mixed.'[4] They float in an existence which may be likened to 'glancing currents and swirling eddies';[5] and both are carried to destruction. They are 'tossed like a

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[1] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 246; cp. Almayer's Folly, pp. 150-160.

[2] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 347.

[3] Almayer's Folly, p. 146.

[4] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 284.

[5] Almayer's Folly, p. 162.

grain of dust in a whirlwind -- sinking and rising -- round and round,' in the words of An Outcast of the Islands.[6] And in Almayer's Folly, we read of a protagonist waking from a drunken dream: he drifts as in 'infinite space' amid 'the rush of circling worlds,' there to observe: 'I cannot get rid of the horrible nightmare yet.... I am dreaming yet.'[7] Almayer, in the end, finds, with a Chinese opium-eater, Jim Eng, 'stupefied bliss,'[8] the annihilation of memory in a drug-induced trance; and Willems is blessed with a merciful death at the hands of his beloved Aissa.

In Tales of Unrest, published two years after An Outcast of the Islands, other variations of the Calderón-like schema are staged, one of which, "An Outpost of Progress," may be read as a rehearsal for "Heart of Darkness." The Europeans, Kayerts, short and fat, and Carlier, tall and thin, subject to feverish fits of heat and cold in a tropical climate,

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[6] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 157.

[7] Almayer's Folly, pp. 158-159.

[8] Ibid., p. 60.

deteriorate in an atmosphere filled with the sound of words 'we hear in...dreams.'[9] As a result of an insane quarrel over the use of some sugar, Kayerts kills Carlier in a dream-sequence; he becomes unable to distinguish life from death; 'He thought he was dreaming.'[10] Awakened to 'his new wisdom,'[11] he commits suicide. What Almayer, Willems, Carlier and Kayerts experience is, to use Marcel Aymé's analogy, an infernal poem by Baudelaire, the amphibologies of which cannot be accounted for by the linear logic of surface intellectual enquiry.[12]

Several critics relate these works of Conrad's apprenticeship to Schopenhauer's philosophy. The German philosopher, like Calderón, pronounced life a dream. Paul Wiley, for example, sees reflections of Schopenhauerian doctrine in Almayer's Folly;[13] and

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[9] Tales of Unrest, p. 97.

[10] Ibid., p. 112.

[11] Ibid., p. 114.

[12] Le confort intellectuel (1949), pp. 27 ff. See F. O'Connor, The Mirror in the Roadway (1956), Chapter VI.

[13] Wiley, p. 38.

Watts, in the introduction to his edition of Conrad's letters to R. B. Cunninghame Graham, suggests, on the evidence of John Galsworthy's remark in Castles in Spain to the effect that Conrad knew of Schopenhauer's philosophy, that the philosopher exercised considerable influence on him. The fact that Henri-Frédéric Amiel's Journal intime, in which the author explicitly states his kinship with Schopenhauer,[14] provided the epigraph of Almayer's Folly, and the fact that there was something of a cult of Schopenhauer in late nineteenth-century fiction in Europe, buttress the suggestion.

A close reading of Conrad's text, however, reveals that Conrad's and Schopenhauer's views of the way 'to be' are antipathetic. As Conrad writes in Almayer's Folly, there is peace in the 'dreary tranquillity of a desert' merely because 'there is no life.'[15] Almayer achieves 'senseless annihilation'[16] only by way of gin and opium. In An Outcast of the Islands, a sequel to Almayer's Folly, Conrad writes that it is only to

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[14] Ward, ed., p. 161.

[15] Almayer's Folly, p. 116.

[16] Ibid., p. 158.

those 'ignorant of life' that 'the pain of struggle and defeat' appears 'remediable and unjust';[17] 'no fatalism can kill the thought of the future'; and Willems' attempt to escape conflict in 'the quietude of all his senses' is a form of self-deception which leads to his destruction.[18] Captain Lingard points directly to an anti-Schopenauerian doctrine: 'It's only those who do nothing that make no mistakes....'[19] The logical consequence of Schopenhauer's doctrine, the denial of the Immanent (Infinite) Will in asceticism, is rendered ironically in An Outcast of the Islands; appearing on Almayer's veranda after his 'swim'[20] in the dark sea of Aissa's love, Willems is likened to 'an ascetic dweller in the wilderness, finding a reward of a self-denying life in a vision of dazzling glory.'[21]

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[17] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 128. Cp. The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, p. 103: 'On deck the men exchanged bitter words, suggested by a silly exasperation against something unjust and irremediable....' Later in this tale, we meet a comparison not complimentary to mariners: '...men went about washing clothes and hanging them out to dry in the unprosperous breeze with the meditative languor of disenchanted philosophers' (p. 138).

[18] Ibid., pp. 126, 147. [19] Ibid., p. 173.

[20] Ibid., p. 81. [21] Ibid., p. 92.

And in The Secret Agent (1907), Verloc's indolence is sardonically attributed to a 'philosophical unbelief in the effectiveness of every human effort.'[22] In a novel published nine years later, Axel Heyst's 'victory' is achieved at the cost of rejecting a philosophy akin to Schopenhauer's. For Conrad, the conflict of opposing forces is the perennial condition of existence; and only by entering that world of conflict can man come to enlightenment. As he notes in an essay on Henry James, 'Neither his fellows, nor his gods, nor his passions will leave a man alone.'[23]

Our examination of Conrad's land-dreamers, beginning with his most frequently-analyzed tale after Lord Jim,[24] "Heart of Darkness" (Youth: A Narrative; and Two Other Stories, 1902), will focus on the following fictions: Nostromo (1904), The Secret Agent (1907), Under Western Eyes (1911), and Victory (1915). Like his sea-dreamers immersed in a world of unreason, Conrad's landsmen-protagonists are deprived of precise referents in time and space. Greenwich Mean Time, a conventional means

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[22] The Secret Agent, p. 12.

[23] Notes on Life and Letters, p. 15.

[24] Based on the number of entries in Teets and Gerber.

of delimitation within infinity, is symbolically exploded on land, either by the removal of the protagonist from a logic-ordered and surface-oriented civilization, or, inversely, as in The Secret Agent, by the destruction of the idea of time within civilization. By immersion in a 'jungle' (which, in Lord Jim, for example, Conrad had likened to 'a dark sleeping sea')[25] analogous to the relativistic or referent-free world of political and moral anarchism, where, as in 'the restless mirror of the Infinite,' time does not exist, Conrad's land-dreamers experience 'truth stripped of its cloak of time.'[26] As Carlyle writes in Sartor Resartus, 'Society sails through...Infinitude on Cloth...; and without such Sheet..., [Society] would sink to endless depths....'[27] Landsmen enter such depths, where exists neither political nor moral order, to learn in a timeless 'jungle' the truth of the self. Political conditions, as Conrad writes in "An Anarchist," are reflections of 'the bitterest contradictions and deadliest conflicts...carried on

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[25] Lord Jim, p. 260.

[26] "Heart of Darkness," p. 97.

[27] Hudson, ed., p. 38.

in every individual breast....'[28]

The reappearance of the mirror symbol on land further suggests the congruence of the path of enlightenment for both mariners and landsmen. During a confrontation in a jungle in An Outcast of the Islands, for example, Willems and Lingard, 'exactly opposite each other' physically and morally, are figuratively united in a single image in 'a concave glass.'[29] In "Heart of Darkness," Marlow sees in a highly-polished door the reflected image of Kurtz;[30] Razumov, in Under Western Eyes, the morning after his betrayal of Haldin, catches sight of his own face in a looking-glass;[31] Alvan Hervey, once likened to a skater on ice, postures before a myriad of mirrors in his wife's boudoir in "The Return";[32] d'Hubert, in "The Duel," sees the reflection of Feraud, his secret sharer, in a mirror;[33] in The Secret Agent, the Assistant Commissioner gazes into a mirror as he

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[28] A Set of Six, p. 161.

[29] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 265.

[30] "Heart of Darkness," p. 156.

[31] Under Western Eyes, p. 69.

[32] Tales of Unrest, p. 136.

[33] A Set of Six, pp. 252-253.

prepares to assume a secret identity, a reflection of the anarchist within himself;[34] in the same novel, Vladimir studies his and Verloc's reflection in a mirror,[35] and Verloc sees Vladimir's face reflected in a dark window-pane;[36] Heyst, in Victory, after the first secret meeting with Lena, stares steadily at himself in a small mirror;[37] and, in Nostromo, Sulaco is like a ship afloat in the mirror of the Placid Gulf.[38] New crew-members' political struggles are, by analogy, mirror-images of conflicts within themselves. The mirror of the Infinite encompasses both land and sea. As the captain-narrator in The Shadow-Line recalls of a time during which his ship floated in a mirror-like sea, 'It was impossible to distinguish land from water in the enigmatical tranquillity of the immense forces of the world.'[39]

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[34] The Secret Agent, pp. 148-149.

[35] Ibid., p. 24.

[36] Ibid., p. 57.

[37] Victory, p. 90.

[38] Nostromo, Part I, Chapter I.

[39] The Shadow-Line, p. 76.

And as Conrad writes in Almayer's Folly, to look into the mirror of a woman's eyes

> has the same meaning for the man of the forests and the sea as for the man threading the paths of the more dangerous wilderness of houses and streets.'[40]

The Infinite on land has as its principle analogue, appropriately enough, a jungle, an equivalent of the 'mirror of the sea.' As Joseph Warren Beach suggests, Thomas de Quincey's vision of terror in a Baroque 'dream-fugue,' a trial 'darkly projected...upon the secret mirror of our dreams,'[41] prefigures Conrad's trial of Kurtz in the Congo.[42] In such trials, dreamers are enlightened. Conrad's land-dreamers suffer from the same deficiency as his sea-dreamers: living a life of surface fact and surface logic, they are initially secure in ignorance and illusion.

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[40] Almayer's Folly, p. 171.

[41] The English Mail-Coach, Prose of the Romantic Period, ed. C. Woodring (1961), p. 427. In Confessions of an Opium-Eater, Quincey formulates a variation of the principle of the coincidentia oppositorum: 'For it may be observed generally, that wherever two thoughts stand related to each other by a law of antagonism, and exist...by mutual repulsion, they are apt to suggest each other' (p. 396); and, in the essay, "Literature of Knowledge and Literature of Power," he observes that it is by way of the 'non-discursive' medium that man comes to realize his 'highest state of capacity for the infinite' (pp. 448-449). De Quincey is mentioned by Conrad in the Dabrowski interview cited above.

[42] J. W. Beach, Obsessive Images (1960), pp. 21-22, 43-44.

The trials of Conrad's dreamers, seamen and landsmen, are analogous to the trials of the artist descending into the self for the vision of the truth of existence. In "Heart of Darkness" and the tales of the enlightenment of land-dreamers, Conrad joins the poets Dante, Virgil, Mickiewicz and Słowacki, for example, among those 'who dare descend into the abyss of infernal regions,'[43] there to explore, in the words of Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, 'the rich territory of the Me..., this real, interior Africa in every sense.'[44] In this Africa, as in the mirror of the Infinite, an analogue of the self, the artist, like Marlow in Lord Jim, struggles 'to comprehend the Inconceivable.'[45]

"Heart of Darkness," included in the Youth volume (1902), is the tale of Conrad's most powerful land-dreamer, narrated by an extraordinary seaman who appears 'to retreat and advance out of the night.'[46] It is a tale of glorious illusions and sordid realities,

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[43] Victory, p. 219.

[44] Richter's words are cited by David Welsh in his study of Mickiewicz, op. cit., p. 48.

[45] Lord Jim, p. 93.

[46] "Heart of Darkness," p. 114.

of sincere falsehoods and abominable truths, of madness and order, of civilization and primitive ritual, and of 'heaven' and 'hell,' in which a landsman comes to be completely disabused of his illusions and in which a mariner, given a 'choice of nightmares,'[47] chooses both and/or neither.

Kurtz's enlightenment is made possible only by the removal of all external fixed points of reference: 'He had kicked himself loose of the earth.'[48] As Marlow remarks in Lord Jim, where 'civilization' ends, 'pure exercises of imagination' begin.[49] It is in such Promethean exercises of the imagination in a jungle where time seems not to exist that Kurtz imitates Jim's leap into 'a deep well -- an everlasting deep hole': Kurtz figuratively drops to the 'bottom of a precipice where the sun never shines,' into a 'wilderness' which closes upon him 'as the sea closes over a

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[47] "Heart of Darkness," p. 147. See Hewitt, "Joseph Conrad's Hero: 'Fidelity' or 'The Choice of Nightmares,'" Cambridge Journal, II (1949), 684-691; and Cox, Chapter III. Both critics stress Conrad's equivocal attitude, and both recognize the consequent confusion in searches for a simple moral message in the tale.

[48] Ibid., p. 144.

[49] Lord Jim, p. 282.

diver.'[50] A pan-European poet, painter, journalist, musician, potential demagogue and an 'emissary of light' to the 'ignorant'[51] inhabitants of the Congo, he lives, like a Roman youth come to England in ages past, in an 'incomprehensible'[52] world, a nightmarish land of contradictions created, as it were, before time itself. Completely isolated as in a dream ('We live, as we dream -- alone...,' states Marlow),[53] where exists no 'clear idea of time,'[54] his ideal conception of his mission and of himself is subjected to the trials of an infernal logic.

This logic is reflected in the ambivalence of Kurtz's 'words.' His pre-eminent gift, 'his words,'

> the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness,[55]

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[50] "Heart of Darkness," pp. 149, 92.

[51] Ibid., p. 59.

[52] Ibid., p. 50.

[53] Ibid., p. 82.

[54] Ibid., p. 103.

[55] Ibid., pp. 113-114. My italics.

reflect, in the words of Conrad in Notes on Life and Letters, 'the duality of man's nature,' whence flows 'a really very relentless warfare.'[56] And Kurtz's report to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, concluding with an absurd non sequitur, described figuratively as a 'flash of lightning in a serene sky' -- 'Exterminate all the brutes!'[57] --, serves as a verbal parallel to the world of contradictions in which Kurtz experiences this inner warfare. 'Being alone in the wilderness,' his soul 'had looked within itself,' there to see the dark truth, and there also to hear 'amazing words,' 'words heard in dreams,...phrases spoken in nightmares.'[58] In such dreams, rational discourse is unavailing as a means of exploring the truth: 'And who can be articulate in a nightmare?,' Conrad was to ask Richard Curle in a letter of 27 March 1917.[59]

Immersed in a mightmarish world symbolically

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[56] Notes on Life and Letters, p. 15.

[57] "Heart of Darkness," p. 118.

[58] Ibid., pp. 144, 145, 146.

[59] Curle, ed., p. 46.

echoed in words of endless 'suggestiveness,' Kurtz's soul comes to learn of 'things of which it had no conception.'[60] Near death, in a 'strange commingling of desire and hate,' Kurtz comes to a 'supreme moment of complete knowledge,' 'a moral victory': he twice whispers words of the 'unspeakable' truth: 'The horror! The horror!'[61] As one whose life has been 'spoiled... by the irresistible grace of imagination,' as Conrad notes of himself in A Personal Record, Kurtz qualifies to have as his 'patron saint' the 'mad,' the 'ingenious' Don Quixote.[62] In a land far removed from civilization, with its order and restraint, Kurtz, by way of 'pure exercises of the imagination,' comes to see the truth of himself and of his belief in the values of light and civilization. Like Falk, Kurtz in the end does not dodge 'the horrid truth.'[63]

Marlow, marine narrator and actor, does not share

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[60] "Heart of Darkness," pp. 144, 131.

[61] Ibid., pp. 149, 151, 162, 149.

[62] A Personal Record, p. 37. See W. H. Auden, The Enchafèd Flood (1967), in which Don Quixote is presented as a model of the 'Romantic Hero.'

[63] Last Essays, p. 145.

Kurtz's complete enlightenment. A pilgrim 'amongst hints for nightmares' travelling back 'to the earliest beginnings of the world,' he experiences 'a state of trance' as he approaches the Inner Station.[64] The symbolism of Marlow's pilgrimage has been well mapped by critics. His journey, as Lilian Feder and R. Evans have shown, may be likened to Dante's and Virgil's 'descent into hell,'[65] into an inner jungle analogous, in the view of James Guetti, Jr., to Stein's 'destructive element,'[66] and to 'an infinite void,' as Albert Cook has noted.[67] It is, in the estimate of Paul Levine, a mystic-like interior 'journey into the dark night of the soul.'[68] In that 'dark night, where exists neither sight, nor sound, nor time, he goes through 'the ordeal of looking into' Kurtz's 'soul,'[69] a

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[64] "Heart of Darkness," pp. 62, 92, 101.

[65] L. Feder, "Marlow's Descent into Hell," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, IX (1955), 280-292; R. Evans, "Conrad's Underworld," Modern Fiction Studies, II (1956), 56-62.

[66] "'Heart of Darkness' and the Failure of Imagination," Sewanee Review, LXXIII (1965), 488-504.

[67] "Conrad's Void," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XII (1958), 326-330.

[68] "Joseph Conrad's Blackness," South Atlantic Quarterly, LXIII (1964), 198-206.

[69] "Heart of Darkness," p. 145.

mirror-image of his own.[70] As in Lord Jim, Marlow is 'made to look at the convention that lurks in all truth and on the essential sincerity of falsehood'; and, like Jim, Kurtz appeals

> 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 in perpetual darkness.[71]

The frequently mentioned dialectical pattern of images of light and darkness which prevails in "Heart of Darkness,"[72] suggests, in the view of Stanton de Voren Hoffman, 'an inescapable two-sidedness'[73] of the truth of Kurtz's and Marlow's selves. The mariner, however, finds in 'surface facts'[74] refuge from the inner world of unreason. He finds in work a safeguard against insanity; and, on one occasion, he sanely refuses to allow his vessel to float free when, in the mist, he

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[70] "Heart of Darkness," p. 156.

[71] Lord Jim, p. 93.

[72] See, for example, W. S. Dowden, "The Light and the Dark: Imagery and Thematic Development in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness,'" Rice Institute Pamphlets, XLIV (1957), 35-51.

[73] "The Hole in the Bottom of the Pail: Comedy and Theme in 'Heart of Darkness,'" Studies in Short Fiction, II (1965), 113-123.

[74] "Heart of Darkness," pp. 61, 75, 83, 85, 93, 97, 149.

he has no bearings by which to steer. Without bearings, he would be 'absolutely in the air in space.'[75] As he ironically notes to his unlistening hearers: 'I take it, no fool ever made a bargain for his soul with the devil.'[76] As a mariner, the making of a bargain with the devil, or, to put it in an analogous context, the surrendering of self-possession to the imagination in a world without bearings, is foolish to Marlow. But as Marlow is also aware, such foolishness is the way to enlightenment.

This irony is compounded when seen in the light of Conrad's remark in A Personal Record that 'transactions' with 'some grotesque devil' are necessary (though to be approached with 'dislike and distrust') for the realization of the 'highest achievement of imaginative literature.'[77] Such transactions are necessary if one is to see the truth, manifold and one, of existence. Given his 'choice of nightmares,' those of the abominable Kurtz of 'unsound method'[78] and those of an illusion-

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[75] "Heart of Darkness," p. 106.

[76] Ibid., p. 117.

[77] "A Familiar Preface," A Personal Record, pp. xvi-xvii.

[78] "Heart of Darkness," pp. 137-138.

ridden proponent of civilization (presumably of sound method), he chooses neither. He lays the 'ghost'[79] of Kurtz with a lie to the unseeing Intended. Ironically, Marlow, one who detests all lies,[80] lies for the sake of preserving a 'saving illusion.'[81] Immersed in such ironic reflections, in which truth doubles falsehood and falsehood, truth, Marlow's sympathies are equivocal. The fact that some critics have placed Marlow in the camp of civilization,[82] while others have stated Marlow's preference for 'the reality of hell,'[83] reflects the pervasiveness of this ironic ambivalence in "Heart of Darkness."

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[79] "Heart of Darkness," p. 115.

[80] Ibid., p. 82.

[81] Ibid., p. 159. Cp. The Secret Agent, p. 91: it is not good for 'efficiency to know too much.' As Conrad replies to Gustave Kahn, who had termed him un puissant rêveur: 'So be it! Yet perhaps not such an unconditional dreamer as all that' -- A Personal Record, p. 111. Marlow's ironic position here may suggest comparison with Conrad's; unlike Dostoevski, Conrad does not revel in unreason.

[82] See, e.g., K. Bruffee, "The Lesser Nightmare: Marlow's 'Lie' in 'Heart of Darkness,'" Modern Language Quarterly, XXV (1964), 322-329.

[83] L. Trilling, "On the Modern Element in Modern Literature," Partisan Review, XXVIII (1961), 25-26.

Marlow's equivocating reflections, however, leave him not at the Carlylean 'centre of indifference,' but, to use Nicholas of Cusa's analogy, at the centre of a circle, the minimum point at which all points of perspective on the circumference converge and from which they radiate.[84] It is, in other terms, the central void from which the Buddha[85] sees multiple perspectives as one and a single perspective as many. These contradictions, as W. B. Stein has observed, are reconciled 'in the timelessness of Eternity.'[86] Expressed in terms of the coincidence of opposites, contrary stresses have produced in Marlow a condition of stillness.[87] But, as elsewhere in Conrad, enlightenment comes by way of 'swimming' in cross-currents. Marlow's ironic balance thus prevents his complete enlightenment. As a practising (though untypical) mariner, whose confession

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[84] Cope, pp. 16-17, passim.

[85] "Heart of Darkness," pp. 46, 50, 162.

[86] "'Heart of Darkness': Bodhisattva Scenario," Orient/West, IX (1964), 46.

[87] Compare Under Western Eyes: 'the stillness of a great tension' (p. 112).

when confronted by 'the restless mirror of the Infinite' is presumably Odi et Amo,[88] he is also aware that 'fatal results' may follow upon 'poetic fancy.'[89]

The logic of "Heart of Darkness," like that in Lord Jim, a tale which is, by analogy, a 'dream,'[90] is the logic of contradictions, the vortical logic of insanity. "Heart of Darkness" is, for example, a tale of a gentle quiet creature (Fresleven) who 'therefore' whacks 'an old nigger mercilessly';[91] of an 'incomprehensible' French warship firing into a continent ('a touch of insanity');[92] of going 'hot and cold all over' as in a 'dream';[93] of an assignment to make bricks without materials; of efforts to demolish a mountain; of Martian quadrupeds; of a painting of a blindfolded woman carrying a torch in the darkness; of an English nautical manual with notes by a Russian sailor whose 'very existence was improbable';[95] of cannibals

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[88] The Mirror of the Sea, p. 135.

[89] "Outside Literature," Last Essays, p. 41.

[90] "Heart of Darkness," p. 82.

[91] Ibid., p. 54.

[92] Ibid., p. 62.

[93] Ibid., p. 94.

[94] Ibid., p. 104.

[95] Ibid., p. 126.

exercising civilized restraint; of aggression for defensive purposes; of civilized dreamers diring Winchesters blindly into a jungle; of 'the great man,' the director of the Company, 'who is five feet six';[96] and of a 'short' man (Kurtz) who looks 'at least seven feet long'[97] -- in short, of 'the mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose,'[98] and of 'the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams.'[99]

This dream-logic, conveying 'a sense of lugubrious drollery,'[100] also operates within the larger frame of the conflict between 'culture and anarchy.' As Lionel Trilling observes on the subject of Conrad's attitude to civilization in "Heart of Darkness," it is 'a story that strangely moves in two quite opposite directions.'[101] (But 'strangely' is surely superfluous, for the principle of the coincidentia oppositorum is central to Conrad.)

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[96] "Heart of Darkness," p. 56.

[97] Ibid., p. 134.

[98] Ibid., p. 150.

[99] Ibid., p. 82.

[100] Ibid., p. 62.

[101] Sincerity and Authenticity (1972), p. 109.

In "Travel: A Preface to Richard Curle's Into the East," Conrad expresses regret (not without some irony, I suspect) for the loss of the 'old black soul of mystery' lying within 'the depths of the jungle (that blessed word),' and he looks forward to the 'marvellously piebald' union of jungle mystery and geometric pattern.[102] The union might be described as a complicated arabesque in which opposites coincide -- for 'good' and for 'bad.'[103] Seen in this ambivalent frame, Marlow's narrative is an extended amphibology: as with Marlow's audience, 'we were fated, before the ebb began to run, to hear about one of Marlow's inconclusive tales.'[104] "Heart of Darkness," in the language of the Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, does not reveal 'the clear logic of a triumphant conclusion.' The light gradually dims in the room of the Intended, and, with the turn of the tide, the NELLIE's bow comes to point toward the darkness engulfing London.[105] The 'jungle' of trees lining the

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[102] Last Essays, p. 89.

[103] Notes on Life and Letters, p. 58.

[104] "Heart of Darkness," p. 51. My italics.

[105] See G. Williams, "The Turn of the Tide in 'Heart of Darkness,'" Modern Fiction Studies, IX (1963), 171-173.

London waterside, as Conrad reminisces in The Mirror of the Sea, veils 'the silent depths of an unexplored wilderness,' 'the depths of London's infinitely varied, vigorous, seething life.'[106] In The Secret Agent, Conrad will explore this other jungle. As Daniel J. McConnell has suggested, it is not only the Congo that is in darkness; England and Europe are also engulfed.[107]

Nostromo, begun shortly after the publication of the Youth volume and published two years later, in 1904, incorporates in an epic[108] frame a logic akin to that in "Heart of Darkness." Avrom Fleishman perceptively notes that the tale follows 'a dialectic as incisive and ironic as one of the character studies in Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind.'[109] The silver mine of Sulaco, a 'double-edged'[110] entity of antagonistic poles

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[106] The Mirror of the Sea, p. 107.

[107] "'The Heart of Darkness' in T. S. Eliot's 'The Hollow Men,'" Texas Studies in Literature and Language, IV (1962), 141-153.

[108] E.M.W. Tillyard, The Epic Strain in the English Novel (1958), pp. 126-167.

[109] Fleishman, p. 164.

[110] Nostromo, p. 365. In a letter to Ernst Bendz, Conrad writes: 'Silver is the pivot of the moral and material events, affecting the lives of everybody in the tale' -- Aubry, Life and Letters, Vol. II, p. 296.

reflecting material interests and ideal conceptions, provides a medium for and an analogue of illusions and their trial. The tension of opposites in individuals, mirrored and mirroring political conflict, reflects, with varying intensity, the oscillation between

> 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.[111]

In an ambience of 'fire and water,' 'ice' and 'fire,' 'elementally different,' yet 'working in conjunction,' these characters, like Kurtz, reflect the 'fascination of contrast'[112] which characterizes all of Conrad's work.

The setting of these conflicts is analogous to both the sea and the jungle; it is the landscape of the

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[111] Nostromo, p. 171.

[112] Ibid., pp. 41, 379, 411, 524. In the text, the phrase 'fascination of contrast' relates to a comparison of the Viola sisters: 'As time went on, Nostromo discovered his preference for the younger of the two. They had some profound similarities of nature, which must exist for complete confidence and understanding, no matter what outward differences of temperament there may be to exercise their own fascination of contrast.' Compare The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, p. 104: 'the fabulous world made up of leaping fire and sleeping water'; and An Outcast of the Islands, p. 284: 'fire and water... monstrously mixed.'

Infinite. Dominated by 'boundless' plains surrounded by peaks of the Cordillera which dissolve 'into great piles of grey and black vapours,' the landscape suggests 'the opal mystery of great distances.'[113] And the centre of the setting, the Golfo Placido, provides an analogue of the entire landscape as infinity: 'Sky, land, and sea disappear together out of the world when the Placido...goves to sleep under its black poncho.'[114] This universal element without bounds, like the jungle in "Heart of Darkness," cannot be known by the limited faculty of reason: 'No intelligence could penetrate the darkness of the Placid Gulf.'[115] The 'metaphysical gulfs' underlying life in Nostromo are the very condition of existence, encompassing man, sky, sea, and land.[116]

It is by dropping into these 'gulfs,' media for the revelation of the core truth within individuals and,

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[113] Nostromo, pp. 87, 6, 8.

[114] Ibid., p. 6.

[115] Ibid., p. 275.

[116] See F. R. Leavis, The Great Tradition, p. 200. Leavis contends that these 'metaphysical gulfs' are a symptom of 'life-emptiness' in Nostromo.

by extension, within the body politic, that protagonists in Nostromo become dreamers, and, by virtue of their dream-like state and its logic, come to enlightenment. Like Lord Jim and "Heart of Darkness," Nostromo may be likened to a dream in which 'chronological dislocations' in narration 'reflect a theory of history...devoid of reason,'[117] as Guerard has remarked; also, as Beach has noted, this novel is a 'pathless forest,' 'a complication of tropical growth.'[118] As the reader sails into the port of Sulaco, he enters a jungle-dream, a work, in the estimation of Morton Zabel, 'incomparable in dramatic impenetrability,'[119] there to be offered a vision of the coincidence of opposites in a microcosm of earth and man.

Nostromo, 'the Man of the People,'[120] once boatswain of an Italian ship and now sailor and Capataz de Cargadores, provides the principal study

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[117] Guerard, p. 215.

[118] The Twentieth-Century Novelists (1932), pp. 337-365.

[119] Zabel, The Portable Conrad, p. 42.

[120] Author's Note to Nostromo, p. xxiii.

of interacting individual and political contradictions. The man who attempts to free himself from the contrary political forces struggling to gain control of the state and who sees himself and silver as 'incorruptible,'[121] by means of silver becomes enmeshed in the struggles for power and is finally corrupted.

In political terms, Nostromo, who embodies the people, is a blatant contradiction. 'A revolutionist at heart,'[122] his political actions are all performed on behalf of the forces of aristocracy and capitalism, the Blancos; his mission to Hernandez; his mission to General Barrios; his rescue of Ribiera and the suppression of a riot; and the secreting of the silver to save it from the forces of Montero. Nostromo the revolutionist consistently comes to the defence of the forces antithetical to revolution, revolution, that is, in its general nineteenth-century meaning, signifying socialist-anarchist-populist efforts to overthrow royalist-aristocratic-dictatorial rulers. It should be noted here that in a Conradian context, all political movements are

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[122] Nostromo, p. 525.

[121] Ibid., pp. 300, 483.

'revolutionary,' in its etymological sense. A circular or vortical logic governs the conflicts of political interests. The Monterist party and its antithesis, the Ribierist party, are part of a single 'revolution' or cycle.[123]

The political contradiction manifested in Nostromo's actions is a reflection of contradictions within Nostromo himself. A man of the people, he is an egotist. By immersion in a dream-like state, he comes to see the antinomy. Afloat in the Placid Gulf, an element 'no intelligence could penetrate,' the unseeing Nostromo becomes a 'blind' man freighted with silver.[124] In this blindness, he comes to see his solidarity with the people; in isolation, he comes to learn that he is not alone. Paradoxically, at the moment when he becomes most selfish, most introspective, 'subjective almost to insanity,'[125] he becomes most selfless. The irony deepens as Nostromo's vision of universality within himself is translated into capital, and as his desire for fame

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[123] See Under Western Eyes, p. 72, where the etymological redundancy of 'revolutionary circles' suggests a pun.

[124] Nostromo, pp. 275, 277.

[125] Ibid., p. 525; see p. 417.

in men's eyes, the very reason for his consistent defence of Blanco interests, makes it impossible in his eyes for him to reveal the location of the silver to anyone. Decoud's four silver weights have compromised him. Immersed in a universe in which cause and effect, selfishness and selflessness are confounded, he sees his selfish dream of fame shattered paradoxically at the moment when he realizes his political ambivalence. As a result of his ideal conception of himself and silver, he himself joins the forces of aristocracy and capitalism in league against the people, while, ironically, becoming a populist focus. Through moral corruption coinciding with a non-rational perception of the contradictions inherent in his political action, he himself becomes a capitalist-gentleman. Silver becomes an objective manifestation of the selfishness and corruption mutually-reflected in the capitalist and the revolutionary.

In the end, Nostromo is unwittingly betrayed by Linda Viola and the logic of existence. Silver and Nostromo's love of Giselle, another reflection of contradictions, are confounded in a paradoxical syllogism. In quest of silver, he is mistakenly believed by Ramirez,

Giorgio, Linda and Giselle to be on an errand of love. Nostromo's death at the hands of his friend, the old revolutionary 'full of scorn for the populace,'[126] Giorgio Viola, completes the ironic cycle: the revolutionist at heart become entrepreneur is unknowingly killed by a revolutionist-compatriot as a result of a failure to distinguish between silver and love. Nostromo's end serves as a paradigm of the entire drama: 'the face of a joke upon the body of a truth,' a joke and a truth which remain 'incomprehensible.'[127] His death completes a tour de force of irony.[128]

Martin Decoud's fate parallels Nostromo's: he is a 'victim of the disillusioned weariness which is the retribution meted out to intellectual audacity,' while Nostromo is 'a victim of the disenchanted vanity which is the reward of audacious action.'[129] Initially, this would-be littérateur refuses to involve himself

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[126] Nostromo, p. 16.

[127] Ibid., pp. 316, 564.

[128] Some critics have suggested that the conclusion of Nostromo is a piece of melodrama contrived for the resolution of artistic difficulties. See, e.g., Palmer, pp. 151-154.

[129] Nostromo, p. 501.

in the 'opéra-bouffe'[130] of Costaguanan politics. However, as a consequence of this same intellectual shield, expressed as a literary joke ('blague'),[131] and, eventually, as a result of his love for Antonia Avellanos, he comes to enter the nightmare of politics, and goes to the wall facing the door with the inscription, 'Intrada de la Sombra.'[132] Decoud's irony is double-edged: he is betrayed by the ideal conception of his own intellectual detachment.

Decoud is a web of contradictions. With every attempt to distance himself from political conflict, he becomes more engaged; and his 'sane materialism' ('some reason...may creep into thinking,' he hopes)[133] is exploded by a series of 'strange coincidences that are almost incredible'; he comes to the realization that 'all this is life, must be life, since it is so much like a dream.'[134] His initial effort at literary irony had plunged him into

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[130] Nostromo, p. 152.

[131] Ibid., p. 153.

[132] Ibid., p. 180.

[133] Ibid., pp. 233, 177.

[134] Ibid., pp. 224, 249.

politics; and, as a result of his love for a woman, he had become like a 'somnambulist' in a 'dream' in which work associated with politics and silver had taken on an ideal meaning:

> He...was in the toils of an imaginative existence, and that strange work of pulling a lighter seemed to belong naturally to the inception of a new state, acquired an ideal meaning from his love for Antonia.[135]

His efforts to mask his patriotism ('He soothed himself by saying he was not a patriot, but a lover')[136] ironically reflect his true patriotism ('A Sulaco revolution.... The Great Cause may be served here!'),[137] which is framed within yet another irony: the value of silver as an instrument of political reform, like his irony, is double-edged and illusory. He becomes an 'imaginative materialist.'[138] His death sustains this many-levelled irony. Like Nostromo, once Decoud has become a full member of the community, once he has given the nationalist

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[135] Nostromo, pp. 499, 266.

[136] Ibid., p. 176.

[137] Ibid., pp. 213-214.

[138] Ibid., p. 364.

movement impetus, he subsequently apprises himself of the antinomies of existence: 'He beheld the universe as a succession of incomprehensible images.'[139] This insight in a dream-like trance leaves him a 'solitary' 'oppressed by a bizarre sense of unreality affecting the very ground upon which he walked.'[140] And the truth of his solidarity with all mankind and nature in the infinite, the 'great void,'[141] atomizes the ironic shield which provides him with his only identity. The vision of unintellectual knowledge is intolerable to this intellectual; he commits suicide. His death completes another ironic cycle: the four silver ingots used to ensure his death compromises 'the Man of the People.' The final vision of solidarity in chaos in the isolation of a dream leads to the betrayal of the man who symbolically represents the people.

Charles Gould enters the drama of the coincidence of opposites as a man of 'flattering illusions' who pins his 'faith to material interests,' means to the end

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[139] *Nostromo*, p. 498.

[140] *Ibid.*, p. 302.

[141] *Ibid.*, p. 498.

of 'law, good faith, order, security.'[142] A believer in 'passionless stability,'[143] he espouses the cause of progress, without realizing that he is obsessed with the desire to absolve himself of guilt for his father's death. This obsession, inseparable from the desire to make the mine a financial and moral success, becomes an 'overmastering passion,' a passion which leaves him 'at the mercy of ignorance and corruption.'[144] He thus loses moral vision: the mine becomes an end, not a means. This lover of stability, in his passion for security, ironically becomes a double of an anarchist bomber. His is 'the spirit of a buccaneer throwing a lighted match into the magazine.'[145] Surrendering to moral chaos, Gould becomes party to bribes and political intrigue. Unprotected by an 'ironic eye' (which, in any event, as Decoud's fate illustrates, is insufficient

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[142] Nostromo, pp. 41, 411, 524.

[143] Ibid., p. 66.

[144] Ibid., pp. 49, 314, 245.

[145] Ibid., p. 366.

armor), he becomes 'insane' in his 'fixed idea' of stability, a victim of an 'oppressive dream.'[146] Gould, however, finds in the taciturn acceptance of insanity as the condition of existence final refuge from self-knowledge. To the end, he refuses consciously to admit to the ambivalent value of the mine as a political and moral fact. He remains ignorant; he survives.

The antinomies incorporated in silver are reflected even in the virtuous Emilia Gould. For her, the silver of the mine is 'like the true expression of an emotion or the emergence of a principle'; its 'reality' is 'immaterial.'[147] But her words should not blind the reader to the fact that she encourages Charles in his course, and, thus, she also is corrupted. Also, her abnegation (she helps to save an old man's house, for example), carried to extremes, is difficult to distinguish from folly. In the midst of major upheavals, she concerns herself with minor after-effects. This 'immaterial' (the pun is perhaps telling) belief in ideals, this

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[146] Nostromo, pp. 378, 379, 406. Cf. R. Elliott, The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art (1960), p. 214.

[147] Ibid., pp. 107, 75.

desire for purity, linked with the ideal love for her husband, is obscured and tainted in the Monterist-Ribierist conflict, during which she is made aware of 'an awful sense of unreality.'[148] Paradoxically, in her desire to be reunited with Charles, enchanted away from her by an ideal partly of her own creation, she allies herself to Martin Decoud, intellectual turned political strategist, himself overmastered by a passion which idealizes the mine. To the end of re-establishing an 'immaterial' union, she involves herself in political intrigue, the very means for the corruption of Charles' 'judgment.'[149]

Thus morally compromised, she comes to see the illusory nature of her previous idealism shielded by ignorance; she comes to doubt the efficacy of simple abnegation. Emilia becomes aware that there is 'something inherent in the necessities of successful action' which carries with it 'the degradation of the idea.'[150] Her knowledge, however, is partial, for the final success

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[148] Nostromo, p. 207.

[149] Ibid., p. 364.

[150] Ibid., p. 521.

or failure of any political action in Nostromo is equivocal. Her assumption of success begs the question with regard not to means but to ends, an upside-down image of Charles' final idealization of the mine as an end, not as a means. Emilia's saving illusion, the belief in progress as an obscure but certain goal, allows her to survive.

Monygham at first appears to provide a reverse image of these optimists, Nostromo, Charles and Emilia Gould, and Decoud (when unmasked): Monygham is one who has already gone on a pilgrimage to the 'heart of darkness.' A man of 'unbelief in men's motives,' he enters the stage as one aware that men are 'capable of anything.'[151] He considers political life in Costaguana 'a comic fairy tale.'[152] However, even this ostensibly enlightened skeptic is not without his illusions.[153] Monygham's ideal conception of his treachery and subsequent disgrace ('Dr. Monygham had

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[151] Nostromo, pp. 44, 319.

[152] Ibid., p. 315.

[153] Some critics overlook this point in writing of the doctor's 'rehabilitation'; see, e.g., Newhouse, p. 120.

made himself an ideal conception of his disgrace')[154] allows him to view ironically men and their motives; it gives him, paradoxically, a sense of detachment from the frailties and self-deception of humanity. Also, his nightmare visions of Father Beron, the idealized inquisitor of his soul, provide a reverse image of Emilia Gould and the mine, which idealization plunges the skeptic into the world of political intrigue. The moral inversion is scathing in its irony: idealized evil prevents moral corruption, while idealized love leads to political action and inevitable moral compromise. The idealized mine which separates Charles and Emilia appears to the 'fifty-years' old eyes' of Monygham 'in the shape' of Emilia.[155] Both Charles, the optimist, and Monygham, the skeptic, are victims of the same illusory ideal; they come to the same end, travelling the same circular course in reverse.

Don [illegible] Avellanos, Don Pépé, Father Roman, Hernandez, and Father Corbelan provide minor reflections

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[154] Nostromo, p. 375.

[155] Ibid., p. 431.

of the thoroughgoing dream-logic at work in Nostromo: Don José shares Charles' illusion: 'order, peace, progress'[156] is his motto. His attack on political unreason, Fifty Years of Misrule, however, serves principally as wadding for guns during a battle for the possession of silver, the means for the realization of 'order, peace, progress.' Don Pépe, Father Roman, Hernandez and Father Corbelan -- all have at one time been outlaws, inhabitants of the jungle; but, in the end, they come to be respected allies of the forces they once opposed. Dwellers in unreason survive to support a regime dedicated to social order and industrial development,[157] while the aristocratic Blanco, Don José, defender of reason and order, dies of disillusionment.

Critics have sometimes failed to perceive the nature and extent of Conrad's irony in Nostromo. Robert Penn Warren, in an otherwise perceptive essay,

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[156] Nostromo, p. 137.

[157] See ibid., pp. 352 ff. There is a similar irony in "Gaspar Ruiz": the Arauco Indians fight on the side of the Royalists against the Republicans (who pride themselves on their 'American' status). The Indians support the political successors to the Conquistadores, the first European entrepreneurs to exploit them.

for example, interprets the novel as an implicit statement of the preferability of a new order based on material interests,[158] while Albert Guerard concludes: 'the conflicts induced by capitalist exploitation outweigh the benefits accrued.'[159] Yet another critic, John Palmer, suggests: 'The secret of ambivalent attitudes toward his own characters may be simply that Conrad had not yet realized the implications of his own ethical commitments....'[160] All three critics, I think, have failed to take into account the pervasiveness of Conrad's dream-logic and its moral consequences. Events in Nostromo flow 'from the passions of men short-sighted in good and evil.'[161] And men, according to Conrad, are an 'intimate alliance of contradictions';[162] they incorporate in themselves the logic of infinity. Nostromo is not an effort to elicit

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[158] "Introduction" to Nostromo (1951), pp. xxix ff.

[159] Guerard, p. 198.

[160] Palmer, p. 151.

[161] Author's Note to Nostromo, p. ix.

[162] A Personal Record, p. 36.

sympathy for one political conviction rather than another or for one character or group of characters rather than another. As we have seen, it is a vision of the truth of existence, in which good and evil are equally ambivalent. Conrad offers this vision that we may come to our own insight into the contradictory logic that governs men and their politics, and that lies at the core of existence.

Conrad's first city novel and the first intellectual spy novel written in English, The Secret Agent; begun immediately after Nostromo during the period of the composition of The Mirror of the Sea and published in 1907, has as its surface subject an attempt to blow up Greenwich Observatory and as its underlying formal theme, the 'logical processes' of 'unreason.'[163] The ironic logic in The Secret Agent, expressed in closely-wrought imagery, language, structure, action and characterization, has been thoroughly examined by critics. Articles on these facets by Avrom Fleishman,[164] Elliott B. Gose, Jr.,[165]

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[163] Author's Preface to The Secret Agent, p. x.

[164] "The Symbolic World of The Secret Agent," ELH, XXXII (1965), 196-219.

[165] "'Cruel Devourer of the World's Light': The Secret Agent," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XV (1960), 39-51.

Wilfrid S. Dowden,[166] and Joseph I. Fradin and Jean Creighton,[167] for example, restate in various forms R. W. Stallman's formulation of the novel's basic principle: 'Everything exists in contradiction of itself....'[168] In Guerard's judgment, The Secret Agent is a 'symmetrical triumph of controlled irony.'[169] No critic, however, has related the irony to the concept of enlightenment by way of immersion in infinity.

The anarchist attempt to destroy chronological time is of the deepest import for Conrad's land-dreamers, for it immerses them in an element analogous to the sea and the jungle as images of the Infinite. The destruction or absence of Greenwich Mean Time, without which there is no chronological time, leaves both landsmen and mariners in a dream-like state analogous to infinity. Without time, landsmen as well as mariners

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[166] "The 'Illuminating Quality': Imagery and Theme in The Secret Agent," Rice Institute Pamphlets, XLVII (1960), 17-33.

[167] "The Language of The Secret Agent: The Art of Non-Life," Conradiana, I (1968), 23-35.

[168] "Time and The Secret Agent," The Art of Joseph Conrad, ed. Stallman (1960), p. 240.

[169] Guerard, p. 248.

lose their 'bearings,' as it were; both are left 'absolutely in the air in space.'[170] The timeless-London and mirror-of-the-Infinite analogy is reflected in the often repeated metaphor in The Secret Agent, the world as a drained aquarium.[171] Drained of water, the aquarium becomes a 'sort of slimy, deep trench,'[172] an analogue, I suggest, of the 'everlasting deep hole' and the 'cold shiny... slime' of a creek bed in Lord Jim.[173] Also, like the Congo jungle, London is, in the words of Norman H. Holland, 'inner madness rendered as outer setting.'[174] In this setting, images of contrasting light and darkness mirror the conflict of opposites: like the Thames, London is 'a sinister marvel of still shadows and flowing gleams mingling...in a black silence.'[175] The circle of Greenwich meridian is, in this madness, rendered as 'coruscations

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[170] "Heart of Darkness," p. 106.

[171] The Secret Agent, pp. 105, 138, 145, 254, 269, 276.

[172] Ibid., p. 254.

[173] Lord Jim, pp. 111, 254.

[174] "Style as Character: The Secret Agent," Modern Fiction Studies, XII (1966), 221-231.

[175] The Secret Agent, p. 300.

of innumerable circles suggesting chaos and eternity,'[176] a vortex analogous to MacWhirr's typhoon and the images of eddies, whirlpools and whirlwinds which appear so frequently in Conrad's tales, as we have noted. The circular descent into unreason suggests a descent into infinity. With the symbolic destruction of chronological 'differentials,' mankind returns to a state of primordial chaos, an Inferno in the 'heart of darkness,' a condition of 'diabolic irony.'[177] Immersed in this primordial element, a mirror-image of infinity within, protagonists come, with varying degrees of clarity, to a vision of truth.

The enlightenment of Adolf Verloc is the central subject of The Secret Agent. Pornography vendor and agent provocateur working for the forces of 'order,' he sees 'his mission in life' as 'the protection of the social mechanism.'[178] To this end, he plays the rôle

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[176] The Secret Agent, p. 237. See Marjorie Hope Nicolson, The Breaking of the Circle (1960), Chapter IV in particular, for a treatment of a similar conflict between 'infinity' (Chaos) and 'reason ('the circle of perfection') in seventeenth-century poetry and astronomy.

[177] Stallman, p. 253.

[178] The Secret Agent, p. 15.

of an anarchist (and a married one at that). He is blind to the moral contradictions of his condition. A lover of 'philosophical serenity,' 'repose and... security,'[179] he finds pleasure in time and limitation, ironically reflected in the astronomical symbol for distance, his secret 'name.' Verloc is awakened from this lethargic dream of security by Vladimir, First Secretary of the embassy, whose 'wit consisted in discovering droll connections between incongruous ideas.'[180] When ordered by Vladimir to translate into empirical terms the destruction of 'pure mathematics,'[181] Verloc objects in the manner of a formal logician: the Secretary 'confounded causes with effects.'[182] As a consequence of a 'metaphysical' logic (Vladimir's 'wit' may suggest Samuel Johnson's description in his "Life of Cowley") reflecting the doubled and reversed perspectives of anarchy and order mirrored in his double identity, the illusion-ridden 'peripatetic philosopher,'

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[179] The Secret Agent, pp. 152, 52.

[180] Ibid., p. 19.

[181] Ibid., p. 33.

[182] Ibid., p. 30.

Verloc, enters the 'nightmare' of 'an elaborate joke.'[183] The man of surface logic, unaware of contradictions within himself, has been confronted by an objective manifestation of his true inner state.

Verloc's subsequent descent into the self parallels the course of the rudderless and powerless BORGMESTER DAHL tracing random circles in Antarctic waters.[184] Figuratively set afloat in the streets of London ('borne from west to east on the wings of a great wind'), he wanders about 'as if in a dream.'[185] Stevie, Verloc's retarded stepson, provides a chart of the voyage of this 'Odysseus':[186]

> circles, circles, circles; innumerable circles, concentric, eccentric; a coruscating whirl of circles that by their tangled multitude of repeated curves, uniformity of form, and confusion of intersecting lines suggested a rendering of cosmic chaos, the symbolism of a mad art attempting the inconceivable.[187]

During this vortical odyssey, like the artist, Verloc

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[183] The Secret Agent, pp. 230, 31-34.

[184] "Falk," Typhoon and Other Stories, pp. 228-235.

[185] The Secret Agent, p. 37.

[186] Ibid., p. 183.

[187] Ibid., p. 45.

descends 'into the abyss of moral reflections,'[188] in which he comes to struggle 'like a man in a nightmare for the preservation of his position.'[189] The struggle culminates in the accidental death of Stevie in an effort to blow up the Observatory and in the murder of Verloc at the hands of his wife, Winnie. Winnie and Verloc, both of whom refrain 'from going to the bottom of facts and motives,'[190] are enlightened at once. The surface appearance of his wife's love for him is removed as she stabs him (ironically at the moment he would make love to her); and Winnie, by that act, precipitated by 'the force of insane logic' (now that Stevie is dead, he wants to keep her for nothing, she thinks),[191] is plunged into emotional chaos. She comes to see the contradictions of her marriage; completely disoriented, she subsequently commits suicide, an 'incomprehensible' event in the view of a newspaperman.

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[188] The Secret Agent, p. 52.

[189] Ibid., p. 236.

[190] Ibid., p. 245.

[191] Ibid., p. 256.

Afloat in a 'sea in a tempest,'[192] both Verloc and Winnie are scuttled.

As the 'lunatic' nihilist Professor ('the bomber') remarks, 'There are several kinds of logic.'[193] Inspector Heat and the Assistant Commissioner present the principal images of the 'kinds of logic' reflected in Verloc and Vladimir. As agents of law and order, they also are secret agents, whose knowledge and/or ignorance partakes of the chaos underlying the varnish of civilization: 'The terrorist and the policeman both come from the same basket.'[194]

Heat, like Verloc, MacWhirr and a host of Conrad's seamen-protagonists, comfortable in his certitudes, finds the 'idea of the absurdity of things human' 'exasperating beyond endurance.'[195] Horrified by 'the inexplicable mysteries of conscious existence' in a 'world of contradictions,' he declares 'impossible' the fait accompli of an anarchist explosion.[196] (Similarly, the anarchist

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[192] The Secret Agent, p. 263.

[193] Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[194] Ibid., p. 69.

[195] Ibid., p. 91.

[196] Ibid., pp. 84-85.

Ossipon declares 'impossible' the fait accompli of Verloc's complicity in the attempt to blow up the Observatory.)[197] With the evidence of Verloc's complicity (and duplicity) in hand, he deduces that Verloc could not have been involved in the explosion for the reason that such could not 'be explained by what he know(s]'[198] (Verloc is one of Heat's secret informers). Like Roquentin in Sartre's La Nausée, Heat, who is referred to as no 'metaphysician,'[199] experiences 'a fresh wave of nausea'[200] in each encounter with the logic of existence; and, having been finally enlightened as to the facts related to the explosion, he resolves to allow Verloc to escape, for the truth of the affair would lay 'waste fields of knowledge.'[201] Rather than face the truth of himself, the state, and mankind, the bastion of order remains a secret agent of anarchy, contributing to chaos in the form of ignorance.

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[197] The Secret Agent, p. 74.

[198] Ibid., p. 133. Like the 'fanatic' Sevrin, a secret working for the police, Heat also believes in 'the absolute value of conventional signs' ("The Informer," A Set of Six, p. 93).

[199] Ibid., p. 87. [200] Ibid., p. 94.

[201] Ibid., p. 210.

Verloc's escape makes possible his murder, and Michaelis' past leads Heat 'logically'[202] to conclude that this innocent man is guilty, a truth to be validated, Heat thinks, by the subsequent accumulation of evidence, which, in fact, does not exist.

The Assistant Commissioner provides both a double and a reverse image of Heat. He has, like Chesterton's Father Brown and Don Quixote,[203] looked deeply into the 'metaphysical' logic of infinity. Having served his apprenticeship in the East, he is qualified to trace the 'coruscations of innumerable circles suggesting chaos and eternity.'[204] Unlike Heat, who is 'not quixotic,'[205] the Assistant Commissioner has experienced 'sudden holes in space and time'; and, like Kurtz, he judges the 'unspeakable' truth 'horrible, horrible!'[206]

Assuming a secret identity, he joins those of 'unsound method' to perceive the truth underlying

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[202] The Secret Agent, p. 114.

[203] Ibid., pp. 115, 147.

[204] Ibid., p. 204.

[205] Ibid., p. 204.

[206] Ibid., pp. 85, 100.

surface appearances. In a 'jungle' of 'contradictions and absurdities,'[207] in which anarchy doubles order and order doubles anarchy, he proves a perceptive reader of men's hearts. But, in so doing, he ironically accepts the truth of the anarchists; in protecting order, he shares in anarchism. Having laid down the principle

> that the existence of secret agents should not be tolerated, as tending to augment the positive dangers of the evil against which they are used,

the Assistant Commissioner resolves that the problem 'should be dealt with with special secrecy.'[208] This irony is reversed within the Assistant Commissioner himself: he can sustain the illusion (and reality) of an anarchist identity only by playing daily games of whist, which provide him with a refuge from 'the secret ills of existence,' for there, as in Heat's mind, events follow 'perfectly comprehensible rules.'[209] Thus, by inversion, the Assistant Commissioner also partakes of

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[207] The Secret Agent, pp. 107, 150.

[208] Ibid., p. 139.

[209] Ibid., pp. 103, 97.

Heat's ignorance, an inseparable companion of anarchy.

The anarchists in The Secret Agent mirror similar antitheses of order and chaos, knowledge and ignorance. Their blindness to the contradictions within themselves, manifested in their political convictions, forms the very basis of their anarchism. Thus, their desire (mostly theoretical) to implement their political dogma, variously expressed by Yundt, Michaelis (a man profesing 'cold reason' who has 'lost the habit of consecutive thinking,' according to Ossipon),[210] Ossipon, and the Professor, is realized only in the reduction to absurdity of self-destruction. Only by literally atomizing the self can the anarchist achieve complete non-order. The full knowledge of the truth of this doctrine comes in death. This truth is also sardonically suggested in "An Anarchist," in which two nihilists are murdered while shouting 'Vive l'anarchie!'[211] Significantly, all the political anarchists in The Secret Agent survive. They remain ignorant; they remain anarchists.

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[210] The Secret Agent, pp. 43-45, 77.

[211] A Set of Six, p. 159.

A Set of Six, published the year after The Secret Agent, offers minor embodiments of the logic of contraries as it relates to enlightenment. In "An Anarchist," a sentimental young Parisian ignorant of himself ('I did not know enough about myself'),[212] goaded on, like Stevie in The Secret Agent, by his companions, had yelled out in drunken sympathy with suffering mankind: 'Vive l'anarchie!'[213] In the nightmare subsequent to his arrest, his lawyer had implicitly damned him as an anarchist by presenting him as a victim of society, a fact that had been ironically validated by the imposition of the maximum sentence. The forces of order and the forces of anarchism thus become indistinguishable; and upon his release from jail, the young man finds himself under the surveillance of both the police and anarchists. Caught between a society which will not have him and the anarchists who will; he then becomes an accomplice in a crime and is apprehended. Immersed in this state of

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[212] A Set of Six, p. 144.

[213] Ibid., p. 147.

of unreason, the young man has revealed to him the frailty of surface order in society and himself: 'Il ne faut pas beaucoup pour perdre un homme!'[214] Ironically, he comes to find refuge in the near-wilderness of an island in the estuary of the Amazon River. In "Gaspar Ruiz," the protagonist's trial results, as in Under Western Eyes, from the coincidence of contrary political identities: Royalists believe him a Republican, Republicans believe him a Royalist. This confusion leads to Gaspar's immersion in politics and love, both of which lead to his destruction. "The Duel" is an allegorical tale of the 'instinctive antagonism' between 'rational desire' and 'pugnacious instincts.'[215] By a 'paradoxical logic' in a 'harassing dream,'[216] the irreconcilable antagonists, d'Hubert and Feraud, become secret sharers: the former secretly supports the latter, his duelling mate. And "The Informer" is a 'joke' in which an anarchist doubles as a connoisseur of delicate art; he is both a

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[214] A Set of Six, p. 161.

[215] Ibid., pp. 191, 204.

[216] Ibid., pp. 195, 193.

cynic and an optimist. "The Brute," the slightest of the tales in A Set of Six, is based on an obvious pun, THE APSE FAMILY: the members of the Apse family are blind to the ship's evil and thus to their own.

"Il Conde," also included in A Set of Six, merits separate consideration, for, in it, Conrad presents with characteristic irony and in compressed form[217] the enlightenment of a civilized, ignorant man, one who, like Whalley and Peyrol, for example, would skim over the years of existence. We are introduced to a rheumatic European aristocrat living a life of retirement in Naples. A believer in 'the respectable placidity of life,' he is ignorant of the analogical significance for himself of the 'catastrophic fury' of the 'volcano' by which the 'delicate perfection' of bronzes from Herculaneum and Pompeii has been preserved.[218] He is blind to the analogous contradiction which lies within himself: he worships refinement without its inseparable antithesis, brutality. An 'abominable adventure,' during which

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[217] See Ernest Carter, "Classical Allusion as the Clue to Meaning in Conrad's 'Il Conde,'" Conradiana, III (1971-72), 55-62.

[218] A Set of Six, pp. 281, 269.

'great waves of harmony' ironically counterpoint a barbarous hold-up by a young chief of a Camorra, an Italian secret society organized by criminal elements in Naples c. 1820, leaves 'defiled' the Count's 'delicate conception of his dignity.'[219] Strolling through an ordered alley of trees, he enters a 'jungle,' there to encounter this 'wolf' of a Camorra: 'the wilderness ...engulfs the old Count,' writes John Howard Mills.[220] Almost deprived of his chronometer, he enters a 'dream.'[221] 'Every small fact and event of that evening stood out in his memory as if endowed with mystical significance,'[222] the narrator informs us.

That the young barbarian is the Count's mirror-image is suggested in a subsequent encounter. In a cafe, 'which is divided into aisles by square pillars set all round with long looking-glasses,'[223] both the Count and the barbarian are reflected in a 'glass.'[224]

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[219] A Set of Six, pp. 274, 283, 288.

[220] "Adam, Axel, and 'Il Conde,'" The Art of Joseph Conrad, ed. Stallman (1960), p. 257.

[221] A Set of Six, pp. 282, 284.

[222] Ibid., p. 276.

[223] Ibid., p. 285.

[224] Ibid., p. 287.

Enlightened in a dream-vision as to the 'abominably savage' aspect of himself (suggested unwittingly by Hermes, guide to the Nether World), he abdicates to death. The Count is not able to reconcile in himself the dualism of savagery and refinement mirrored ironically in the stone "Resting Hermes," bearer of the caduceus, a traditional symbol of 'l'équilibre entre les tendances contraires.'[225] The superficial admirer of the surface aspect of art is destroyed by the revelation of the underlying antitheses within himself, antitheses which are reconciled in art. Ironically, the Count glides away in 'stony immobility' within 'the train de luxe of the International Sleeping Car Company.'[226] Like the less fastidious Almayer, he seeks annihilation in endless sleep, the reconciliation of contrary stresses in the void. Only a crudely literal analysis such as John V. Hagopian's[227] or a non-analysis such as Lawrence Graver's[228] could lead to the conclusion that "Il Conde" is a straight-

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[225] Chevalier, et al., p. 129.

[226] A Set of Six, p. 289.

[227] "The Pathos of Il Conde," Studies in Short Fiction, III (1965), 31-38.

[228] Conrad's Short Fiction, pp. 141-144.

forward potboiler.

In 1911, some three years after the publication of A Set of Six, appeared Under Western Eyes, a work which is now generally considered one of Conrad's finest. The universality of its appeal is suggested by the fact that critics of such opposed philosophical persuasions as André Gide[229] and F. R. Leavis[230] can celebrate its merits. Evaluation of the novel, as with these two critics, has been based almost exclusively on its political verisimilitude and probity and/or its literary technique. Though certainly justifiable, this approach tends to gloss over the central theme, the enlightenment of Razumov. As Morton D. Zabel observes, it is in the 'drama of a character subjected to the most searching tests' 'that the book achieves its essential strength.'[231] That Conrad intended this is suggested by the initial title of the work, Razumov; and the fact that the words of the title eventually chosen (prefigured in Lord Jim:

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[229] Journals (1948-49), p. 641.

[230] The Great Tradition, pp. 219-222.

[231] "Introduction to Under Western Eyes," Conrad: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Mudrick, p. 136.

'the Western eye, so often concerned with mere surfaces')[232] relate explicitly to logic -- 'Eastern logic' unrolled 'under...Western eyes'[233] further suggests that Under Western Eyes is primarily a tale of logic as it pertains to Razumov (meaning 'son of reason').

Under Western Eyes focusses on a young Russian student of philosophy, a solitary 'swimmer,' who, by way of 'absurd complications' comes to a 'profounder knowledge' of the 'mysterious and secret sides' of life and of himself.[234] Much as in the tale of masked bedlamites, The Arrow of Gold (1919), the narrator, an English teacher, relates part of the tale from a diary, a 'mirror'[235] of the protagonist's self. Within this mirror are reflected the 'dramatic possibilities' of dream-logic in a 'comedy of errors, phantoms, and suspicions.'[236]

Razumov, like Verloc in The Secret Agent, is ignorant of the interchange of appearance and reality within

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[232] Lord Jim, p. 262.

[233] Under Western Eyes, p. 381.

[234] Ibid., pp. 10, 198, 357, 54.

[235] Author's Note to Under Western Eyes, p. vii; Under Western Eyes, p. 99.

[236] Under Western Eyes, p. 214.

himself. While Razumov dispassionately (he is a philosophy student with a 'frigid English manner')[237] views Eastern logic through Western eyes, manifested in his academic identification with the tsarist regime, the force of order (in his mistaken view), he also considers himself part of the irrational, chaotic mass of the Russian people. An orphan, Razumov sees the 'people' as his family. Unaware, like Nostromo, of this contradiction between surface order and underlying anarchy mirrored in himself, he remains aloof to dream of 'an ordered life'[238] as a respected professor of philosophy.

Razumov's odyssey to enlightenment begins with an experience of the conflict between the state and revolutionists (presumably the voice of the people). He is suddenly confronted, in the form of the self-deceived Victor Haldin, with the 'absurd dread of the unseen.'[239] The contradiction of Razumov's ambivalent surface identity -- a man of the people and a supporter of the tsarist regime -- is visited upon him. 'Like other Russians before him,' Razumov enters 'in conflict

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[237] Under Western Eyes, p. 16.

[238] Ibid., p. 55.

[239] Ibid., p. 35.

with himself.'[240] Anarchists assume he is an anarchist; tsarists assume he is a tsarist. Haldin's self-deception, an image of Razumov's self-deception as to his own identity, immerses the latter in the Infinite; Razumov's dream of order is atomized in a 'nightmare' in which his watch stops ('Impossible to know the time').[241] In a desperate effort to salvage the blueprint of his future -- a reverse image of the anarchists' utopian beliefs --, he allies himself to the regime by betraying Haldin. 'Mephistophelian laughter' follows Razumov's perception of the irony of his and Haldin's predicaments.[242]

This search for refuge from chaos and infinity proves futile, however, for he finds his 'intelligence'[243] murdered by both Mikulin, a tsarist official, and by student revolutionists, both assuming, as Victor Haldin had, that Razumov is sympathetic to their cause. Tsarists and revolutionists see themselves in Razumov, and Razumov does not see that the conflict is a reflection of the truth

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[240] Under Western Eyes, p. 34.

[241] Ibid., pp. 71, 64.

[242] Ibid., p. 82; see also pp. 182, 228.

[243] Ibid., p. 83.

within himself. The efforts of this man of 'cool superior reason' to return to an 'intelligible universe'[244] are futile, for they are based on an illusion. Neither Razumov, nor the tsarists, nor the anarchists are 'intelligible.' All three are ignorant of the truth of themselves.

Razumov's further descent into unreason is symbolically marked by dreams and their logic. Having betrayed Haldin, Razumov, as in a 'dream,'[245] enters an oculist's shop to meet Mikulin. His association with a crime has dashed his future in his eyes, and fellow students believe him to be a sympathizer with their cause. Razumov, like Paul in "An Anarchist," thus caught in a paradox of identity, agrees to make use of the identity provided by the anarchists: he becomes a tsarist agent. The irony is pervasive. Like the Assistant Commissioner in The Secret Agent, Razumov and Mikulin become anarchists in adopting the techniques of secrecy and deception, subterfuges antithetical to surface order: 'And was not all secret revolutionary action based upon folly, self-deception, and lies?'[246] The anarchists are equally ignorant of

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[244] Under Western Eyes, pp. 85, 99.

[245] Ibid., p. 315.

[246] Ibid., p. 83.

the double-edged nature of secrecy. Anarchy is thus invoked against anarchists, professed tsarists and professed revolutionaries alike. Razumov, in order to sustain his illusion of order, becomes an agent of chaos; he assumes co-existing contradictory identities in a nightmare.

The logic of Razumov's descent into himself is explicitly articulated in a discussion between Nathalie and the English Teacher on the 'logical' structure of existence. The Teacher, who sees events through Western eyes (though on occasion he shifts perspective), argues: 'Life is a thing of form. It has its plastic shape and a definite intellectual aspect.' As a logician, he cannot understand how 'antagonistic ideas' are 'to be reconciled.'[247] As a philosopher of the coincidentia oppositorum, Miss Haldin counters: 'The whole world is inconceivable to the strict logic of ideas.'[248] The universe is not susceptible to rational analysis; it is and we are. The words, ironically enough, spoken by Nathalie, 'ignorant of basic instincts,' have 'enigmatical

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[247] Under Western Eyes, pp. 105-106.

[248] Ibid., pp. 105-106.

prolongations' for this teacher of words who, unwittingly and, thus ironically, declares words 'the great foes of reality.'[249] The surface logician implicitly confesses that his truth is illusory.

Peter Ivanovitch (in part a portrait of the anarchist Michael Bakunin) reflects Nathalie's dialectic: he incorporates the 'civilized man...and the stealthy primeval savage' -- 'as though there had been two human beings indissolubly joined.'[250] This 'Asiatic' 'mystically inclined'[251] anarchist, a feminist abusive to a woman, provides a mirror image of the logic of contradictions at work in Razumov. Like Razumov, Ivanovitch is ignorant of the tension of opposites in himself, a tension manifested in descrepancies between theory and practice.

Razumov's arrival in Geneva marks the next stage of his enlightenment. There, he is symbolically immersed in a swift-flowing stream; at once, he enters a dream-like trance of introspection and begins to perceive the logic of the infinite at work in himself.[252] Now

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[249] Under Western Eyes, pp. 102, 118, 3.

[250] Ibid., p. 122.

[252] Ibid., Part II, Chapter IV.

completely engulfed in a world of optical and moral illusions, he enters into 'a secret dialogue with himself,' during which he reflects: 'An absurdity may be the starting-point of the most dangerous complications.'[253]

These complications are mirrored in the self-deception of both the Teacher, a Western logician, and the mystical anarchists, Eastern logicians. The Teacher, proud of his 'faculty of putting two and two together,'[254] calculates that since Razumov arrived from Stuttgart, he must be working in conjunction with Ivanovitch (Stuttgart is a revolutionary centre). The Teacher, ironically, is blind to his own non sequitur, and joins, with Nathalie (seeing Razumov's reaction to her name, she infers that he is no impostor),[255] the mystical anarchists in unreason and self-deception. On one occasion, the Teacher appears in the eyes of Razumov as 'the devil himself.'[256] The illusory belief in the truth of appearances explains this Western logician's 'dread of being suddenly snatched away'

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[253] Under Western Eyes, p. 198.

[254] Ibid., p. 195.

[255] Ibid., p. 172.

[256] Ibid., p. 360.

by the swift-flowing river of existence.[257]

Also ironically, anarchists are equally deceived by surface appearances. The professedly mystical Ivanovitch, who claims, 'I never make a mistake in spiritual matters,'[258] is in fact deaf to Razumov's double-entendre and blind to his double-identity; Mme. de S__ confesses to Razumov, 'I can see your very soul,'[259] while endorsing his authenticity as an anarchist agent; and Sophia Antonovna unknowingly plays a monstrous joke on herself: 'I have understood you at the end of the first day,' she informs the 'devil'-like secret agent.[260] And, as though to enlighten the naif young anarchist (in fact a tsarist agent), she pronounces: 'There's no looking into the secrets of the heart.'[261] Her acute blindness leads her to the certain conclusion that since the ostler Ziemienitch hanged himself (a 'diabolic surprise,' in the view of Razumov)[262] shortly after Victor Haldin's arrest, he must have done.

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[257] Under Western Eyes, p. 197.

[258] Ibid., p. 130. [259] Ibid., p. 224.

[260] Ibid., pp. 280, 282, 243.

[261] Ibid., p. 249. [262] Ibid., p. 280.

so out of remorse for betraying the assassin. The post hoc ergo propter hoc, a double of the Teacher's non sequitur, validates her words: 'Revolutionists hate irony.'[263] Lovers of surface order and surface appearances hate is as well. The wise Sophia and her companions, aware of the 'invincible nature of human error,'[264] amply reveal the extent of their ignorance.

In this chaotic universe of sometimes doubly-reversed contradictions forming an 'infernal cycle,'[265] only Razumov is enlightened. 'Falling into mysticism,' he muses: 'Perhaps life is just that..., a dream.'[266] Looking within himself in this dream, he becomes aware of his guilt and self-deception. He seeks refuge from this awareness by attempting to gain possession of Nathalie's soul ('I shall steal his (Victor's) sister's

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[263] Under Western Eyes, p. 279.

[264] Ibid., p. 282.

[265] Ibid., p. 268. Upon being investigated by the revolutionists, Razumov protests: 'Inquire, investigate! I defy you but I will not be played with.' The narrator adds: 'He had spoken such words before. He had been driven to cry them out in the face of other suspicions. It was an infernal cycle bringing round that protest like a fatal necessity of his existence.' Razumov had uttered this very protest to Mikulin.

[266] Ibid., p. 316.

soul from her'],[267] and thereby laying the 'spectre'[268] of Victor Haldin reflected in Nathalie. Razumov becomes like 'a haunted somnambulist.'[269] But this introspection also brings Razumov to a vision of the 'primeval savage' within himself, which he shares with the universe and with mankind. And in an effort to objectify his solidarity, he confesses ('betray myself back into truth')[270] to the deaf Nathalie, who subsequently rejects him because he has revealed the truth of his mask of anarchy. Thus rejected, in an effort to divest himself of all masks and to reveal the truth of his inner anarchism, Razumov betrays himself to the anarchists, an act of treachery prefigured in his earlier betrayal of Haldin and himself: 'In giving Haldin up, it was myself, after all, whom I have betrayed most basely.'[271] Ironically, as a consequence, he is literally deafened by Necator (Death), the anarchist of anarchists, betraying tsarists and anarchists alike. In this final catastrophe, Razumov is fully enlightened, divested of all masks, he enters a darkness of 'silent

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[267] Under Western Eyes, p. 359.

[268] Ibid., p. 229.

[269] Ibid., p. 336.

[270] Ibid., p. 358.

[271] Ibid., p. 361.

flames, the water of a deluge.'[272]

Razumov, like Jim, has been thoroughly tried by the 'terrifying logic' of existence. A man 'whose solitary existence had been a stranger' to 'that side of our emotional life' which exists in perpetual darkness, has come to a 'profounder knowledge.'[273] He has come to be completely disabused of his illusory belief in 'an ordered life.' Appropriately, Razumov, as a forcibly retired tsarist agent, ends as an adviser to anarchists. He knows well the secrets of his own heart.

The 'comedy of errors' closes with a flash of Eastern logic. The Asiatic, mystical Ivanovitch, having been deceived by both Razumov and Necator, is 'canonized' in Sophia Antonovna's final non sequitur: 'Peter Ivanovitch is an inspired man.'[274] The 'dream' concludes on 'foreseen lines, inexorably logical.'[275] The political anarchists, unlike Razumov, have learned nothing of themselves. They

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[272] Under Western Eyes, p. 369.

[273] Ibid., pp. 357-358.

[274] The final words of the novel.

[275] Under Western Eyes, p. 315.

remain ignorant, blind to the logic of infinity in themselves and the body politic.

Irony is based on the tension of opposites. Viewed from this perspective, irony, expressed as the coincidence of opposites, is the central formal element of Nostromo, The Secret Agent, A Set of Six, and Under Western Eyes. Plunged into a moral condition which may be likened to a jungle in its unreason and confusion, protagonists experience the dream-like nature of existence. They experience the ironies of life governed by the circular logic of contraries. Taken together, these fictions may be seen as a single vision of the logic of emotions within man mirrored in outward political events, manifestations of 'the logic of history,'[276] which, as Razumov learns, is an 'infernal cycle.'

Victory, published in 1915, presents another philosopher enlightened by existence. Like Calderón's El magico prodigioso (The Wonder-Working Magician) and Shakespeare's The Tempest, Victory is an 'imagined drama'[277] (actually

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[276] Under Western Eyes, p. 35.

[277] Author's Note to Victory, p. ix.

staged at the Globe, 26 March--14 June 1919)[278] of a battle between beast-demons and men in a universe of dreams, enchantment, and 'optical delusion.'[279] Like Kurtz, Il Conde and Razumov, for example, Heyst is plunged into a 'volcano' for the testing of his philosophical illusions; and there, in 'an amazing dream-plot,'[280] he comes to a vision, in Sartre's words, of être-en-soi ('being-in-itself').[281] As Jones, the 'devil himself,' reveals to Heyst: 'I am he who is--,' 'I am he that is.'[282]

A brief scrutiny of adverse criticism of Victory proves useful in describing Conrad's vision in this work. Moser[283] and Daiches,[284] for example, offer a

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[278] R. Ryf, "Conrad's Stage Victory," Modern Drama, VII (1964), 148-160.

[279] Victory, p. 82. Cp. "The Lagoon," Tales of Unrest: the earth is 'a shadowy country of inhuman strife, a battle-field of phantoms terrible and charming, august or ignoble, struggling for the possession of our restless hearts' (pp. 193-194). The expression 'optical delusion' in its moral sense first appears in Conrad in a letter of 26 December 1899 to W. Blackwood: Blackburn, ed., p. 79.

[280] Victory, p. 403.

[281] Cf. Barrett, pp. 254-250.

[282] Victory, pp. 383, 317, 376.

[283] Moser, pp. 116-119.

[284] Daiches, pp. 55-61.

single judgment: Conrad, by presenting a simplified black and white distinction between good and evil, is not being sufficiently 'realistic.' Both critics, it seems, implicitly (Moser) or explicitly (Daiches) assume that Conrad is heir to Flaubert, then implicitly criticize Conrad for being heir to Calderón-like ideas. Though Calderón is not mentioned by these critics, their criticism of Victory, based on 'realism' as an aesthetic criterion, can be interpreted as unsympathetic to him. And a reading of Victory in the light of Calderón's central themes makes clear the following points: it is an allegorical, dramatic rendition of the dialectic of good and evil in a dream-world; this struggle mirrors the conflict within the central 'subject' of the drama, Axel Heyst; and in this struggle, Heyst comes to enlightenment. As George F. Reinecke observes, Victory is a 'psychomachy,' a dramatic staging of internal conflicts;[285] and it is only on this allegorical level, as S. L. Gross argues, that there is real 'victory.'[286] Adverse criticism of

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[285] "Conrad's Victory: Psychomachy, Christian Symbols, and Theme," Explorations in Literature, ed. Rima D. Reck (1966), pp. 70-80.

[286] "The Devil in Samburan: Jones and Ricardo in Victory," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XVI (1961), 81-85.

Victory on the basis of lapses from 'realism,' it seems to me, is misplaced. One had as well criticize the philosophical drama of Calderon for not being as 'realistic' as Madame Bovary. Donald A. Dike offers a more accurate assessment than Moser and Daiches: Victory is

> a fantasy way of seeing the duality of illusion and reality in ambiguous, inseparable connection with the duality of innocence and guilt.[287]

The logic of this duality may be likened to the logic of dreams.

Axel Heyst is introduced as a 'pursuer of chimeras,'[288] a man of contradictions of which he is ignorant ('for of downright irony Heyst was not prodigal').[289] As one dedicated to complete detachment from life -- he is 'a man determined to remain free from the absurdities of existence'[290], he impulsively engages in financial and moral action (the coal venture and Captain Morrison's rescue). Reversals of intended effects -- bankruptcy and

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[287] "The Tempest of Axel Heyst," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XVII (1962), 95-113.

[288] Victory, p. 9.

[289] Ibid., p. 9.

[290] Ibid., p. 202.

the death of Morrison, 'the victim of gratitude'[291] serve to reinforce his ignorance of the antinomies of himself and existence, and lead him to have 'done with facts.'[292] Unaware, like Peyrol, of the contradictory impulses to detachment and to engagement within himself, Heyst is blind to the logical contradictory of his philosophy: 'all action is bound to be harmful.'[293] The Schopenhauerian principle of detachment, adopted as a mask, leads him to become 'a hermit in the wilderness,' in which he seems 'to swim in a green sea.'[294] As many critics have noted,[295] the hermitage, Samburan, is an allegorical Eden; but, also, paradoxically, as 'sea' and 'wilderness,' it is by analogy the landscape of the infinite. And it is on this island, in a struggle with envoys of civilization ('Hades'), with whom he is in 'spectral fellowship,'[296] that Heyst comes to learn that the negation of life leaves him not innocent, but of the party of Satan-Jones, an

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[291] Victory, p. 22.

[292] Ibid., p. 28.

[293] Ibid., p. 54.

[294] Ibid., pp. 31, 29.

[295] E.g., Wiley, pp. 150 ff.

[296] Victory, p. 393.

'outlaw from the higher spheres,'[297] and that his ideal conception of detachment is an illusion. Inaction as well as action is bound to be harmful.

Like Decoud and Razumov, Heyst is initially unaware of his solidarity with mankind. Having vowed to become a hermit, he returns from Samburan on occasion ostensibly to observe the human 'spectacle';[298] he fosters in himself the illusion of skeptical detachment. On impulse, however, in a moment of inadvertence, he takes a 'sort of plunge'[299] after the beleaguered outcast, Alma/Magdalen, 'an action big with incalculable consequences.'[300] The man who has 'renounced all outside nourishment'[301] rescues Alma (Soul/Nourishment); the man of refined sensibility experiences an undercurrent of sensuality (Magdalen). Having thus engaged life in the form of a woman, a mirror image of his own dual soul of spirit (her eyes are 'windows of the soul')[302] and sensuality ('movements of carnal emotion'),[303] he unknowingly prepares the way for a

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[297] Victory, p. 382.

[298] Ibid., p. 178.

[299] Ibid., p. 77.

[300] Ibid., p. 83.

[301] Ibid., p. 177.

[302] Ibid., p. 204.

[303] Ibid., p. 218.

satanic 'visitation,' an 'infernal surprise.'[304] His skeptical detachment blinds him to the consequences of his conflicting impulses, of the 'sharp contradictions that lacerate our intelligence and our feelings.'[305]

Retreating from civilization to the wilderness of Samburan/Eden, Heyst ('Adam'),[306] now with Alma/Magdalen, retains his illusion of complete safety in detachment. This illusion is reflected in his effort to fashion a mask of complete disinterestedness toward her. He resists immersion in the infinite; he resists lying in 'the bed of dreams.'[307] Heyst's philosophical detachment, however, is but a surface disguise, for, as with Razumov, it does not reflect the image of the truth of himself and existence. Heyst's 'cherished negations,'[308] analogous to Razumov's initial rejection of unreason, are a defence against truth.

Ironically, it is Schomberg, Teutonic pillar of

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[304] Victory, pp. 228, 353.

[305] Ibid., p. 67.

[306] Ibid., p. 174.

[307] Ibid., p. 219.

[308] Ibid., p. 222.

civilization, who creates a false 'reality' of Heyst by a series of 'false inferences' which will awaken Heyst in his dream-life of 'false inferences.'[309] Out of revenge (Heyst has taken Magdalen from him), Schomberg directs the composite beast-devil, Jones-Ricardo-Pedro, to Samburan/Eden, where, Schomberg has 'logically' inferred, lies concealed a fortune: Heyst's seclusion, according to Schomberg, can be explained only by the presence of hidden treasure. Thus, both Heyst's action (the rescue of Alma) and his inaction (detachment from society) lead to catastrophe. The world, which Heyst in his skepticism had renounced, sends to 'Eden' a 'trio of fitting envoys' -- 'evil intelligence,' 'instinctive savagery,' and 'brute force.'[310] Though Heyst believes he has 'renounced' the world, the world has not renounced him. The philosopher's faulty conversion of a proposition by omission, appropriately enough, leaves him without armour in the ensuing conflict. Heyst, in his ignorance, is unprepared for complete immersion in existence.

Heyst's illusion of safety in detachment is shattered

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[309] Victory, pp. 162, 359.

[310] Ibid., p. 329.

in a dream-world. The satanic envoys arrive in a 'dream,' a fact which Heyst regards as a 'prodigious improbability,'[311] while Heyst, suspicious of the envoys, 'gods or demons, bringing good or evil,'[312] advises his soul (Alma) that his logic has been faulty: 'what must be avoided are fallacious inferences.'[313] The logic of existence, also manifested in a nightmarish series of dissimulations -- Alma deceives Heyst and Ricardo; Heyst lies diplomatically to Jones; Ricardo dissimulates before Jones; Wang deceives; and Heyst lies to Wang --, clearly refutes his father's Schopenhauerian philosophy: 'sparrows...are brought down to the ground.'[314] The passive voice indicates the truth of the logic of contraries: inaction in skepticism and innocence (passivity) is but a reverse image of guilt and engagement (activity) -- both may be equally good and/or evil.

The final encounter with evil occurs in an infinite cosmos of contradictions. Beneath a sky of 'waves of cold

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[311] Victory, pp. 241, 248.

[312] Ibid., pp. 228; cf. p. 314.

[313] Ibid., p. 359.

[314] Ibid., pp. 375, 389, 216.

fire,' Heyst, 'in an incomprehensible dream,' 'an amazing dream-plot,' is plunged into a 'flaming abyss,'[315] there to encounter Jones, a fin-de-siècle Satan in the manner of Huysmans. In Jones, Heyst sees the image of his own negation of life ('spectral fellowship'). In an allegorical Hell, Heyst becomes aware of his bond with chaos and of his solidarity in love and sensuality with Alma/Magdalen.[316] The philosopher experiences in this culminating debacle an 'illusory effect of awakening,' and sees 'the impossibility of ever closing his eyes again.'[317] He becomes aware that passivity and innocence may be as instrumental in the workings of evil as positive action. His failure to translate this new awareness into action results in catastrophe. Paradoxically guilty of doing nothing evil, Heyst is caught between contrary stresses -- to action and to detachment: Alma dies as a result of his inability to act.

Thus, the final 'lesson' -- man must learn in youth 'to put...trust in life'[318] is profoundly equivocal, for

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[315] Victory, pp. 375, 216, 403.

[316] Conrad suggests comparison with Sir Thomas Browne: '...though in a Wilderness, a man is never alone, not only because he is with himself,..., but because he is with the Devil.' (Hudson, ed., p. 399.)

[317] Victory, p. 403.

[318] Ibid., p. 410.

life, like love, 'rests as much on antagonism as on attraction.'[319] Jones/Satan and Alma/Magdalen are analogical reflections of Heyst's self, and both are part of existence. And the woman who had saved Heyst's life by the deception of Ricardo had, in her death, made it impossible for the philosopher to live on with the positive consequences of his negation.' Ironically, once Heyst proves victorious in self-knowledge, fully engages life and himself, and becomes aware of his kinship with Jones and Alma, he inflicts on himself the final negation, death.

Like Cyprian in Calderón's The Wonder-Working Magician, Heyst comes to see, by way of a descent 'into the abyss of infernal regions,'[320] an allegorical mirror-image of the 'hell' within himself; that his philosophical estrangement proves his ignorance more. And, like Cyprian, he achieves a moral victory; he comes to an insight into the non-rational truth that lies at the core of existence, the 'unknown,' the 'incomprehensible.'[321] Ironically,

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[319] Victory, p. 222.

[320] Ibid., p. 219.

[321] Ibid., pp. 219, 344.

once he has learned in an 'inferno' of his oneness with all life, Heyst commits his life to the flames. Conrad concludes Victory with a final flash of ironic logic, a logic which wreaks havoc with critics who read Victory as sentimental melodrama.[322] Heyst's victory is pyrrhic, for his enlightenment encompasses good and evil, neither of which can be clearly distinguished.

Thus are Conrad's land-dreamers enlightened. Divested of all 'armour for the soul,'[323] they are 'translated' figuratively and/or literally into a 'jungle,' a world of 'cold fire,' where operates the logic of dreams. By way of this Calderón-like logic of contradictions, they descend into 'an infernal abyss,' like 'the innermost frozen circle of Dante's Inferno,'[324] there to be granted a vision (of varying degrees of clarity and darkness) of

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[322] Other critics have pointed this out in different ways. Sharon Kaehele and Howard German, for example, argue that the novel's conclusion emphasizes 'the difficulty of achieving a mature balance of skepticism and illusion': "Conrad's Victory: A Reassessment," Modern Fiction Studies, X (1964), 55-72. David Lodge considers Victory a 'tragedy of the absurd': "Conrad's Victory and The Tempest: An Amplification," Modern Language Review, LIX (1964), 195-199.

[323] Under Western Eyes, p. 53. This image also appears in Victory (p. 270) and Chance (p. 126).

[324] "The Warrior's Soul," Tales of Hearsay, p. 1. See above, the conclusion of Chapter IV.

the truth of existence: order and anarchy as reverse images of the 'heart of darkness' in themselves and in the universe. Frederick Prokosch, in Death at Sea (1940), provides an analogue of Conrad's trial of land-dreamers plunged into unreason:

> Who knows what apelike arm is ready to strike
> Out of the Elizabethan wilderness, tearing
> Open that awful flaw in the armor: imagination?

It is when Conrad's landsmen are stripped of the armour of 'surface facts,' 'words,' 'ideal conceptions,' 'cool reason,' 'time,'-- in a word, 'civilization' --, that they are enlightened. Immersed in a moral wilderness in which they come to perform 'pure exercises of imagination,' they are made 'to see.'

Both land-dreamers and sea-dreamers are immersed in a timeless dream-world. Both embody the vision of an artist who descends into the timeless 'jungle' within himself, an 'infernal abyss,' there to see, as in the mirror of the Infinite, the truth, manifold and one, underlying existence. The manifold voyages of Conrad's dreamers, mariners and landsmen, may be seen as separate revelations of the single reality of the coincidence of opposites, the principle lying at the core of existence.

The voyages of all dreamers, in the words of A Personal Record, have as their 'appointed end...Truth itself,' which 'is One -- one for all men and for all occupations.'[325]

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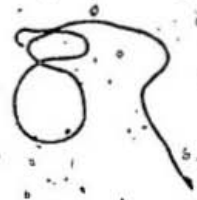
[325] A Personal Record, p. 18.

CHAPTER VI: THE PLAYHOUSE OF THE WORLD



'I had never heard before a woman spoken about in that way, a real live woman, that is, not a woman in a book.'
--The Arrow of Gold

'It is right that the dramatist should use All the miracles at his disposal.... His universe is the play....'
--Guillaume Apollinaire, Preface to The Breasts of Tiresias

'The truths of metaphysics are the truths of masks.' -- Oscar Wilde, "The Truth of Masks."

In this chapter, I shall examine Conrad's dream-vision and its logic in the light of the third of Calderón's themes outlined in the introduction, the world is a stage, a conception clearly articulated by Conrad. 'The earth,' he writes to Arthur Symons in a letter of 29 August 1908, 'is a temple where there is going on a mystery play',[1] and in the essay, "Geography and Some Explorers," he notes: 'The earth is a stage' where 'it is the drama of human endeavour that will be the thing, with a ruling passion expressed

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[1] Aubry, Vol. II, p. 183.

by outward action."[2] And so it is in Conrad's fiction, in which outward actions, as we have seen, mirror the conflict of opposites within the characters.

While Conrad may have borrowed the idea from Shakespeare, or may have borrowed it from no one -- the conception arising from partial congruence of vision --, Conrad himself gives us warrant to link him in the concept with Calderón. In a letter of 21 November 1922 to Christopher Sandeman, Conrad refers explicitly to the compatriot of Cervantes in writing of dreams and the stage, venerable mirrors of illusion and reality:

> I feel more than ever how much la vida es sueño and what fantoches we become the moment we step on to the stage.[3]

Conrad echoes Calderón's evocation of Polish somnambulists playing corresponding multiple rôles on la anchurosa plaza del teatro del mundo,[4] which metaphor Calderón

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[2] Last Essays, p. 1.

[3] Aubry, Vol. II, p. 286.

[4] La vida es sueño, Jornada Segunda. The reader will recall Basilio's vision of the world as a teatro funesto.

staged in the auto sacramental, El gran teatro del mundo. And, within the more spacious confines of the playhouse of the western world, the fact that the conception of the world as a stage, in conjunction with that of life as a dream, has been variously traced from Plato, Dante and Cusa, through Shakespeare, Jakob Bidermann and a legion of Baroque dramatists in addition to Calderon, to such twentieth-century writers as Strindberg, Ortega y Gasset, Genet and playwrights of 'The Theatre of the Absurd,'[5] suggests a literary and philosophical tradition for assessing Conrad's achievement. As Jackson I. Cope and Martin Esslin have suggested, it is a tradition based on the dream-logic of contradictions.[6] In the playhouse of the world, actors are spectators and spectators, actors -- both play dual or multiple roles as they see and are seen from different angles. Truth and illusion, relative to the angle of perception, coincide in such a context, which is like a dream.

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[5] Cope, Chapters I, VII, VIII; F. Fergusson, The Idea of the Theater (1949), passim; and M. Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (1969), pp. 301-308.

[6] Cope, Chapter I; Esslin, pp. 6-10.

Conrad frequently tried his hand at writing plays. His earliest composition appears to have been an anti-Russian comedy entitled The Eyes of King John Sobieski.[7] He adapted a novel for the stage (The Secret Agent), and reshaped two short fictions, "To-morrow" (Typhoon and Other Stories) and "Because of the Dollars" (Within the Tides), into one-act plays, One Day More and Laughing Anne. Also, he wrote a screen-play based on "Gaspar Ruiz" (A Set of Six). Under Western Eyes was to provide Conrad with yet another play, but the project was never completed. Of Conrad's plays, only One Day More was staged with moderate success.

Conrad, as a dramatist, is a critical failure. As Robert S. Ryf has observed, Conrad's philosophical overtones on lost on the stage, leaving only melodrama.[8] And, as we have seen, the logic of contradictions,

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[7] Busza, p. 172.

[8] "Conrad's Stage Victory," Modern Drama, VII (1964), 148-160. H. B. Irving adapted Victory and directed the play. Conrad, in a letter to Galsworthy (28 March 1911), proclaimed his 'ineradicable mistrust of the theatre as the destroyer of all suggestiveness' -- Aubry, Vol. II, p. 128. And in a letter to Richard Curle (18 August 1920), he noted that the theatre falsified 'the very soul of one's work, both on the imaginative and on the intellectual side' -- Curle (ed.), p. 88.

incompatible with melodramatic distinctions between good and evil, underlies Conrad's work as a whole. Thus, to study Conrad in the light of stage techniques is to render him a great disservice. It is the idea of the theatre which proves useful in analyzing Conrad's vision.

Conrad's fiction fairly bristles with allusions to drama. Lakamba, for example, listens with Babalatchi to the Trovatore's 'mournful round of tearful and endless iteration' in Verdi's opera,[9] and a provincial governor (unnamed), proud of his 'Europeanism,' ascribes to Mozart Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor.[10] Karain, 'incomparably faithful to the illusions of the stage,'[11] plays his rôle with seemly bravado, while Jim joins a troupe of nine 'actors' directed by Fate in the presentation of 'a farce.'[12] Cornelius, 'a sinister pantaloon,' offers 'a grotesque and vile performance';[13] and in South

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[9] Almayer's Folly, p. 89.

[10] Nostromo, p. 90.

[11] "Karain: A Memory," Tales of Unrest, p. 9.

[12] Lord Jim, pp. 97-104.

[13] Ibid., pp. 307, 329.

America and Africa, respectively, Decoud and an improbable Russian sailor each participate in the commedia dell'arte as an ironic 'harlequin,' the former in what he sees to be 'une farce macabre,' the latter in a sordid 'farce acted in front of a sinister back-cloth' on which is also silhouetted the form of a 'papier-mâché Mephistopheles.'[14] Prax, in The Arrow of Gold, during a carnival of unreason, steps on to the stage 'in a sort of medieval costume very much like Faust wears in the third act.'[15]

The world as a playhouse is a setting for conflicts in a hell-like abyss of contradictions. While the tragi-comic DIANA sits 'on the smooth level' of an anchorage likened to a 'vast arena,'[16] a stage for the presentation of an allegorical struggle of opposing forces, cannibalism and civilization, the FERNDALE is likened to a 'stage of tragi-comedy' afloat in 'a sheet of darkling glass crowded with upside-down reflections.'[17] Marlow and

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[14] Nostromo, p. 152; "Heart of Darkness," pp. 122, 61.

[15] The Arrow of Gold, p. 13.

[16] "Falk," Typhoon and Other Stories, pp. 208-209.

[17] Chance, pp. 272-273.

Mr. Fyne, searching for Flora at the bottom of a quarry at night, are 'engaged in a farce or in a tragedy.'[18] The anarchists Yundt, Sevrin, and Razumov are designated 'actors' on metonymic stages, European sets ('the... refined stage of European politics,'[19] in the words of Nostromo) for 'African' rituals,[20] analogous to the rituals seen by a harlequin ('hellequin') in "Heart of Darkness," and rendered, as Joseph Warren Beach has noted, in the tradition of the Grand Guignol theatre.[21] Heyst and Captain Morrison of the CAPRICORN become, by analogy, 'conspirators in a comic opera' which plunges Heyst into a hell-like 'flaming abyss.'[22] Seen from the perspective of Edith Travers, who finds exciting the prospect of acting on the 'stage of an exotic opera,' Captain Lingard is 'a great actor on a darkened stage in some simple and tremendous drama.'[23] Her 'acting,'

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[18] Chance, p. 55.

[19] Nostromo, p. 156.

[20] The Secret Agent, p. 48; "The Informer," A Set of Six, p. 94; Under Western Eyes, p. 99.

[21] Obsessive Images, pp. 41-45.

[22] Victory, pp. 19, 216.

[23] The Rescue, pp. 295, 282.

however, plunges Lingard into 'an obscurity without limit in space and time,'[24] where he is tormented by contradictory impulses. The 'play' ends in a cataclysm. And an 'existentialist' adumbration of 'a motive for Greek tragedy' 'arising from irreconcilable differences and from that fear of the Incomprehensible that hangs over all our heads,' and the terror and fear inspired by 'a tragedy of Racine,' play respective rôles in "Amy Foster" and "A Smile of Fortune."[25] For the narrator in the latter tale, as for the other characters of the vast Conradian cast, 'the world' is given him 'for a stage.'[26] On this stage is enacted the drama of the coincidence of opposites, the drama of the logic of emotions within mankind.

The multiple nature of Conrad's thought is intimately allied to the conception of the world as a stage. As

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[24] The Rescue, Part V, Chapter V.

[25] Typhoon and Other Stories, pp. 107-108; 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 35.

[26] 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 4. Cp. Suspense, p. 255: '...the soft and invincible stillness of air and sea and stars enveloping the active desires and secret fears of men who have the sombre earth for their stage.'

he noted in the Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, the artist descends within himself to discover the truth, manifold and one, of the universe, a process which he later described in A Personal Record in terms of the stage: the artist descends into 'an interior world' both as an 'actor' and a 'spectator' in a solipsistic yet universal drama.[27] There, like the narrator in E. T. A. Hoffmann's Don Juan, he reconciles apparently discrete perspectives in a dream-like trance.[28] The artist enters the playhouse within, a mirror of the boundless world of feelings, and, by way of analogy and mirror-reflections, the playhouse without. He looks into his own soul to find worlds within worlds, playhouses within playhouses. The artist's truth, like that of the Elizabethan theatre and the Theatre of the Absurd, mirrors the truth of mankind and the universe.[29] David Daiches' charge that Conrad failed to reconcile the roles of actor and spectator[30] illustrates the seriousness of misinterpretations of Conrad that may arise when critics

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[27] "A Familiar Preface," pp. xv, xviii.

[28] See above, Chapter I, n .

[29] Cf. Esslin, p. 303.

[30] Daiches, p. 58; see above, Chapter I, notes 20 ff.

fail to perceive his dream-logic by which opposites coincide.'

Ernst Cassirer provides a synthesis of striking relevance to Conrad in this matter. Finding a model of the 'double function' of 'all symbolism,' division and integration, in the 'conversation of the soul with itself,' Cassirer, in The Logic of the Humanities, suggests that this colloquy (or soliloquy) is made possible only 'by virtue of the fact that in the process the soul in a sense undergoes a division within itself.'[31] The soul both hears and speaks, questions and answers. It observes a symbolic performance within itself. 'To this extent,' Cassirer adds, 'the soul ceases to be purely singular, purely an "individual." It becomes a "person" in the basic etymological meaning of the word, which goes back to the mask and the role of the player on the stage.'[32] The symbolist is both persona and

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[31] Ernst Cassirer, The Logic of the Humanities, trans. Clarence Smith Howe (1960), p. 114.

[32] Ibid., p. 115. Paraphrasing Kant, Cassirer notes that 'intellectual pursuits' cannot 'solve the riddle of existence' (p. 183). Kant, like Cusa, found 'reason' an insufficient means of coming to know the 'supreme reality.'

person, acting and observing his own performance, reconciling the individual self and the other. He dons a mask and observes his own rôle.

Conrad's dreamers undergo a similar process. Razumov, for example, enters a 'comedy of errors' as a double-agent in a 'dream,' in which his 'self' observes the performances of his 'other self'; gazing into the mirror of his diary, he soliloquizes at length.[33] Willems, likened to 'a masquerading spectre' living in 'heaven -- or hell,' has, in a 'dream,' 'an indistinct vision of a well-known figure,'[34] himself. And Alvan Hervey, with the descent within himself, comes to hear

> his own voice with the excited and sceptical curiosity with which one listens to actors' voices speaking on the stage in the strain of a poignant situation.[35]

Conrad's protagonists as persons observe their performances as *personae*; they descend within themselves to see the truth of their dual rôles. Before this descent, they are ignorant; they identify their truth simply with their

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[33] *Under Western Eyes*, pp. 99, 109, 185, 230, 251, 257, 284, 243, 349. E. K. Brown writes of Conrad's success in 'the theatre within': "James and Conrad," *Yale Review*, N.S. XXXV (1945), 265-285.

[34] *An Outcast of the Islands*, pp. 145, 86, 89.

[35] "The Return," *Tales of Unrest*, p. 144.

masks, unaware of the secret truth hidden within themselves.

For the symbolist expressing the enlightenment of protagonists secure in the illusion of their masks, art becomes the expression of contradictions, actions become projections of interior states; and the artist translates both feeling and action into verbal analogues, symbols for the expression of the dramatic conflicts mutually-reflected within himself, mankind and the universe. Beneath surface appearances, by virtue of a logic uniting contraries or dissimilars, the symbolist sees, in the words of Schomberg speaking of Jones and Ricardo, 'identical souls in different disguises',[36] and, inversely, like Camus' actor, he reflects 'so many souls summed up in a single body.'[37] Wilde, treating of 'truth in art' in terms of 'Hegel's system of contraries,' states a similar principle: 'The truths of metaphysics are the truths of masks.'[38] As in the

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[36] Victory, p. 130.

[37] Camus, "The Absurd Man," The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays (1955), p. 61. Camus, translator of Calderon's Devotion of the Cross, treats Prince Segismundo and the 'idea' of 'acting' at length in this essay.

[38] "The Truth of Masks," The Artist as Critic, p. 432. See Beguin, pp. 302-303.

first chapter of The Arrow of Gold, an 'allegory of love,' the masks are donned in a dream-like trance of hellish unreason, in which the realities and the illusions of performances and characters are indistinguishable. The core truth or underlying reality of individuals and events is revealed by the 'metaphysical' logic of contraries.

'How is any distinction possible between reality and the fictions of our imagination?,' ponders Bishop George Berkeley in The New Theory of Vision (1733) -- a question which has perennially haunted Western philosophers, and one which in the nineteenth century Schlegel declared Calderón had solved.[39] Lena, in Victory, poses essentially the same question to Axel Heyst: 'When you don't see me, do you believe I exist?',[40] Monsieur Georges, in The Arrow of Gold, echoes this theme when he addresses Dona Rita:

> I see you now lying on this couch but that is only the insensible phantom of the real you that is in me. And it is easier for me to feel this because that image which others

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[39] R. A. Caponigri, A History of Western Philosophy (1971), Vol. III, pp. 318-321; A. del Rio, Vol. I, p. 329.

[40] Victory, p. 247.

> see and call by your name -- how am I to know that it is anything but an enchanting mist?[41]

And Captain Lingard, in The Rescue, once reminded, 'If you see anything..., it will be but the shadow of things,' asks himself: 'Who could tell what was real in this world?'[42] In a dream-world, distinctions between reality and illusion, actor and spectator are uncertain.

The question of reality and illusion in Conrad's work touches closely on shifting optical perspectives and the conception of the world as a playhouse. As the Commander in "The Tale" observes, 'comedy is but a matter of the visual angle';[43] in Conrad's own words, 'Everything is relative.'[44] Thus, any distinction between reality and illusion becomes problematical in a 'mystery play' going on in a universe where, as we observed in the examination of Conrad's dreamers, optical and moral perspectives are reversed, doubled and interchanged.

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[41] The Arrow of Gold, p. 296.

[42] The Rescue, pp. 437, 431. See Wilbur Cross, "The Illusions of Joseph Conrad," Yale Review, N.S. XVII (1928), 464-482: Cross likens Conrad's philosophy to Plato's and Berkeley's in so far as all three consider the world as 'a creation out of the images of the mind.'

[43] "The Tale," Tales of Hearsay, p. 62.

[44] "Henry James," Notes on Life and Letters, p. 13.

While Jim acts out the truth of his illusions, Razumov is divested of his mask-illusion of security in philosopical detachment. The reader is left to speculate: which is true, the mask or the 'reality' behind the mask?

The interchange of fact and fiction operating explicitly within the conceptual framework of the world-as-a-stage, a manifestation of the logic of dreams, is readily illustrated, for example, in "Karain: A Memory," included in the volume published a year after The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, Tales of Unrest (1898). Narrated by a gun-runner, the tale opens in a bay likened to 'a bottomless pit of intense light,' a 'circular sheet of water' circumscribed by 'an opaque ring of earth floating in an emptiness of transparent blue.'[45] The glittering landscape afloat, by analogy, in the mirror of the Infinite, is a 'stage' upon which Karain, a belligerent Malay chief,

> presented himself essentially as an actor, as a human being aggressively disguised. His smallest acts were prepared and unexpected, his speeches grave, his sentences ominous like hints and complicated like arabesques.[46]

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[45] Tales of Unrest, p. 5.

[46] Ibid., p. 6.

It is only at night, 'a marvellous thing of darkness and glimmers,' after 'the daily performance -- in the wings, so to speak,'[47] that he removes his mask and relates his 'personal' memories. Ever accompanied by his sword-bearer, Karain takes up 'the slender thread of his dream.'[48] He becomes a spectator of his earlier performance; he reveals the truth of his past, while remaining an actor in the past.

At the opening of Part II, the gun-runners arrive on their final trip to learn that Karain's sword-bearer had died a few days before; and only after a mysterious delay does the Malay chief emerge from the darkness of a 'warm deluge' to appear in the English schooner.[49] The actor's bravado has dissolved, and in his gestures and speech can be read a struggle 'against something that cannot be grappled,' 'the vivid emotions of a dream.'[50] By immersion in this dream, an element of unreason, Karain has been stripped

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[47] Tales of Unrest, pp. 8, 9.

[48] Ibid., p. 17.

[49] Ibid., pp. 19-21.

[50] Ibid., pp. 23, 26.

of his mask. Karain now relates the story of his secret past.

Fifteen years ago, he had his reason blinded by the vision of a woman. Having been unable to distinguish dreaming from waking, he had fulfilled a dreamed promise to her, a promise that had entailed a very palpable consequence; he had killed that woman's brother, Pata Matara, his close friend, in order that she might live. But the promise, real to Karain, had appeared illusory to her; and she had said that she did not know him. Karain, now, by the death of his guardian, left unprotected from the 'spectre' of his friend, seeks refuge in the world of the white, where 'day is day, and night is night.'[51] In the logical world of the white man, one can distinguish dreaming from waking; one is either an actor or a spectator, for only in the world of dream-logic can one be both actor and spectator at once. A promise made during a performance in a dream is not real in the white man's world.

Karain's past failure to distinguish between waking and dreaming, resulting in catastrophe, is ironically

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[51] Tales of Unrest, p. 44.

laid to rest in another dream-play. Hollis, one of the gun-runners, resolves to give Karain a charm for the prevention of dreaming, and directs a theatrical performance for the chief's benefit. 'This is no play,' Hollis protests to Jackson and the narrator.[52] Once betrayed by an illusion and now to be protected by another in the form of a Jubilee sixpence proffered by an actor, Karain 'awakens as ~~from a dream~~' and steps back 'into the glorious splendour of his stage, to wrap himself in the illusion of unavoidable success.'[53] A dream-play is staged with a dream-play.

Some years later, the narrator and Jackson meet in London; and the latter reveals that he has come to believe that Karain's story is more real than the palpable world of this city, where 'day is day, and night is night.' A mirror image peers at Jackson from a store window, and the narrator sees a doubled companion. The reader and the narrator-spectator are left to ponder: which is real, the image or the fact, the person or the persona? Like Marlow's

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[52] Tales of Unrest, p. 46. Cp. "Typhoon," p. 39: Jukes, an actor in a complex joke, observes: 'This is no joke.'

[53] Ibid., p. 52.

account in "Heart of Darkness," the experience is 'inconclusive,'[54] for reality or truth in Conrad's universe, like comedy, 'is but a matter of the visual angle.' In London, as in the Congo, Malaya and the Gulf of Aden (Jim's optical and moral illusions), protagonists participate in the commedia dell'arte, a dream-performance in which, as Jackson Cope has observed, 'actors act the lives of actors.'[55]

The 'epistemological perspectivism' derived in part from Cusa's principle of the coincidence of opposites provides the formal philosophical basis of the commedia dell'arte, a precursor of Calderón's philosophical drama.[56] And knowledge, in Conrad as in the commedia dell'arte, is a matter of perspective. Conrad's protagonists, as we have seen, are initially ignorant in that they assume to be true surface appearances and surface logic. They see themselves purely from one perspective; they equate their perception of themselves with truth. It is only when they are immersed in the Infinite, in which multiple perspectives shift and

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[54] "Heart of Darkness," p. 51.

[55] Cope, p. 168.

[56] Ibid., pp. 125-126, passim.

interchange, that they are enlightened: In a world without bounds or referents in time and space, all points of view are relative; what may appear to be 'this' from one perspective may appear to be 'that' from another. 'Everything is relative.' It is in such a world that Conrad's protagonists come to see the multiple contradictions within themselves. They come to see themselves in a new light from a different angle of vision; and their enlightenment, as we have frequently noted, is prefaced by a reversal of optical perspective.

The world-as-a-stage concept also provides an analogue of Conrad's favourite narrative structure, the frame-tale, so useful for the multiplication of perspectives and levels of irony. Conrad's framing devices have been thoroughly, if not exhaustively, analyzed by a host of critics; and, thus, the repetition of their well-known observations and analyses would add nothing new to our knowledge of Conrad. However, it is useful to observe that the utilization of framing techniques places Conrad within the tradition of the commedia dell'arte and of a logic akin to Cusa's and

Calderon's, the logic of contraries. And it is this dream-logic which has generally eluded critics.

The coincidentia oppositorum within the playhouse of the world is, for example, the central and manifest theme of "The Informer: An Ironic Tale," published in A Set of Six (1908). The narrator, a collector of art objects who sees himself as 'imaginative,' relates a tale told to him by a Mr. X, an 'anarchist' who doubles as a connoisseur of bronzes and china.[57] Mr. X. had arrived to investigate a group of anarchists, one of whom was an informer, living in a house on Hermione[58] Street. He had staged a sham raid, 'a conspiracy within a conspiracy,' 'a theatrical expedient'[59] not unlike that arranged by Hamlet for the unmasking of Claudius[60] and by Basilio for the testing of Segismundo. Sevrin, an 'actor,' had seen the performance as real, and, believing that the Professor intended to destroy the entire

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[57] A Set of Six, p. 77.

[58] The name may recall Shakespeare's Queen Hermione in The Winter's Tale, a play of improbabilities and contrasts partly set in Bohemia. Hermione's statue proves a living 'double' -- IV, iii, 107.

[59] A Set of Six, pp. 86-87.

[60] Hamlet's directive to his players provided the epigraph of the Within the Tides volume.

building, had betrayed himself for love of Lady Amateur by crying out to the actors (from their perspective, spectators): 'Get the lady away at once.'[61] Sevrin, the *persona*, had functioned as a 'real' person within the illusory, framed performance, while 'real' persons had functioned as *dramatis personae*. The 'comedy' had proved successful, and Sevrin had been awakened 'to the reality of things,' only to assume the rôle of an 'actor intent upon the terrible exigencies of his part.'[62] Persons and *personae* dwell in dreams within dreams. Discarding one rôle, they assume another.

The story having been told, Mr. X, an anarchist delighting in a *bombe glacée* after an elegant meal, relates to the narrator: 'You must be a thick-and-thin optimist...to make a good social rebel of the extreme type'; and yet, of Sevrin, an opponent of anarchists and a police agent, he notes: 'He was not enough of an optimist.'[63] The layers of irony are further

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[61] *A Set of Six*, pp. 93-94.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

multipled as the narrator informs us that Mr. X is a 'cynic' sneering at people's 'gesture'; yet, the anarchist had been described by a Parisian collector of acquaintances as 'the greatest rebel (révolté) of modern times.'[64]

Mr. X, an actor gesturing as a connoisseur and a cynic, incorporates the coincidentia oppositorum; he may be seen as a cynical optimist or an optimistic cynic. He is a 'joke.'[65] It is a 'joke' which the 'imaginative' narrator cannot perceive, for he is blind to the possibility of multiple yet coinciding roles and to the levels of irony for which the frame-tale offers a structural analogue.

Variations on this 'joke' appear throughout Conrad's frame-tales. Razumov, for example, cast in a 'comedy of errors, phantoms, and suspicions,' protests: 'I am not a young man in a novel.'[66] Georges confesses in The Arrow of Gold: 'I had never heard before a woman spoken about in that way, a real live woman that is, not a woman

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[64] A Set of Six, pp. 101, 73-74.

[65] Ibid., p. 102.

[66] Under Western Eyes, pp. 99, 185-186.

in a book';[67] and of the Doramin family Jim remarks to Marlow: 'They are like people in a book, aren't they?'[68] Razumov, Georges and Jim, like actors in the commedia dell'arte, recall an artistic world that impinges from behind the mimetic screen of the fiction. It is only when protagonists realize that life is a dream, that ~~that~~ the world is a stage, that they come to a vision of the truth and/or untruth of their masks. Razumov, for example, is enlightened when he sees, paradoxically, that he is a young man in a novel and that the assumed rôle of the anarchist is the mask of truth.

The 'joke' has proved durable. Tom Stoppard, for example, has recently exploited it in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (1967), a tragi-comedy of 'epistemological perspectivism' staged by seventeenth-century dramatis personae. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, fated to play parts within parts, are immersed in a world of improbabilities (92 consecutive 'heads' in a

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[67] The Arrow of Gold, p. 34.

[68] Lord Jim, p. 260.

contest of flipping coins), 'a world of intrigue and illusion.'[69] Like Calderón's Segismundo and Basilio, and Shakespeare's Hamlet and Claudius, and like Conrad's protagonists, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are both actors and spectators in a dream-world of unreason.

Traced forward in time, Conrad's logic can be likened to the logic of 'The Theatre of the Absurd.' His kinship with playwrights of existentialism is founded on the rejection of practical and formal reason as means of knowing underlying truth, the primary negation for an existentialist theory of knowledge.[70] Frederick Patka in 1962 thus summarized the existentialist critique of reason:

> It only deals with a secondary, derived and static logical structure of 'things'... similar to the condition of ice on the surface of ever flowing water.[71]

Conrad, before the turn of the century, had offered the identical comparison in an analogous context. In "The Return," Hervey and his wife, ignorant of existence,

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[69] (1968), Second Edition, p. 16.

[70] Frederick Patka, Existentialist Thinkers and Thought (1962), pp. 24-26.

[71] Ibid., p. 25.

living in a static 'world of crescents and squares,' are likened to

> two skilful skaters curring figures on thick ice.,.and disdainfully ignoring the hidden stream, the stream restless and dark; the stream of life profound and unfrozen.[72]

They 'had lived in a world that abhors enigmas';[73] but, by an act of simulated passion (the wife runs off briefly with an artist), they drop into that stream, into what may be described as a nightmare. The image of falling through a hole or a crack in ice is explicitly linked with images of fire and circular movement in "The Planter of Malata" (Within the Tides). Renouard meditates on the emotional disorientation that he has experienced since falling in love with Felicia Moorsom:

> It seemed to him that he must be on fire, then that he had fallen into a cool whirlpool, a smooth funnel of water swirling about with nauseating rapidity. And then (it must have been a reminiscence of his boyhood) he has walking on the dangerous thin ice of a river, unable to turn back.... Suddenly it parted from shore to shore with a loud crack like the report of a gun.[74]

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[72] Tales of Unrest, p. 123.

[73] Ibid., p. 176.

[74] Within the Tides, p. 71.

Falling through a hole or a crack in ice, Conrad's dreamer is immersed in the stream of existence where rules the circular logic of contradictions.

As Martin Esslin observes, the nightmarish quality of unreason which pervades existentialist drama, in which characters are often expressed as dreams within dreams and reflections within a mirror, as in Genet's The Maids and Deathwatch, for example, is not entirely unprecedented. Calderon, playwrights of the commedia dell'arte and Baudelaire, among others, are included in 'the tradition of the absurd.'[75] Conrad, who persistently returned to the theme that life is a dream, and who rejected reason as a means of seeing underlying truth, may also be included. In 1898, he wrote to Cunninghame Graham:

> Life knows us not and we do not know life--we don't even know our own thoughts. Half the words we use have no meaning whatever and of the other half each man understands each word after the fashion of his own conceit.[76]

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[75] Esslin, Chapters IV, VI.

[76] Watts, ed., p. 65.

Earlier in the same letter, he noted: 'Of course, reason is hateful -- but why? Because it demonstrates...that we, living, are out of life -- utterly out of it.'[77] Even after the reader has taken into account Conrad's tendency in his letters of accommodating negatively or positively the emphasis of his views according to his perception of those of his correspondent -- in this case, of the optimistic Cunninghame Graham --, the conviction of Conrad's skeptical view of 'reason' and 'words' remains. In this respect, his is a voice prefiguring contemporary existentialism.

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[77] Watts, ed., p. 65.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

'And on he goes, swimming and swimming slow;
Round and down...' -- Dante, Inferno, XVII.

'And the earth stands still like the
abyss of time,
Like those who are living at the moment, whose
Last small bone will vanish into slime
Though men will be -- as always....'
-- Cyprian Norwid, Marionettes

Seen in the light of Calderon's themes -- life is a dream, the coincidence of opposites, and the world is a stage --, each a reflection of the logic of dreams suggesting a fundamental harmony between apparent discords, Conrad appears at once in the guise of a Baroque allegorist, a Metaphysical ironist, a Symbolist poet, and a dramatist of the Theatre of the Absurd. Like a mystical craftsman, as we saw in the second chapter of this study, he abandons as means of 'seeing' truth traditional formal logic and practical reason, idols worshipped in nineteenth-century positivist thought; and he adopts a circular logic of contradictions, akin to Nicholas of Cusa's principle of the coincidentia oppositorum and to Schelling's 'balance of opposites.' Conrad struggles to see the 'Inconceivable' by the

light of a synthetic logic and to translate into verbal symbols the 'unspeakable' truth of man and the universe. The truth eludes surface logic and surface language.

Conrad's logic is the logic of analogy, expressed otherwise as the logic of the Infinite, by which extremes are reconciled. Expressed analogically as sea, well, mirror, woman, dream, and jungle, the core reality of existence unbounded by time and space is mutually reflected within the craftsman, mankind and the universe. Looking within himself, the writer finds all the world; his fiction is a mirror reflecting the truth of the logic underlying that world. Conrad's works may be likened to mirrors and dreams, dramatic performances of unreason in a universal playhouse of multiple interchanging moral and optical perspectives and identities, in which distinctions between reality and illusion, actor and spectator, good and evil, order and anarchy, innocence and guilt, dreaming and waking, are ambiguous and obscure. Immersed in this dream-like, timeless element of contradictions, Conrad's protagonists, landsmen and seamen, initially ignorant of the truth of existence

and themselves, come to experience the conflicts and absurdities of life and its logic. Their subsequent interior vision, a non-rational or, to use Cusa's term, 'learned unknowing,' of truth, coincides with catastrophe. Disaster and moral victory coincide in Conrad's fictional universe.

The frequent failure of critics to perceive Conrad as a dream-logician and prose-poet of a world not restricted to surface facts and surface logic, accounts, I think, for some misreadings of his achievement within the tradition of Western letters: Conrad's logic, akin to that of Słowacki, Baudelaire, Calderón, Donne and Camus, for example, is the logic of the 'Inscrutable.' To place Conrad within a tradition of 'realism' and rational scrutiny seems to me to do him an injustice. Also, I suggest, this failure accounts for much of the mistranslation of Conrad's semantics of the Infinite (e.g.: 'inscrutable,' 'unfathomable,' 'inconceivable,' and 'limitless'), which are intimately related to his rejection of the rational scrutiny of the philosopher who 'plunges into ideas' and of the scientist who

plunges 'into facts,'[1] as the way to truth. For Conrad, the truth is quite literally 'non-scrutable,' 'non-fathomable,' 'non-conceivable' -- in short, 'non-finite.'

In the foregoing study, we have seen the continuity of Conrad's logic, variously manifested in irony, characterization, imagery, semantics, plot, analogy, and theme, in relation to seamen and landsmen, microcosmic reflections of the logic of contradictions at work in the body politic and the universe. This circular logic of the ironic tension of opposites underlies "Typhoon," "Youth," and "The End of the Tether" as well as Nostromo, Under Western Eyes and The Secret Agent, for example. Conrad's vision of man as 'the intimate alliance of contradictions' pervades the corpus of his work and provides its underlying theme; formally, that theme may be described as the coincidentia oppositorum.

It is essentially (in the philosophical sense) on the basis of his perception of this logic operating

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[1] Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, p. vii.

at the core of existence that Conrad retains a profound significance for the modern reader. Like Conrad's protagonists, contemporary man floats in an infinite cosmos, a sea, as it were, without bottom and without shore. And, as in Conrad, the modern reader and his interior vision often partake of a nightmare in an inferno or a madhouse (images which seem to come readily to the contemporary craftsman of the imagination), in which good and evil, anarchy and order are interchanging reflections. Conrad's opus as a whole provides a mirror-reflection of the truth and absurdity in modern man, an image of the truth of his existence. Encompassing as it does both land and sea, Conrad's vision of dream-logic, so germane to contemporary speculation, offers, in the tradition of Western literature, perhaps the single most comprehensive and rigorous examination of the coincidentia oppositorum in man and his world. And it is on the basis of the truth of this logic that assessments of Conrad's achievement most securely rest.

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