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CONRAD AND THE "ATMOSPHERE OF AUTHENTICITY": AN INQUIRY INTO THE STRUCTURE AND MEANING OF CHANCE

by
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CONRAD AND "THE ATMOSPHERE OF AUTHENTICITY": AN INQUIRY INTO THE STRUCTURE AND MEANING OF *CHANCE*

By Gerald H. Levin

The purpose of this study is to examine the psychological realism of *Chance* and its "Impressionism," what Conrad called the "New Form of the Novel." *Chance* was the culmination of Conrad's effort to represent limited and emergent consciousness, and to render experience as it registered in the consciousness of an intelligent observer. The problem is to discover why Conrad discarded conventional methods of characterization and whether the method of *Chance* was developed merely as an experiment in pure technique. The aim is to discover the relationship between the structure and meaning of *Chance*.

In Chapter II, the theory of the "New Form" and Conrad's conception of psychological realism is traced. Since Conrad was influenced by the French realists and Henry James, it is important to understand his theory of fiction in the light of their ideas. This approach may explain why Conrad used "reporter" and interpreter characters in *Chance*. But an understanding of his theory of fiction can only establish intention in a partial way. In Chapter III, *Lord Jim*, *Nostromo*, "Heart of Darkness," and *Under Western Eyes* are studied to establish Conrad's typical method of characterization before *Chance*, and to examine the relationship between structure and meaning. These considerations prepare for the intensive analysis of *Chance* to discover its thematic patterns and the technique created to express them.

Analysis of the earlier works and Chance shows that Conrad centered awareness in interpreter characters when the principal characters realized only partial or no insight, or when the emphasis was on the effect of the experience of the principals or the interpreter characters. When the emphasis was on the meaning of experience rather than on its effect on the principals, Conrad sometimes used several interpreter characters to convey different views of the central situation. When the emphasis was on the effect of the experience on the principals, Conrad used interpreter characters to discover the true motives for the action. Unlike James, Conrad did not depict consciousness directly. The interpreter characters communicate different views of the situation and judge the principals by different standards. The structure of Chance explores the themes of determinism, destiny, and moral responsibility by moving from examinations of consequence to considerations of motive by means of elaborate time-shifts. The complex method of Chance is one solution to the thematic problems of the novel. The Impressionistic devices of Chance conveys the effect of life as an intelligent observer experiences it, but most of these devices are used because of the requirements of the theme. The devices used to convey time intervals seem to be developed as pure technical considerations.

Several conclusions may be drawn from the study. 1) Chance is not an experiment in pure technique. 2) Its complex method is equally the result of a general theory of fiction and of major thematic requirements. 3) Immediacy is sacrificed to the indirect method of characterization and the literal representation of time intervals.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study is an inquiry into the structure and meaning of Chance, completed by Conrad in 1913 after at least six years of planning and writing. Chance was the culmination of Conrad's effort to write the novel of psychological realism, using what he called the "New Form of the Novel." Its technique was one among several solutions of compositional problems he had faced in earlier novels. These were the representation of emergent and limited consciousness, and the intensive rendering of reality as it is registered in the consciousness of an intelligent observer. The fullest rendition of consciousness seemed to Conrad the special problem of the "New Form."

This concern with what James described in "The Art of Fiction" as "the atmosphere of mind," is one that Conrad shared with Proust and Joyce as well as with James. Critics like David Daiches and Leon Edel have been concerned with explaining changes that were believed to mark a new conception of form in literature at the turn of the century. Edel, in The Psychological Novel, describes the problems that centered around the question of the intensive rendering of mental reality. Because partial and total consciousness

were central to esthetic experience, "the images of the inner world of fantasy, fusing with sounds and smells, the world of perceptual experience,"[1] in short, the dynamic rather than the static aspects of consciousness, were to be rendered. Through the careful depiction of mind, the "flow" of thought and sense experience, the artist might create the illusion that we are inside the mind of the character:

> From being listeners once removed from the scene, we have become actual participants. The effect is to make us use our eyes to see--and to feel what we have seen--rather than rely upon someone else's report of what he has seen. When we stop to think about it, we know that all this has been artfully arranged. And we must face the inevitable truth that the extent of our perception will depend in a marked degree upon our own eyes.[2]

The object was to create the illusion of reality as though it were being given without selection from experience, in other words, the effect of an apparent naturalism. In this way, the reader would be involved directly in the mental experience of the characters, in "the atmosphere of mind."

It is a mistake to assume that stream-of-consciousness was the sole technique developed to realize these aims; rather, it was one development among several, as Edel shows in his discussion of psychological realism in James. What has not been widely recognized is the significance that Conrad's work, particularly Chance, has for the study of psychological realism. The rendition of the physical and mental "atmosphere of actuality," as he termed it, was the

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[1] Leon Edel, The Psychological Novel (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1955), p. 22.

[2] Ibid., pp. 209-10.

principal aim of the "New Form of the Novel." In his essay, "The New Novel," James described this aim as the actual representation of reality in the fusion of what we see with how we see, the "fusion between what we are to know and that prodigy of our knowing which is ever half the very beauty of the atmosphere of authenticity."[1] The emphasis would be on the "point of view" which would commit the reader, once inside the mind of the character. For both James and Conrad, the problem for the artist was not merely what was seen, but, more significantly, how it was seen. In the preface to Chance, Conrad states that his vision of things is indissolubly allied to the style which expresses it. Their endeavor to realize versions of psychological realism was but one aspect of the general endeavor Edel describes. They were equally concerned with the growth of perception in their characters from states of moral bafflement to insights into human error and weakness and moral responsibility. In James, for example, individuals often unknowingly commit treacherous acts or mistakenly interfere in the lives of others when they are blinded by appearances to the truth of motives and events. Such a self-betrayal often becomes a flaw that blights the person's own inclination to love and beauty. The problem for Conrad was how to depict the limited consciousness, blind to the realities of experience, but sometimes emerging into total awareness as in Under Western Eyes and Chance.

In Chance, Conrad created the effect of psychological

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[1] Henry James, Notes on Novelists (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1914), p. 275.

reality by more intricate means than in Lord Jim and Under Western Eyes. He did this by substituting for the conventional narrator an interpreter character who tries to determine what has happened from conflicting testimonies. The significant experience of the novel was centered not in what was seen, but rather in this reconstruction of events. Conrad experimented with ways of conveying the significance of moral blindness when the individual was not himself aware of the meaning of his experience, and of involving the reader directly in the mental reality of the character without personally intervening. In Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, he used a straight dramatic technique. But in certain novels of his middle period, he substituted a new technique of characterization which depended on "second-degree" characters who are not directly involved in the action. The motivation of principal "first-degree" characters like Jim and Flora de Barral is established indirectly in the comments and narratives of these second-degree characters. But interpretations of motivation are often in conflict when these characters distort what they see because of their involvement in the action. The story, in other words, is told not by an impersonal narrator but by characters who are a part of the action. Such conflicts of interpretations are often central to the meaning of the novel as in Lord Jim. Thus a character exists for the reader only as he exists for other characters; and the reader is consequently involved in a reconstruction or interpretation of mental reality rather than in the mental reality itself. This method of characterization was not new

to the English novel--Richardson used it in Clarissa Harlowe. But it is significant that it developed, in part, from a theory of the novel.

Conrad thus created the "atmosphere of mind" of characters limited in insight by centering awareness in second-degree characters who tell what they have seen, and interpret it. His technique of characterization was a departure from the standard methods of the earlier nineteenth-century English novel. Daiches describes these methods in The Novel and the Modern World:

> Sometimes the character as we see him first is a shadowy and indeterminate creature, but after his reactions to a chronological series of events have been presented we feel that he is now a living personality. In other novels we are given a descriptive portrait of the character first, so that we know what to expect, and the resulting actions and reactions of the character provide a filling-in and elaboration whose justness we can appreciate by comparison with the original portrait.[1]

Thus Trollope shows "a known constant in varied circumstances"; Jane Austen shows "a partially known variant" becoming a constant; Hardy shows "an unknown defining itself by its reactions to the circumstances with which it is brought into contact."[2] With the turn of the century, Daiches continues, character ceases to be a quantity established in these conventional ways. It instead becomes a process: "They have become interested in those aspects of consciousness which cannot be viewed as a progression of individual and self-existing moments, but which are essentially dynamic rather

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[1] David Daiches, The Novel and the Modern World (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), p. 18.

[2] Ibid., p. 21.

than static in nature and are independent of the given moment."[1] This is essentially the kind of characterization Conrad achieved in Chance, with the difference that these aspects of consciousness are reflected through second-degree characters.

Although the complexity of Conrad's technique has often been commented on, it has not been given the attention it deserves. Criticism has heretofore not seriously examined characterization in Conrad as a function of his general theory of the novel, and has often proceeded on different assumptions. Typical of the standard approach is Edward Crankshaw's distinguished study. Like Gustav Morf who suggested that Conrad was an "introvert intuitive type" preoccupied naturally with certain character types, Crankshaw tries to explain the complexities of characterization in the light of biography:

> Conrad, as author, was inhibited from introducing his own comments on men and affairs, yet we find Marlow moralizing with ease, fluency, and conviction. We find, moreover, that his capacity for moralizing is quite half the justification for his existence. . . . [Conrad] hit on Marlow as a technical device to enable him, the author, to introduce his own observations, to moralize freely, without breaking into the frame of the story.[2]

It is clear, however, that Marlow often breaks into the story, and his comments unify Lord Jim. But Crankshaw explains this device in another way:

> For it was he among other aids who enabled Conrad to illuminate with subjective comments states of mind which he could never have rendered objectively because he could not invent, because he could not visualize what he had never seen. We find that at the back of his strange psychological limitations is precisely this incapacity

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[1] The Novel and the Modern World, p. 22.

[2] Edward Crankshaw, Joseph Conrad: Some Aspects of the Art of the Novel (London: Bodley Head Press, 1936), pp. 71-72.

> to invent; we find that he was an analytical psychologist of a most distinguished order, but not a creative psychologist at all.[1]

By considering Conrad's technique as the result of "particular limitations," Crankshaw misses the significance of its intention. It might be asked, in fact, why it should have been easier for Conrad to speak through Marlow than in his own person. Works like Typhoon, The Nigger of the Narcissus, The Secret Agent, and Under Western Eyes seem to me to show that Conrad was a great "creative" as well as an "analytical" psychologist.

The main difficulty with Crankshaw's approach is that it limits appreciation of Conrad's peculiar achievement. If a criticism is to be made, it must develop from considerations of form in the novel. But this approach has other dangers. Critics of the novel like Percy Lubbock have tried to show that changes in form were the result of experimentation with technique for its own sake. In his description of the Jamesian novel, Lubbock discusses at length the "reflector" technique and the "dramatic" rendering of mind:

> Everything in the novel is now dramatically rendered, whether it is a page of dialogue or a page of description, because even in the page of description nobody is addressing us, nobody is reporting his impression to the reader. The impression is enacting itself in the endless series of images that play over the outspread expanse of the man's mind and memory. . . . The same law rules everywhere--that Strether's changing sense of his situation shall appeal directly to the onlooker, and not by way of any summarizing picture-maker. And yet as a whole the book is all pictorial, an indirect impression received through Strether's intervening consciousness,

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[1] Joseph Conrad: Some Aspects of the Art of the Novel, p. 119.

> beyond which the story never strays. I conclude that on this paradox the art of dramatizing the picture of somebody's experience . . . touches its limit. There is indeed no further for it to go.[1]

In this passage, Lubbock looks at technique without considering the requirements of the action: his emphasis on "dramatic" effect suggests that it is not the subject but its treatment that is most valuable. This way of looking at the novel may sometimes suggest falsely that the artist develops his technique outside of thematic considerations.

In this study, the technique of Chance will be considered from both points of view. An analysis of the function of second-degree characters and the structure of points of view in some of the major novels will show that the use of these characters was the result of a theory of the novel that Conrad worked with as well as of problems of thematic representation he faced. In order to demonstrate that Conrad worked from a theory of the novel rather than from "particular limitations," it will first be shown that he came directly under the influence of theories of realism, and that he tried to execute this theory in several novels before Chance. Thus the second chapter will consider the emergent conception of the "New Form of the Novel," including those devices, described by F. M. Ford as Impressionistic, which influenced the depiction of physical reality in Chance. The third chapter will analyze the techniques of characterization in Lord Jim, Nostromo, "Heart of Darkness," and Under Western

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[1] Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), pp. 170-71.

Eyes to show that technique did not develop separate from considerations of theme. It will be seen that characters at first inadequate to meet the conditions of life find some kind of factitious salvation after considerable suffering. There is a shift from characters like Jim ignorant of the meaning of his experience, from characters like Willems who sustains a partial vision of his flawed existence and is impotent to repair it, to characters like Razumov and Flora de Barral who reach some provisional awareness of the inexorable processes of life which have circumscribed their destruction, and often some kind of provisional awareness. These two chapters are preparatory to the inquiry into the structure and meaning of Chance in the last chapter.

In the final chapter, Chance will be considered in relation to the general theory of the "New Form." First, it will show Conrad's concern with emergent consciousness and with the moral implications of certain motives as determinants of action. Secondly, it will evaluate the technique of Chance as a solution to major thematic problems and as an attainment of the "New Form." Finally, it will discuss the implications of this theory as it is realized in Chance for the novel as an art form. Chance provides an opportunity to test aspects of one conception of the modern novel, the creation of the "atmosphere of mind," both in theory and in practice.

CHAPTER II

THE THEORY OF THE "NEW FORM OF THE NOVEL"

The Impressionism of the "New Form of the Novel"

When an artist states that his work is "realistic," he usually means that his style has made it possible for him to portray life accurately, which is always to portray life as he sees it. But regardless of whether the artist specifically aims for realism, it would seem true that the way any artist expresses what he sees is implicit in how he sees it. And how an artist sees is often conditioned by his awareness of how other artists have rendered experience. As André Malraux states in The Voices of Silence, the mastery of reality is attained not through the artist's visual experience of the world itself, "but by a victory over one of the forms of an immediate predecessor that he has taken over."[1] It is reaction, Malraux states, that best explains styles of realism: "There is no absolute style of realism, there are only realistic deflections of pre-existing styles."[2] Joseph Conrad realized this when he stated in the preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus that a writer could not be limited to "temporary formulas" of Realism, Romanticism, and Naturalism:

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[1] André Malraux, The Voices of Silence (New York: Doubleday, 1953), p. 334.

[2] Ibid., p. 301.

"The enduring part of them--the truth which each only imperfectly veils--should abide with him as the most precious of his possessions . . . ."[1] His aim was to realize in "the perfect blending of form and substance"[2] a literary art that would have the plasticity of sculpture, the color of painting, and the suggestiveness of music. And it was this declared intention to show the movement, form, and color of life, to disclose its truth, that links him with such realists as Flaubert, de Maupassant, and James whose declared intention it was to portray life as it is.

Foremost among the novelists of his time, Conrad became a novelist of reaction against certain aspects of the older Victorian novel; he was, in the words of Crankshaw, "a restless experimenter." His interest in problems of literary form was intensified by his participation in the Rye Circle. It was after Conrad moved to Pent Farm near Rye in 1898, the same year that Henry James bought Lamb House, that he began to share his literary interests in a circle that included James, Stephen Crane, F. M. (Hueffer) Ford, and H. G. Wells among others who lived in close proximity. Ford describes the activities of this circle in his various memoirs.

> Occasionally we would go together and have tea with Henry James at Rye. I think that I was most preoccupied with the simple expression of fine shades; Mr. Conrad's unceasing search was for a New Form of the Novel, mine for a non-literary vocabulary. And I do not believe that

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[1] Joseph Conrad, Conrad's Prefaces to his Works (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1937), p. 53.

[2] Ibid., p. 51.

> there were in the England of those days any two other people whose whole minds and whose unceasing endeavours were so absolutely given to that one problem of expression between man and man which is the end of all conscious literary art.[1]

Ford states that they "were united by a common technique and their literary aims were to all intents exactly the same."[2] Their intention was to search for "the Absolute in Literature."[3] According to H. G. Wells who was unsympathetic to the ideas of Conrad and James, Conrad "had gone literary with a singleness and intensity of purpose that made the kindred concentration of Henry James seem lax and large and pale."[4]

After 1897 problems of technique were becoming increasingly important for Conrad. Writing to R. B. Cunningham-Grahame in August of 1897, Conrad describes the crucial problem of form in the novel as he saw it:

> And suppose Truth is just round the corner, like the elusive and useless loafer it is? . . . 't is impossible to know anything, tho' it is possible to believe a thing or two. . . . Straight vision is bad form,--as you know. The proper thing is to look round the corner, because, if Truth is not there, there is at any rate a something that distributes shekels. And what better can you want than the noble metal?[5]

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[1] F. M. Ford, Thus to Revisit (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1921), pp. 39-40.

[2] F. M. Ford, The English Novel (London: Constable, 1930), p. 137.

[3] Thus to Revisit, p. 34.

[4] H. G. Wells, Experiment in Autobiography (New York: The Macmillan Company Ltd., 1936), p. 527.

[5] G. Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad, Life and Letters (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1927), Vol. I, p. 208.

This statement is in accord with Ford's description of the "New Form" in his study of Conrad. Ford states that the novel "more or less gradually, more or less deviously, lets you into the secrets of the characters of the men with whom it deals."[1] The effect was Impressionistic: ". . . we saw that Life did not narrate, but made impressions on our brains. We in turn, if we wished to produce on you an effect of life, must not narrate but render impressions."[2] Ford places Conrad with Flaubert, Maupassant, and Turgenev:

> Those then were the Impressionists, with of course behind them the great shades of Flaubert and Turgenev. The one passion that united them all . . . was that: to leave behind them a creative record of their time. They said: 'Once we have rendered our day, with a due vision for the inner truths of it--then the world can draw its own morals. . . . But the important thing is that the World should have an aperçu of itself as it is . . . a passionless reconstitution, not passionate fakings of aspects and of evidence . . .'[3]

The Impressionists insisted that "once the suggestion was taken hold of, it should be turned over and over in the mind until the last drop of suggestion that could come from the original idea was squeezed out of it."[4] They aimed for "progressions of effects."[5] Conrad and James saw that

> . . . a Novel was the rendering of an Affair: of one embroilment, one set of embarrassments, one human coil, one psychological progression. From this the Novel gets

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[1] F. M. Ford, Joseph Conrad (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1924), p. 191.

[2] Ibid., pp. 194-95.

[3] F. M. Ford, Portraits from Life (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937), pp. 207-208.

[4] F. M. Ford, Henry James (London: Boni, 1915), p. 161.

[5] Thus to Revisit, p. 42.

> its Unity. No doubt it might have its caesura--or even several; but these must be brought about by temperamental pauses, markings of time when the treatment called for them. But the whole novel was to be an exhaustion of aspects, was to proceed to one culmination, to reveal once and for all, in the last sentence, or the penultimate; in the last phrase, or the one before it--the psychological significance of the whole.[1]

Ford compares Conrad and James to Flaubert and comments that "all three treated their characters with aloofness; all three kept themselves, with their comments and their prejudices out of their works, and all three rendered rather than told."[2] A story would convey a sense of inevitability:

> The problem of the author is to make his then action the only action that character could have taken. It must be inevitable, because of his character, because of his ancestry, because of past illness or on account of the gradual coming together of the thousand small circumstances by which Destiny, who is inscrutable and august, will push us into one certain predicament.[3]

The novelist must then invent and justify a character who will convincingly express his views. The aim of the "New Form" was to be "the sheer attempt to reproduce in words life as it presents itself to an intelligent observer."[4]

Because the novel conveys life as it appears to an intelligent observer, Ford argues that the speech of one character should not answer the speech that precedes it. Thus the novel would approximate life itself in its organic

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[1] Thus to Revisit, p. 44.

[2] The English Novel, p. 137.

[3] Ford, Joseph Conrad, p. 219.

[4] Thus to Revisit, p. 46. The "New Form" was a revolt against the convention of the "Strong Situation" at the end of a serial installment. The old form of the novel was "a series of short stories with linked characters and possibly a culmination" (p. 43).

wholeness. Insofar as it realized this aim, it would give the world a vision of itself as it is. The novelist achieves organic wholeness through the gradual revelation of insight into character rather than in a descriptive portrait, through the rendering of impressions and the accumulation of effects, and through characters who interpret the action.

James on the Novel

Unlike Ford who is almost solely concerned with devices which convey the sense of physical reality, James is concerned primarily with intensive characterization and the "atmosphere of mind." He was committed, with Conrad, to the idea that views of experience are essentially relative. He saw with Flaubert and Maupassant that this meant that the problem of representation lay not so much in what was seen, but rather in how it was seen, hence his concern with what he described in his comments on Chance as the "fusion between what we are to know and that prodigy of our knowing which is ever half the very beauty of the atmosphere of authenticity."[1] This conviction of the relativity of experience was partly responsible for his interest in what Maupassant called analytic realism.

The aim of the novelist, Maupassant states, is "to compel us to reflect and to understand the occult and deeper meaning of events."[2] The artist is different from other men

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[1] Notes on Novelists, p. 275.

[2] Guy de Maupassant, Pierre and Jean, translated from the French with a critical introduction by the Earl of Crewe (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1923), p. xlix.

because "he has come to regard the world, facts, men and things in a way peculiar to himself, which is the outcome of the sum total of his studious observation."[1] Thus he may look with other spectators at a common reality, but his interpretation of this common reality is special:

> Each of us, then, has simply his own illusion of the world . . . . And the writer has no other mission than faithfully to reproduce this illusion, with all the elaborations of art . . . . All the great artists are those who can make other men see their own particular illusion.[2]

Consequently selection is important, for the artist has to separate the trivial from the significant. The realist is concerned with the usual, the "normal condition," and aims for the "sense of simple reality."[3] The realist must "often correct events in favor of probability and to the detriment of truth";[4] he must give

> . . . a presentiment of it which shall be more complete, more striking, more cogent than reality itself. . . . A choice must be made--and this is the first blow to the theory of the "whole truth."[5]

Truth consists in producing "a complete illusion by following the common logic of facts."[6] This consideration results in a distinction between objective and analytic realism. Analytic realism is concerned with the why and wherefore of every impulse, "every reaction of the soul's movements under the promptings of interest, passion, or instinct."[7] Objective realism is the attempt "to discover the action or

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[1] Pierre and Jean, pp. xlix-l. [2] Ibid., p. liv.
[3] Ibid., p. li. [4] Ibid., p. lii. [5] Ibid., p. lii.
[6] Ibid., p. liii-iv. [7] Ibid., p. lv.

gesture which that state of mind must inevitably lead to in that personage, under given circumstances."[1] The objective approach avoids "all complicated explanations, all disquisitions on motive."[2] Maupassant believes that objective realism is truer to the way things happen because people do not generally divulge their motives; it is also more dramatic. Psychology should be concealed "as it is reality, under the facts of existence."[3] For this reason, a realistic view may simply involve an awareness of appearances. The representation of appearance is as much a problem for the objective realist as the representation of motives is for the psychological realist. For the objective realist, "pure psychological analysis is impregnable."[4]

Maupassant emphasized that both objective and analytic realism are concerned with psychological reality and both methods take the special experience and vision of the artist into account. James in his critique of the French realists, emphasizes that selection is basic to an artful realism. Is this emphasis on selection intended as an answer to the Naturalists who had seized upon Flaubert's statement that "poetry is as precise as geometry" for their rationale?[5] Flaubert's idea was that the work of art is organic since "the Idea exists only by virtue of its form":[6] "It is for

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[1] Pierre and Jean, p. lvi.

[2] Ibid., p. lv.

[3] Ibid., p. lvi.

[4] Ibid., p. lviii.

[5] Francis Steegmuller (ed.), The Selected Letters of Gustave Flaubert (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young Inc., 1953), p. 161.

[6] Ibid., p. 77.

this reason that there are no noble subjects or ignoble subjects; from the standpoint of pure Art one might almost establish the axiom that there is no such thing as subject, style in itself being an absolute manner of seeing things."[1] The effect of Madame Bovary, Zola said, was "comme un spectacle vu, une action qui se passe matériellement sous vos yeux."[2] And yet Zola recognized that such objectivity was only apparent:

> Le romancier naturaliste affecte de disparaître complètement derrière l'action qu'il raconte. Il est le metteur en scène caché du drame. Jamais il ne se montre au bout d'une phrase. On ne l'entend ni rire ni pleurer avec ses personnages, pas plus qu'il ne se permit de juger leurs actes. C'est même cet apparent désintéressement qui est le trait le plus distinctif.[3]

James saw that the idea of a spectacular presentation might lead to the fallacy of "saturation"--the excessive accumulation of detail without selection from it. Such an assumption ignored the incalculability of the artist's range. In Balzac, the artist is smothered by the historian:

> What makes Balzac so preeminent and exemplary . . . is his having felt his fellow-creatures . . . as quite failing of reality, as swimming in the vague and the void and the abstract, unless their social conditions, to the last particular, their generative and contributive circumstances, of every discernible sort, enter for all these are "worth" into his representative attempt.[4]

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[1] Steegmuller, Selected Letters, p. 128.

[2] Emile Zola, Les romanciers naturalistes, Vol. XLII, Les oeuvres complètes. Texte de l'edition Eugène Fasquelle. Notes et commentaires de Maurice Le Blond (Paris, Typ. F. Bernouard, 1927-29), p. 119.

[3] Ibid., p. 110.

[4] Notes on Novelists, p. 118.

The same concern leads to "the promiscuous shiftings of standpoint and centre of Tolstoy and Balzac . . . [which] come, to my eye, from their being not so much big dramatists as big painters."[1] Zola similarly produces "the effect of character and passion in the lump or by the ton."[2] The esthetic mistakes of these novelists result because they ignore the point that "vision and opportunity reside in a personal sense and a personal history, and no short cut to them in the interest of plausible fiction has ever been discovered."[3]

The problem for the novelist, as James saw it, is how to create the "atmosphere of authenticity," the perspective of reality without saturation:

> To give the image and the sense of certain things while still keeping them subordinate to his plan, keeping them in relation to matters more immediate and apparent, to give all the sense, in a word, without all the substance or all the surface, and so to summarize and foreshorten, so to make values both rich and sharp, that the mere procession of items and profiles is not only, for the occasion, superseded, but is, for essential quality, almost "compromised"--such a case of delicacy proposes itself at every turn to the painter of life who wishes both to treat his chosen subject and to confine his necessary picture.[4]

He felt that he could produce illusion if he could achieve intensity. For this reason, he rejected objective realism because he felt that intensification of interest is best realized by centering it in a "vessel" of experience and

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[1] Percy Lubbock (ed.), The Letters of Henry James (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), Vol. I, p. 327.

[2] Notes on Novelists, p. 27. [3] Ibid., p. 28.

[4] Henry James, The Art of the Novel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 140.

consciousness. The problem is how to relate everything of value to this central intelligence so that "the drama is the very drama of that consciousness."[1] Thus the placing of the "registers" of the experience is a major problem for the novelist. Writing to Mrs. Humphrey Ward about her novel, Eleanor, James criticizes the looseness of the form:

> How then do I get Lucy's consciousness, I impudently retort: "By that magnificent and masterly indirectness which means the only dramatic straightness and intensity. You get it, in other words, by Eleanor." "And how does Eleanor get it?" "By everything! By Lucy, by Manisty, by every pulse of the action in which she is engaged and of which she is the fullest--an exquisite--register.[2]

In another letter to Mrs. Ward, James argues that life is a poor organizer of esthetic experience:

> I hold the artist must (infinitely!) know how he is doing it, or he is not doing it at all. I hold he must have a perception of the interests of his subject that grasps him as in a vise, and that (the subject being of course formulated in his mind) he sees as sharply the way that most presents it, and presents most of it, as against the ways that comparatively give it away. . . . I am afraid I do differ with you if you mean that the picture can get any objective unity from any other source than that. . . . From the personality of the author . . . it can get nothing but a unity of execution and of tone.[3]

Thus the artist for James begins with a world that is familiar to the reader, but subordinates this world as a background for the mental reality of his central characters: "I was myself so much more antecedently conscious of my figures than of their setting . . . ."[4] Since the interest of a situation depended on the nature of the characters situated, the "action" is the drama of consciousness; the minor

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[1] The Art of the Novel, p. 16.

[2] Lubbock, Letters of Henry James, Vol. I, p. 322.

[3] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 326. [4] The Art of the Novel, p. 44.

characters were "the numbered pieces of my puzzle, the concrete terms of my 'plot.'"[1] The central intelligence is, in fact, a disponible, a free agent of experience. Speaking of Turgenev's treatment of his characters, James states:

> He saw them, in that fashion, as disponibles, saw them subject to the chances, the complications of existence, and saw them vividly, but then had to find for them the right relations, those that would most bring them out; to imagine, to invent and select and piece together the situations most useful and favourable to the sense of the creatures themselves, the complications they would be most likely to produce and to feel.[2]

This character must be free from the limitations of environment to move around in the temptations of the world with every approach closed to him. Moral complications are necessary because "a character is interesting as it comes out, and by the process and duration of that emergence."[3]

In the preface to The Princess Casamassima, James considers the crucial problem of how the artist dramatizes the limited consciousness as a register of moral experience. By limited consciousness he means the character who begins relatively ignorant of the truth of his experience:

> . . . the figures in any picture, the agents in any drama, are interesting only in proportion as they feel their respective situations; since the consciousness, on their part, of the complication exhibited forms for us their link of connexion with it. But there are degrees of feeling--the muffled, the faint, the just sufficient, the barely intelligent, as we may say; and the acute, the intense, the complete, in a word--the power to be finely aware and richly responsible.[4]

It is better that this character not know too much. And because he does not always have a complete knowledge of all

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[1] The Art of the Novel, p. 53. [2] Ibid., p. 43.

[3] Ibid., pp. 127-28. [4] Ibid., p. 62.

aspects of a situation, the novelist has to rely on "the multiplication of aspects."[1] In the "multiplication of aspects," various characters, none of whom have complete knowledge, are reflectors of the central situation. James compares these characters to lamps situated around an object:

> I remember that in sketching my project for the conductors of the periodical I have named I drew on a sheet of paper . . . the neat figure of a circle consisting of a number of small rounds disposed at equal distance about a central object. The central object was my situation, my subject in itself, to which the thing would owe its title, and the small rounds represented so many distinct lamps, as I liked to call them, the function of each of which would be to light with all due intensity one of its aspects. . . . Each of my "lamps" would be the light of a single "social occasion" in the history and intercourse of the characters concerned, and would bring out to the full the latent colour of the scene in question and cause it to illustrate, to the last drop, its bearing on my theme.[2]

In the preface to The Spoils of Poynton, James shows that characters as well as occasions may serve as lamps: "The thing is to lodge somewhere at the heart of one's complexity an irrepressible appreciation, but where a light lamp will carry all the flame I incline to look askance at a heavy."[3] His point is that these minor characters are "fixed constituents," lacking power to grow in awareness, and limited in their power to "appreciate":

> The fools are interesting by contrast, by the salience they acquire, and by a hundred other of their advantages; and the free spirit, always much tormented, and by no means always triumphant, is heroic, ironic, pathetic . . . "successful," only through having remained free.[4]

In his 1914 essay, "The New Novel," James used his conception of the realistic novel as a measure for a criticism

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[1] The Art of the Novel, p. 90.
[2] Ibid., pp. 109-10.
[3] Ibid., p. 129.
[4] Ibid., pp. 129-30.

of contemporary fiction. He stresses first the relativity of vision: "Our argument is that each is ideally immersed in his own body of reference, and that immersion in any such degree and to the effect of any such variety, intensity, and plausibility is really among us a new feature of the novelist's range of resource."[1] James then analyzes the method of Chance as a contrast to the "saturation" methods of Wells and Bennett. Chance is the "supreme specimen" of an "extraordinary exhibition of method."[2] The whole undertaking was "committed by its very first step either to be 'art' exclusively or to be nothing."[3] What most distinguishes it is the multiplication of "registers" who project the action, so that it is dramatized from a number of points of view rather than through an omniscient narrator:

> It has been the course . . . of his so multiplying his creators or, as we are now fond of saying, producers, as to make them almost more numerous and quite emphatically more material than the creatures and the production itself in whom and which we by the general law of fiction expect such agents to lose themselves.[4]

Conrad works out a technique that is close to James's own "multiplication of aspects." James describes this technique:

> Mr. Conrad's first care . . . is expressly to posit or set up a reciter, a definite responsible intervening first person singular, possessed of infinite sources of references, who immediately proceeds to set up another, to the end that this other may conform again to the practice, and that even at that point the bridge over to the creature, or in other words to the situation or the subject, the thing "produced," shall, if the fancy takes it, once more and yet once more glory in a gap. It is easy to see how heroic the undertaking of an

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[1] Notes on Novelists, p. 254. [2] Ibid., p. 274.

[3] Idem. [4] Ibid., p. 275.

> effective fusion becomes on these terms, fusion between what we are to know and that prodigy of our knowing which is ever half the very beauty of the atmosphere of authenticity; from the moment the reporters are thus multiplied from pitch to pitch the tone of each, especially as "rendered" by his precursor in the series, becomes for the prime poet of all an immense question--these circumferential tones having not only to be such individually separate notes, but to keep so clear of the others, the central, the numerous and various voices of the agents proper, those expressive of the action itself and in whom the objectivity resides.[1]

Conrad's method is distinctive in that each "reporter" confirms what is seen and interpreted by another:

> We usually escape the worst of this difficulty of a tone <u>about</u> the tone of our characters, our projected performers, by keeping it single, keeping it "down" and thereby comparatively impersonal . . . . But the omniscience, remaining indeed nameless, though constantly active, which sets Marlow's omniscience in motion from the very first page, insisting on a reciprocity with it throughout, this original omniscience invites consideration of itself only in a degree less than in which Marlow's own invites it; and Marlow's own is a prolonged hovering flight of the subjective over the outstretched ground of the case exposed.[2]

The result is that Conrad is able to discard the kind of omniscient viewer he had used in "Heart of Darkness." No one register can establish a view of reality without that view being confirmed by another who observes the action from a different vantage point. Conrad realizes a version of "authenticity" in the novel because of the successful fusion of what we see with how we see.

Conrad on the Novel

Conrad was, in fact, drawn to the methods of objective and analytic realism partly by his philosophy of art.

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[1] <u>Notes on Novelists</u>, pp. 275-76. [2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 276.

When he states that his intention was "by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel--it is, before all, to make you see," he was restating Flaubert's belief that the power of art is a transmutation of the power of life itself:

> Life! Life! . . . That is the only thing that counts! That is why I love lyricism so much. It seems to me the most natural form of poetry--poetry in all its nakedness and freedom. All of the power of a work of art lies in this mystery, and it is this primordial quality, this motus animi continuus (vibration, continual movement of the mind--Cicero's definition of eloquence), which gives conciseness, distinctness, form, energy, rhythm, diversity.[1]

Conrad continually emphasizes that the power of art is essentially the power of life:

> All art, therefore, appeals primarily to the senses, . . . if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions. It must strenuously aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the colour of painting, and to the magic suggestiveness of music . . . .[2]

But there was also the fundamental problem of verisimilitude as the basic appeal. James had made a distinction between the sense of life in the novel and reality itself:

> The real represents to my perception the things we cannot possibly not know, sooner or later, in one way or another; it being but one of the accidents of our hampered state, and one of the incidents of their quantity and number, that particular instances have not yet come our way. The romantic stands . . . for the things that, with all the facilities in the world, all the wealth and all the courage and all the wit and all the adventure, we never can directly know; the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire.[3]

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[1] Steegmuller, Selected Letters, p. 158.

[2] Conrad's Prefaces, p. 51.

[3] The Art of the Novel, pp. 31-32.

Conrad, in his writings, does not dissociate effect from the fact:

> . . . the romantic feeling of reality was in me an inborn faculty. This in itself may be a curse but when disciplined by a sense of personal responsibility and a recognition of the hard facts of existence shared with the rest of mankind becomes but a point of view from which the very shadows of life appear endowed with an internal glow.[1]

He is convinced that imagination can penetrate the appearances of life to truth. Unlike the thinker and the scientist who are concerned with ideas and facts alone, the artist speaks to the "sense of mystery surrounding our lives; to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain."[2] Art is

> . . . a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect. It is an attempt to find in its forms, in its colours, in its light, in its shadows, in the aspects of matter, and in the facts of life what of each is fundamental, what is enduring and essential--their one illuminating and convincing quality--the very truth of their existence.[3]

The artist for Conrad as for Maupassant has the power to detect the "one immutable quality that matters in the changing aspects of nature and under the ever-shifting surface of life.[4] As Conrad expresses it, the imagination is the tool of the

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[1] Conrad's Prefaces, pp. 153-154.

[2] Ibid., p. 50. [3] Ibid., p. 49.

[4] Joseph Conrad, Notes on Life and Letters (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1949), p. 31. Conrad is close here to Ruskin's idea of the "penetrative faculty," "the power of imagination in exalting any visible object, by gathering round it, in farther vision, all the facts properly connected with it; this being, as it were, a spiritual or second sight, multiplying the power of enjoyment according to the fulness of the vision." C. F. Harrold and W. D. Templeman, English Prose of the Victorian Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 859.

artist's pursuit; it is the "God-sent form of trust in the magic force and inspiration belonging to the life of this earth."[1] This statement is close to that of Flaubert: "There are no more artists as they once existed, artists whose loves and minds were the blind instrument of the appetite for the Beautiful, God's organs by means of which He demonstrated to Himself His own existence."[2] Conrad does, in fact, suggest that art has a quasi-religious function:

> All creative art is magic, is evocation of the unseen in forms persuasive, enlightening, familiar and surprising, for the edification of mankind, pinned down by the conditions of its existence to the earnest consideration of the most insignificant tides of reality.[3]

Following Flaubert and James, Conrad moves to the realization that the experience of art depends not on the subject itself but rather on what the artist makes of the subject; it depends on how the artist sees. As for Maupassant, the greatness of the artist lies in his ability to create his own distinctive world. Conrad assumes that verisimilitude is the first condition for enjoying literature. But the fact that men respond differently to experience means that the artist has to offer more than verisimilitude:

> In truth every novelist must begin by creating for himself a world, great or little, in which he can honestly believe. This world cannot be made otherwise than in his own image: it is fated to remain individual and a little mysterious, and yet it must resemble something already familiar to the experience, the thoughts and the sensations of his readers.[4]

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[1] Notes on Life and Letters, p. 8.

[2] Steegmuller, Selected Letters, p. 63.

[3] Notes on Life and Letters, p. 13. [4] Ibid., p. 6.

A recognition of all "the more distinct forms of action" is the first stage of appreciation, but the significant experience is what the reader comes to know as "reality," what the artist creates "through the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions."[1] It is not the objective world but rather the peculiar differences in vision which account for the apparent relativity of truth:

> . . . all my moral and intellectual being is penetrated by an invincible conviction that whatever falls under the dominion of our senses must be in nature and, however exceptional, cannot differ in its essence from all the other effects of the visible and tangible world of which we are a self-conscious part.[2]

Life feeds art, and art appeals because it communicates a heightened awareness of life. But it is always an individual sense of life that makes the artist unique. In his appreciative essay on James, Conrad states that "fiction is history, human history," and is based on "the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena."[3] Although the artist penetrates appearances to discover reality, he cannot presume to cover the range of human experience. What James has done, Conrad states, is to keep a firm hold of what is worth having. The pursuit of reality is an independent endeavor: "But everything is relative, and the light of consciousness is only enduring, merely the most enduring of the things of this earth, imperishable only as against the short-lived work of our industrious hands."[4] The emphasis on the

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[1] Conrad's Prefaces, p. 51. [2] Ibid., p. 173.

[3] Notes on Life and Letters, p. 17. [4] Ibid., p. 13.

individual sense of life is basic to Conrad's estimation of Maupassant. In Maupassant, he states, "facts are so perfectly rendered that, like the actualities of life itself, they demand from the reader the faculty of observation which is rare . . . ."[1] Maupassant becomes a true artist when he comes to detect the immutable reality behind the changing aspects of nature: "His vision by a more scrupulous, prolonged, and devoted attention to the aspects of the visible world discovered at last the right words as if miraculously impressed for him upon the face of things and events."[2]

This is the basic philosophy of art that places Conrad with the Continental realists. Art is essentially the pursuit and creation of immutable reality:

> It is rescue work, this snatching of vanishing phases of turbulence, disguised in fair words, out of the native obscurity into a light where the struggling forms may be seen, seized upon, endowed with the only possible form of permanence in this world of relative values--the permanence of memory.[3]

Conrad and James follow de Maupassant and Flaubert in considering art as "a fusion of illusion and reality." Psychological truth was not the final aim of the novel for James; the problem was how to produce "the maximum of intensity with the minimum of strain."[4] Conrad departs from James at this point, partly because his emphasis is squarely on art as a heightened sense of life, and partly because of his view of man. Conrad believed that men were ultimately faced

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[1] Notes on Life and Letters, p. 27.

[2] Ibid., p. 28.

[3] Ibid., p. 13.

[4] The Art of the Novel, p. 56.

with the revelation that their security in fidelity and solidarity, their faith in the triumph of principles and personal heroism, were empty illusions, doomed to failure. The problem that he faced was how to project awareness of this fact either in the characters themselves or in others. Thus he faced the same problems that James did, but in a different way. In the preface to Nostromo, he states that he is dramatizing "events flowing from the passions of men short-sighted in good and evil."[1] He has to reveal "the secret purposes of their hearts," those dark motives which are hidden even to the strongest of men.[2]

In the early novels, illusion is the provisional saving power of life. The man who discovers that his head is full of sawdust is no longer useful to mankind.[3] In a letter to Cunningham-Grahame, Conrad writes:

> Moi, je regarde l'avenir du fond d'un passé très noir et je trouve que rien ne m'est permis hormis la fidélité à une cause absolument perdue, à une idée sans avenir.
> Aussi, souvent, je n'y pense pas. Tout disparaît. Il ne reste que la vérité,--une ombre sinistre et fuyante dont il est impossible de fixer l'image. . . . Vous qui dévouez votre enthousiasme et vos talents à la cause de l'humanité, vous comprendrez sans doute pourquoi je dois,--j'ai besoin,--de garder ma pensée intacte comme dernier hommage de fidélité à une cause qui est perdue. C'est tout ce que je puis faire. J'ai jeté ma vie à tous les vents du ciel, mais j'ai gardé ma pensée.[4]

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[1] Joseph Conrad, Nostromo (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1950), p. ix. All subsequent references are to this edition.

[2] Ibid., p. xi.

[3] Cf. Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad, Vol. I, p. 247.

[4] Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 269-70.

In the epigraph to Almayer's Folly, Conrad quotes Amiel: "Qui de nous n'a eu sa terre promise, son jour d'extase, et sa fin en exil?" He states in the preface: "Their hearts--like ours--must endure the load of the gifts from Heaven: the curse of facts and the blessing of illusions, the bitterness of our wisdom and the deceptive consolation of our folly."[1] By "blessing of illusions" he refers to the solidarity men share when bound to a code that exacts absolute obedience and helps them to forget their individual weaknesses; a provisional salvation, a "deceptive consolation," is thereby realized. There is security for a time in this illusion; but man is ultimately forced into a consciousness of forces that endanger his survival. Confronted with the imminent destruction of the code, he is sometimes momentarily shattered by the awareness that his security is only an illusion. In The Nigger of the Narcissus, the impending death of Jim Wait foreshadows the eventual disruption of the solidarity of the crew which even a raging storm could not destroy. When he is finally dropped into the waters off the Cape, they are able for a while to return to the illusory solidarity of their former existence.

This conception of illusion and reality is also associated with the individual who lives by private rather than communal values. This kind of man is often betrayed by appearances that are mistaken for reality. Jim defects from a code which commands him to remain aboard the sinking Patna.

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[1] Conrad's Prefaces, p. 38.

Instead of "steering clear" like Singleton in The Nigger who ignores the potentiality of human weakness and keeps the Narcissus on her course, Jim bolts the ship. His public disgrace destroys his power to discriminate the relative value of human commitments and actions. Thus he sacrifices the woman who loves him to die futilely in an illusory struggle to win back his lost honor. In Chance, Flora de Barral is betrayed by the appearances of evil and hate into believing she cannot be loved. Such conflicts are usually dramatized in terms of the deception of the illusion that the individual can sustain his virtue alone against the onslaught of life. Speaking of Verloc, in what is perhaps his bitterest judgment of an individual, Conrad states that he was "a servant of law and order, faithful, trusted, accurate, admirable, with perhaps one single amiable weakness: the idealistic belief in being loved for himself."[1] Ultimately there is only consciousness and private hells:

> What makes mankind tragic is not that they are the victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it. To be part of the animal kingdom under the conditions of this earth is very well,--but as soon as you know of your slavery, the pain, the anger, the strife,--the tragedy begins. We can't return to nature, since we can't change our place in it. Our refuge is in stupidity, in drunkenness of all kinds, in lies, in beliefs, in murder, thieving, reforming, in negation, in contempt,--each man according to the promptings of his particular devil. There is no morality, no knowledge and no hope: there is only the consciousness of ourselves which drives us about a world that, whether seen in a convex or a concave mirror, is always but a vain and floating appearance.[2]

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[1] Joseph Conrad, The Secret Agent (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1953), p. 235.

[2] Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad, Vol. I, p. 226.

The problem that Conrad faced was how best to depict mental reality. The desertion of the Patna becomes meaningful only in the views of different characters who interpret Jim's desertion. The meaning of the experience lay not in what happened but in what was thought to have happened: what the characters saw and acted on. Just as the significance of artistic experience lay in what the peculiar vision of the artist made of a common reality; so, in the formulations of Conrad and James, the meaning of experience lay in what the individual thought experience to be. The central problem was to place in the novel some kind of consciousness that would project the fuller awareness not present in the principal characters themselves; and he sought a method that would give the moral vision of the novel the authenticity it had in life. Such a method, moreover, would increase the esthetic value of the work: "And suppose Truth is just round the corner, like the elusive and useless loafer it is? . . . Straight vision is bad form . . . . The proper thing is to look round the corner, because if Truth is not there, there is at any rate a something that distributes shekels."[1] Ford had said that the novel "more or less gradually, more or less deviously lets you into the secrets of the characters of the men with whom it deals."[2] It would be the method of indirection, made possible through registers of reality rather than an omniscient narration.

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[1] Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad, Vol. I, p. 208.

[2] Ford, Joseph Conrad, p. 191.

In the preface to The Wings of the Dove, James calls the register of reality a "reflector." This is defined by Percy Lubbock as "some one who will form an impression of her state of mind and reproduce it."[1] This method would also be one way to show the effect of Jim's life on the characters who tell the story and comment on its moral significance. The use of registers or "producers," as James put it, would make it possible to present different views of a central psychological reality in such a way that the depiction of how this reality is seen would have the complexity of life itself. What defines this idea of complexity is Ford's notion that "the general effect of a novel must be the general effect that life makes on mankind."[2] Because "life did not narrate, but made impressions on our brains,"[3] psychological reality in the novel would be a reconstruction of impressions communicated through a series of characters who registered aspects of that reality. Crankshaw describes this method in the following way: "His way is to show us the characters from the outside until we see them so vividly and in a light, or a variety of lights, so significant and revealing that their souls are naked before our eyes . . . ."[4] Here is James's "multiplication of aspects": ". . . the small rounds represented so many distinct lamps . . . the function of each of which would be to light with all due

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[1] The Craft of Fiction, p. 153.

[2] Ford, Joseph Conrad, p. 192. [3] Ibid., p. 194.

[4] Crankshaw, Joseph Conrad, p. 85.

intensity one of its aspects."[1] It is this narrative technique that Conrad fastened upon in certain novels of his middle period. It was a technique that would help him to create "a true effect," to detect "the one immutable reality that matters in the changing aspects of nature and under the evershifting surface of life."[2]

The problem that Conrad faced, then, was how to organize multiple views of a central situation and come to one immutable truth of psychological reality. It became in Chance the problem of dramatizing the limited consciousness. In several novels of his middle period, he considered several solutions to these problems which led to the distinctive method of Chance. In the next chapter, certain problems of characterization in Lord Jim, Nostromo, "Heart of Darkness," and Under Western Eyes will be considered.

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[1] The Art of the Novel, p. 110.

[2] Notes on Life and Letters, p. 31.

CHAPTER III

TECHNIQUE IN NOVELS BEFORE CHANCE

The Problem of the Limited Consciousness

It is necessary to understand the problems in the representation of limited consciousness that Conrad faced in certain novels which preceded Chance if the distinction of its method is to be understood fully. Conrad had to discard earlier modes of characterization for a new method that made possible the rendering of unconscious motivation. In this chapter, one aspect of "the New Form of the Novel," indirect characterization, will be considered as it is used in these novels.

The condition of the limited consciousness explains much about characterization in the early tales and novels. The key figure in these works is the familiar hermit type of character that Paul Wiley describes. To begin with, most of the early hermit-heroes are individuals who experience what Marlow describes in "Youth" as the "romance of illusion," "looking anxiously for something out of life, that while it is expected is already gone."[1] It is often the illusion that "some absolute standard of conduct" or some brilliant

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[1] Morton D. Zabel (ed.), The Portable Conrad (New York: The Viking Press, 1947), p. 154.

expectation can prevail even in the face of what the individual often recognizes to be a morally disastrous and sometimes almost criminal weakness. Often these early characters deny the weakness and try to escape from self-knowledge in hermetic isolation. Paul Wiley states: "When mind with its traditional values loses hold in a world no longer ruled by Providence, the result is not only self-betrayal for the individual but also betrayal of man by man."[1] Just as James constructs his novels so that the individual is faced with a painful moral choice, Conrad, in the early novels, constructs his plots so that the individual comes to self-knowledge and struggles with an adjustment to it. What differentiates these people from one another are the kinds of awareness they have of the corruption of their illusions. The depiction of these kinds of awareness presented compositional problems that Conrad solved in different ways.

In the epigraph to Almayer's Folly, Conrad states the central theme of much of his early work: "Qui de nous n'a eu sa terre promise, son jour d'extase et sa fin en exile?" This theme is central in "The Return," a story about the hesitations of a person who comes to a sudden knowledge of the corruption of his illusions. Alvan Hervey is the prototype of characters in the later novels who have similar experiences. Confident in the happiness of a life he does not suspect to be treacherous, Hervey's face revealed a trace of brutality given by easy mastery over men. Because he has

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[1] Paul Wiley, Conrad's Measure of Man (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1954), p. 32.

never lost or been denied anything, he is ignorant of the humiliation of defeat. He had married only because his friends told him that he was very much in love:

> They skimmed over the surface of life hand in hand, in a pure and frosty atmosphere--like two skillful skaters cutting figures on thick ice for the admiration of the beholders, and disdainfully ignoring the hidden stream, the stream restless and dark; the stream of life, profound and unfrozen.[1]

When his wife finally leaves him for another man, he is shocked by ". . . the vision of everything he had thought indestructible and safe in the world crashing down about him, like solid walls do before the fierce breath of a hurricane" (p. 130). When his wife returns unexpectedly because of her fear of scandal, Hervey faces a great crisis.

Conrad describes and comments directly on Hervey's state of mind and dilemma. When he first discovers that his wife has left him, "a dark curtain seemed to rise before him, and for less than a second he looked upon the mysterious universe of moral suffering" (p. 133). He tries immediately to forget what he has seen; and when his wife returns, he tries to convince himself that it was she who violated a sacred trust:

> He was in league with a universe of untold advantages. He represented the moral strength of a beautiful reticence that could vanquish all the deplorable crudities of life--fear, disaster, sin,--even death itself. It seemed to him that he was on the point of sweeping triumphantly away all the illusory mysteries of existence. It was simplicity itself (p. 156).

Conrad states that Hervey deludes himself in his belief that

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[1] Joseph Conrad, Tales of Unrest (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1949), p. 119. All subsequent references are to this edition.

his wife's infidelity can be ignored, that life can go on as it did before:

> Something desperate and vague, a flicker of an insane desire to abase himself before the mysterious impulses of evil, to ask for mercy in some way, passed through his mind; and then came the idea, the persuasion, that the evil must be forgotten--must be resolutely ignored to make life possible; that the knowledge must be kept out of mind, out of sight, like the knowledge of certain death is kept out of the daily existence of men (p. 160).

Hervey consequently defends his innocence to his wife by asserting that there is no temptation when a man lives up to his social obligations. She refuses, however, to accept this; she has returned to him only because she is convinced that he does not love her. Hervey slowly begins to realize that the love she once could have given him is now forever lost to him: "And now the shadow had appeared and faded he could not extinguish his longing for the truth of its substance" (p. 181). Hervey thus comes to the awareness that man cannot will his own happiness: "It came to him in a flash that morality is not a method of happiness. The revelation was terrible. He saw at once that nothing of what we know mattered in the least" (p. 183). Torn between the pull of the restraints his wife despises and his new awareness of the power of sexual instinct, Hervey leaves his wife, never to return, preferring to escape rather than face "the rites of a debasing persuasion" (p. 184).

As in the early novels, Conrad does not use other characters to picture Hervey's conflict for the reader. He does this himself, describing Hervey's thoughts and feelings directly; he does not dramatize the conflict by putting inner or outer aspects of consciousness in view without

interpretation. He himself interprets Hervey's final decision for the reader. But what about the depiction of those characters who come to no awareness whatever? How is the artist to portray a consciousness that never reaches even a limited insight? In "Karain: A Memory," Conrad introduces a reflector character who forms and reproduces an impression of the central character. The narrator, Jackson, is confronted by a superstitious native who fears that his charm is not strong enough to protect himself from the demon of a blood-friend whom he has accidentally killed. Jackson helps the native by giving him a coin which he tells the native has the power to exorcise evil spirits. Jackson says:

> I looked at that man, loyal to a vision, betrayed by his dream, spurned by his illusion, and coming to us unbelievers for help. . . . I thought of his wanderings, of that obscure Odyssey of revenge, of all the men that wander amongst illusions; of the illusions as restless as men; of the illusions faithful, faithless; of the illusions that give joy, that give sorrow, that give pain, that give peace, of the invincible illusions that can make life and death appear serene, inspiring, tormented, ignoble.[1]

It is Jackson, not the native, who comes to this insight. The story would have been incomplete without it. Conrad uses the personal narrator in other significant ways in the early fiction.

Conrad first introduces Marlow in "Youth" where he interprets the meaning of his youthful experiences to his friends. For him, these events are symbolic of existence itself in which the individual moves from the illusory strengths of youth to an acceptance of a code or law that

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[1] Tales of Unrest, p. 40.

is more perfect.than man, and gives man a provisional freedom: "There was a completeness in it, something solid like a principle, and masterful like an instinct--a disclosure of something secret--of that hidden something, that gift of good or evil that makes racial difference, that shapes the fate of nations."[1] The Nigger of the Narcissus is told ostensibly in the third person, but as the personal narrator becomes one with the hidden thoughts and intentions of the crew, the narrative shifts into the first person. The sense of solidarity is what enables them to survive the onslaught of the sea. Yet the imminent death of the nigger reminds them that the solidarity that joins them in a common effort must eventually be destroyed; his death momentarily shatters their well-being until the storm binds them together again. The dark forces of destruction which the nigger and Donkin symbolize are kept from succeeding by the captain who defends the code when the crew refuses to come to his assistance when he is threatened. The narrative shifts back to the personal narrator at the end who expresses his ultimate tragic awareness of isolation:

> And swaying about there on the white stones, surrounded by the hurry and clamor of men, they appeared to be creatures of another kind--lost, alone, forgetful, and doomed; they were like castaways, like reckless and joyous castaways, like mad castaways making merry in the storm and upon an insecure ledge of a treacherous rock.[2]

The Structure of Lord Jim

In Lord Jim, Conrad made a significant innovation in

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[1] The Portable Conrad, p. 140. [2] Ibid., p. 452.

the use of the reflector character as a means to the rendering as well as to the interpreting of mental reality. The action of the novel leads up to and away from two important episodes, the jump from the Patna and the meeting at the river; but the action is set forth in a structure of interpretations of these two events by a series of characters who see different things in what has happened. Jim's psychology emerges gradually in a series of often-conflicting impressions which Marlow contrasts and eventually puts together. It becomes clear that Jim suffers from a strong imagination which intensifies his reactions to the point where he makes mistakes in judgment: ". . . he was a gifted poor devil with the faculty of swift and forestalling vision."[1] Once this is established, Conrad turns to the problem of the significance of this condition. Certain characters talk about its significance as they see it without knowing the circumstances of Jim's death. Marlow seeks an answer to the philosophy of survival that Stein presents to him. It is Stein's view of Jim that, in fact, organizes the elaborate presentation of opposing points of view. Conrad as the novelist is only one among several interpreters, and he is careful not to press the validity of his own judgment. He insists always that Jim remains inscrutable to the end. Thus the first forty-two pages of the novel consist of his presentation of Marlow's narrative to which he adds whatever

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[1] Joseph Conrad, Lord Jim (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1948), p. 96. All subsequent references are to this edition.

information he has received from Marlow at other times. There is a break in the narrative, and the story is completed only after the novelist receives letters from Marlow at the end informing him of Jim's death.

Conrad first describes an incident which helped to shape Jim's romanticism. Aboard the yacht of the naval academy which he attends as a young man, Jim dreams of "saving people from sinking ships, cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through a surf with a line" (p. 6). He looked down from the fore-top "with the contempt of a man destined to shine in the midst of dangers" (p. 6). When a coaster rams a schooner in the bay, Jim misses the rescue because of a momentary hesitation. He rationalizes that he could face up to greater perils better than could his comrades. When a comrade does rescue a drowning man and brags about his heroism, Jim is jealous but at the same time aware of the pretense: "The gale had ministered to a heroism as spurious as its own pretence of terror" (p. 9). What he is not aware of is the equal futility of his own desire: "When all men flinched, then--he felt sure--he alone would know how to deal with the spurious menace of wind and seas" (p. 9). Conrad then tries to explain his apparent strain of cowardice:

> The danger, when not seen, has the imperfect vagueness of human thought. The fear grows shadowy; and Imagination, the enemy of man, the father of all terrors, unstimulated, sinks to rest in the dulness of exhausted emotion (p. 11).

There is no moral judgment here--merely an illumination of motive. The moral significance of such a motive will be developed in another way.

Much of the explanation for what happens is put together by Marlow with the help of other characters. Like the novelist, he tries to determine the motives for Jim's desertion of the ship; he is not yet concerned with a moral view of it. What it is is one thing, what we are to think of it another. Conrad has earlier stated that Jim lives in the illusion of the invincibility of his virtue:

> He was gentlemanly, steady, tractable, with a thorough knowledge of his duties; and in time, when yet very young, he became chief mate of a fine ship, without ever having been tested by those events of the sea that show in the light of day the inner worth of a man, the edge of his temper, and the fibre of his stuff; that reveal the quality of his resistance and the secret truth of his pretences, not only to others but also to himself (p. 10).

Jim is blind to his inner weakness, and Marlow later comments:

> "Nothing more awful than to watch a man who has been found out, not in a crime but in a more than criminal weakness. The commonest sort of fortitude prevents us from becoming criminals in a legal sense; it is from weakness unknown, but perhaps suspected, as in some parts of the world you suspect a deadly snake in every bush--from weakness that may lie hidden, watched or unwatched, prayed against or manfully scorned, repressed or maybe ignored more than half a lifetime, not one of us is safe. We are snared into doing things for which we get called names . . . . And there are things--they look small enough sometimes too--by which some of us are totally and completely undone" (pp. 42-43).

If this is the case, how then is Marlow to distinguish between the German skipper of the Patna and Jim, both of whom have apparently acted on cowardly impulses? Why is Jim more worth considering than the skipper? It is the positive value of awareness that allows Marlow to make an important distinction. The skipper is not a conventionally evil man. This is because Conrad realizes the ambiguity of moral judgments in a world where absolute values like cowardice and heroism find their

only sanction in a factitious humanism. Thus the cowardice of the captain earns Marlow's contempt although not his clear moral disapprobation; he is, in fact, ironic about and even amused at the skipper's alternate rage and panic. What is important is the kind of awareness of inherent weakness that makes Jim "one of us" for Conrad and Marlow. Marlow reflects on the power of such men to reckon the meaning of evil in moments of illumination:

> ". . . he was one of us. He stood there for all the parentage of his kind, for men and women, by no means clever or amusing, but whose very existence is based on honest faith, and upon the instinct of courage. . . . I mean just that inborn ability to look temptations straight in the face . . . a power of resistance . . . an unthinking and blessed stiffness before the outward and inward terrors, before the might of nature, and the seductive corruption of men--backed by a faith unvulnerable to the strength of facts, to the contagion of example, to the solicitation of ideas. Hand ideas! They are tramps, vagabonds, knocking at the back-door of your mind, each taking a little of your substance, each carrying away some crumb of that belief in a few simple notions you must cling to if you want to live decently and would like to die easy!" (p. 43)

The word "invulnerable" gives the important clue to the shift in Marlow's commentary: Jim is "invulnerable" against the corruption of a conviction that men are fatally prone to sin, yet he fatally believes that the individual can achieve something more than a factitious heroism. Men like Jim believe that they will triumph over such weaknesses; they do not succumb to the corruption of men who have surrendered to them, men like the crew of the Patna. But he is loyal to his ideals; he is untouched by the ideas of solidarity and fidelity which offer strength through duty to a transcendent code. Jim will not admit that individual striving is a

meaningless pursuit, and thus he lives by an illusion which sustains him only until he succumbs once more to a basic weakness, his fatal excess of imagination:

> "I would have trusted the deck to that youngster on the strength of a single glance, and gone to sleep with both eyes--and, by Jove! it wouldn't have been safe. There are depths of horror in that thought. He looked as genuine as a new sovereign, but there was some infernal alloy in his metal. How much? The least thing--the least drop of something rare and accursed; the least drop!--but he made you--standing there with his don't-care-hang air--he made you wonder whether perchance he were nothing more rare than brass" (pp. 45-46).

The question Conrad asks about Jim is whether he will be destroyed by his perception of the moral corruption of the Patna crew,or whether he will learn to live with the knowledge of what disgraceful conduct men are capable of. Marlow thus explores the possibilities of survival for the idealist in a world of imperfect men.

Conrad thus introduces characters who serve as contrasts to Jim and point up important truths, and characters who interpret experience. The first are usually imperfect men such as Captain Robinson who, like Brown, was a fearful marauder in better days; he has since become senile and helplessly follows Chester around, witlessly financing insane ventures with his hard-won fortune. Robinson symbolizes the ultimate fate of ego-centered heroism. And there is Brierly who has lived always by the conviction that "an absolute standard of conduct" could prevail, that he is not susceptible to the weaknesses that made Jim leap from the ship. Jim will go on living as Brierly has lived, secure for a while in this conviction. The sight of Jim at the trial

forces Brierly to see that he might have deserted the ship had he been in Jim's place. In leaping to his death afterwards, Brierly prefers to die rather than live with self-knowledge. What are the solutions for men like Brierly and Jim? They might have run away like the German skipper, perhaps to find peace in isolation, away from their kind. Both Brierly and the French lieutenant suggest this as a possibility for Jim. Yet Brierly commits suicide, and the lieutenant can afford to be realistic because he did not jump from the ship. And yet he sees that man cannot live without honor:

> "'Man is born a coward (L'homme est né poltron). It is a difficulty--parbleu! It would be too easy otherwise. But habit . . . necessity . . . the eye of others--voilà. One puts up with it. And then the example of others who are no better than yourself, and yet make good countenance. . . .'" (p. 147).

For the lieutenant, the code of the sea is the only solution because it compels duty and honor in the face of the inherent cowardice of man. It is another thing, however, once man has lost honor:

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

The question that Conrad raises is the heart of The Nigger of the Narcissus: how is man to live when the codes of life break down? The crew of the Patna are hard realists, corrupted

into cynicism by the facts of existence. They are not worth considering from Marlow's point of view because they do not have the courage to look at temptations.

Marlow states that in searching for the cause of Jim's desertion he hoped for the impossible:

> "I see well enough now that I hoped for the impossible--for the laying of what is the most obstinate ghost of man's creation, of the uneasy doubt uprising like a mist, secret and gnawing like a worm, and more chilling than the certitude of death--the doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct" (p. 50).

Later he reflects:

> "I didn't know what he was playing up to--if he was playing up to anything at all--and I suspect he did not know either; for it is my belief no man ever understands quite his own artful dodges to escape from the grim shadow of self-knowledge.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> It was solemn, and a little ridiculous, too, as they always are, those struggles of an individual trying to save from the fire his idea of what his moral identity should be, this precious notion of a convention, only one of the rules of the game, nothing more, but all the same so terribly effective by its assumption of unlimited power over natural instincts, by the awful penalties of its failure" (pp. 80-81).

Marlow himself has stoically accepted the imperfect human condition. He admits that he shares in the "fellowship of these illusions you had thought gone out, extinct, cold" (p. 128): "In no other kind of life is the illusion more wide of reality--in no other is the beginning <u>all</u> illusion--the disenchantment more swift--the subjugation more complete" (p. 129). He believes that it is suicidal to live by illusions like Brierly and Jim. The death of such men is "the only event of their fantastic existence that seemed to have a reasonable certitude of achievement" (p. 13). And yet are

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not the ideas of fidelity and solidarity liable to disintegration? Marlow presents no solution of his own; he can only contemplate those of others.

The conversation between Marlow and Stein in the twentieth chapter is often misunderstood because it is assumed that Stein presents Conrad's, and possibly Marlow's solution for the problem of the romantic idealist. Stein recognizes that, like himself, Jim has sought to realize an absolute standard of conduct. Stein has tried to ignore the ugliness of existence by searching for and capturing absolute beauty. He suggests that the remedy for Jim is to continue pursuing the ideal; he must never see that the ideal is for man ultimately unattainable:

> "'We want in so many different ways to be,' he began again. 'This magnificent butterfly finds a little heap of dirt and sits still on it; but man he will never on his heap of mud keep still. . . . He wants to be a saint, and he wants to be a devil--and every time he shuts his eyes he sees himself as a very fine fellow--so fine as he can never be . . . In a dream. . . .'
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> . . . . . .
>
> "'And because you not always can keep your eyes shut there comes the real trouble--the heart pain--the world pain. I tell you, my friend, it is not good for you to find you cannot make your dream come true, for the reason that you are not strong enough, or not clever enough. . . . A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns . . . . No! I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up. So if you ask me--how to be?'" (pp. 213-14)

The word "inexperienced" is centrally important. Stein means that Jim will drown if he comes to face and accept the fact that heroism is an impossible ideal. Unlike Jim, the experienced person can manage to survive in the awareness that such

ideas are impossible and can be destructive. Stein emphasizes in this way the importance of this awareness for survival, something which he admits Jim does not have. Still Jim should pursue his dream, for he will otherwise be destroyed, and there is the possibility of provisional survival in such a pursuit. Marlow doubts the wisdom of this solution: "One had not the courage to decide; but it was a charming and deceptive light, throwing the impalpable poesy of its dimness over pitfalls--over graves" (p. 215). Conrad does not imply that Stein's view is the one that must prevail, for the end of the novel brings Stein to further insight. Yet what Stein says about Jim is ultimately true: he is the kind of man that knowledge destroys. The problem, then, is whether one can survive following the dream. The irony of Stein's remarks is that self-knowledge is important for him only because it helps man to survive:

> "'Yes,' said I, 'strictly speaking, the question is not how to get cured, but how to live.'
>
> "He approved with his head, a little sadly as it seemed. . . . 'How to be! Ach! How to be!'" (pp. 212 13).

In the Patusan chapters, Marlow sees that Jim is now completely isolated from mankind in his factitious achievement. He has acted heroically and become the savior of the formerly oppressed natives. His isolation, however, is not a guarantee of his security, for it is really Jewel and Tamb'Itam who protect him from dangers he is too blind to see for himself. As with the pilgrims earlier, he endangers the welfare of those who have entrusted themselves to him. Jewel sees that she cannot always protect him from his enemies, that he has

no realistic attitude toward danger. When he is attacked by his enemies in the warehouse, he holds his shot deliberately to marvel at his own rash courage even though this hesitation may be fatal. Cornelius sees that Jim is afraid of nothing and therefore does not know how to meet evil. He is proved right when Jim succumbs to Brown's fatal insinuation in their meeting at the river:

> "When he asked Jim with a sort of brusque despairing frankness, whether he himself--straight now--didn't understand that when 'it came to saving one's life in the dark, one didn't care who else went--three, thirty, three hundred people'--it was as if a demon had been whispering advice in his ear" (pp. 386-87).

Jim is blinded by this appeal to the hard fact that Brown must be destroyed for the good of the community, and he consequently takes Brown at his word when the marauder promises to leave the coast. When Jewel questions the wisdom of this, Jim replies that "men act badly sometimes without being much worse than others" (p. 394). When Jim finally dies, he believes that he has achieved the heroism he had been seeking in this savage world. There is "a proud and unflinching glance" (p. 416) on his face as he is shot by Doramin, for he believes now that he has expiated his guilt. Conrad ends the novel with the initial problem unanswered. It is open to Jim to accept his responsibility to Jewel and flee with her as she wishes, accepting in this way the awareness that a sacrificial death is ultimately meaningless. And yet such an escape is impossible if only because Jim would have been terrorized forever by the knowledge of his guilt.

In a story of this period, "The Lagoon," Arsat finds

himself in a predicament similar to that of Jim. He flees with his stolen bride, leaving his brother to face alone the hordes of the Rajah; he flees because it would have been certain death for them all to have remained on the shore. Arsat lives in terror and remorse until his bride dies and he decides to return to his enemies to expiate his guilt. In Lord Jim, it is Jewel who reflects the tragic significance of Jim's sacrificial death. She cries that he is mad and false as he leaves the compound. She is left to wander through Stein's house, reminding the old man of the bitter consequences of his philosophy. Jim has found his ideal in death; and yet he has ignored the reality of human responsibilities. Perhaps his acceptance of this reality might have exemplified a greater heroism; but this is a heroism of which he is incapable.

The ending of Lord Jim is tragic because Jim destroys both life itself and those who love him in meeting the responsibility he believes his destiny compels. He tells Jewel at the end that he would not have been worth having otherwise, and the truth of this is not missed by Marlow:

> "He passes away under a cloud, inscrutable at heart, forgotten, unforgiven, and excessively romantic. Not in the wildest days of his boyish visions could he have seen the alluring shape of such an extraordinary success! . . . He goes away from a living woman to celebrate his pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct. . . . He is gone, inscrutable at heart, and the poor girl is leading a sort of soundless, inert life in Stein's house. Stein has aged greatly of late. He feels it himself, and says often that he is 'preparing to leave all this; preparing to leave . . .' while he waves his hand sadly at his butterflies" (pp. 416-17).

For Marlow, Jim is "good enough" because he faces temptation

and pursues an ideal even in the face of the certain corruption of men. But no man is fully good enough to enact the role of the Christian here except the flawless man. It was Jim's illusion to believe that he could ever have been flawless: "It was a strange and melancholy illusion, evolved half-consciously like all our illusions, which I suspect only to be visions of remote unattainable truth, seen dimly" (p. 323).

The method of Lord Jim is distinctive because of Conrad's reliance on second-degree characters to convey the meaning of the novel. What is important is not so much what happens as what these characters assume has happened, and what they make of this. How then are the events themselves depicted? Conrad employs a reflector technique for this purpose. Certain other characters form an impression of what has happened, and communicate it. The method is entirely indirect. Thus, in the depiction of the Patna incident, the engineer is one reflector of what has happened. He deserts because, in his drunken purgatorial vision, he sees the sleeping pilgrims as reptiles. For Marlow this view explains nothing about Jim, and yet it has a validity of its own. Marlow has to explore Jim's character before he understands what has happened. The event is important for him only in its psychological significance. When he does come to a realization of what has happened, the incident takes on a symbolic meaning. The voyage has a cosmic significance. The German skipper is a devil, "the incarnation of everything vile and base that lurks in the world we love" (p. 21).

And the voyage itself is really a pilgrimage: ". . . we are only on sufferance here and got to pick our way in cross lights, watching every precious minute and every irremediable step, trusting we shall manage yet to go out decently in the end" (p. 35). Like Adam and Eve whose sin involved all mankind, the men of the Patna jeopardize the lives of the pilgrims. Yet the pilgrims are almost divinely saved, "held by an invisible hand on the brink of annihilation" (p. 97). Marlow comments that it was as if "the Omnipotence whose mercy they confessed had needed their humble testimony on earth for a while longer, and had looked down to make a sign, 'Thou shalt not!' to the ocean" (pp. 97-98).

In Lord Jim, Conrad uses numerous second-degree characters to help set forth what has happened and interpret the significance of the central events, the leap from the ship and the meeting at the river. It would seem that the alternation of points of view in the novel would culminate in a final statement pointing up a solution to the problems Marlow explores. It is characteristic of Conrad's method in the early novels that he leaves the problems unanswered. The crucial problem was how the individual was to meet the terrible reality of death. In the novels which followed Lord Jim, he continued to explore the psychology of suicide and sacrificial idealism.

The Problem of Awareness: The Technique of Nostromo

What the method of Lord Jim most clearly demonstrates is that its complex technique was developed as a solution to

certain problems of thematic representation. This fact is also true of Nostromo. In this novel, all of the characters are blind to important truths about themselves and about the general situation created by the revolution. As Conrad states in the preface, he is dealing with "events flowing from the passions of men short-sighted in good and evil" (p. ix). None of the interpreters of the situation have the insight of Marlow, Stein, or the French lieutenant. With the elimination of the Marlow type of character, the emphasis is put on action, the actual circumstances of the revolt and the fortunes of persons caught in it, and on a contrast of limited views and interpretations of these events. Because Conrad could not introduce into the novel an interpretive character who was not short-sighted, he faced different technical problems than in Lord Jim.

Much of the meaning of Nostromo unfolds in a number of paradoxes which stem from contradictions in pragmatist values. In this novel, Conrad is concerned with the effect of the "religion of silver and iron" (p. 71), the pragmatist ethics of capitalistic enterprise, on the lives of people whose acquisitive instincts make such enterprise possible, and on the larger masses of people exploited by sham idealisms. Conrad's point is that by pragmatist standards, "material interests," like the acquisitive instinct in man, inevitably destroy both the individual and the state. The question that pervades the novel is whether idealism in any form is a sufficient justification for the sacrifice of the

individual. It is obvious that Conrad faces the problem of economic and political struggle, the entrenchment of "material interests," because he believes that man cannot realize by himself any ideal truth, goodness, or heroism because of flaws in his nature. The irony is that man sometimes realizes these ideals through "material interests"; this is, for Conrad, the central paradox of his existence. As Dr. Monygham puts it, virtue is "the last thing a man ought to be sure of" (p. 310).

What are these paradoxes which reflect the ironies of social and individual idealism? To begin with, permanence and stability are for the characters of Nostromo absolute values, whatever suffering the struggle for them causes. As Gould sees it, they are necessary for the triumph of "material interests." Thus Conrad is ironic when he speaks of Avellanos, the republican idealist, who writes a history of his torturer, the butcherly "Citizen Saviour":

> "Yet this monster, inbrued in the blood of his countrymen, must not be held unreservedly to the execration of future years. It appears to be true that he, too, loved his country. He had given it twelve years of peace; and, absolute master of lives and fortunes as he was, he died poor. His worst fault, perhaps, was not his ferocity, but his ignorance" (p. 142).

The aim of revolution and subversion is to realize permanence and stability. And this is what makes the process absurd: for permanence and stability must always be threatened by the very nature of the "material interests" that make them possible. At the end of the novel, Father Corbelàn predicts that the mine workers, hindered from attaining their

aspirations, will struggle for wealth and power. Dr. Monygham says:

> "There is no peace and no rest in the development of material interests. They have their law, and their justice. But it is founded on expediency, and is inhuman; it is without rectitude, without the continuity and the force that can be found only in a moral principle. Mrs. Gould, the time approaches when all that Gould Concession stands for shall weigh as heavily upon the people as the barbarism, cruelty, and misrule of a few years back" (p. 511).

The second paradox is implied in the first: the means to realize an ideal often contradicts this ideal. Thus parliamentary democracy becomes a reality through the efforts of an idealist who is committed to the establishment of a just political order by force. Originally Charles Gould shared the conviction of his father that Federation and "rational liberty" could be realized without intrigue and economic subversion of the country. His conviction changes and his latent fanaticism emerges when he learns of the persecutions that have hastened his father's death:

> "What is wanted here is law, good faith, order, security. Any one can declaim about these things, but I pin my faith to material interests. Only let the material interests once get a firm footing, and they are bound to impose the conditions on which alone they can continue to exist. That's how your money-making is justified here in the face of lawlessness and disorder. It is justified because the security which it demands must be shared with an oppressed people. A better justice will come afterwards. That's your ray of hope" (p. 84).

Gould embarks on a venture which promises to realize his idea of rehabilitation, but which instead corrupts his values. His idealism is like that of his backer, Holroyd, whose purpose in financing the reopening of the mine is to endow churches with his share of the silver. Mrs. Gould remarks:

> "I heard those men talk among themselves. Can it be that they really wish to become, for an immense consideration, drawers of water and hewers of wood to all the countries and nations of the earth?"
>
> "A man must work to some end," Charles Gould said, vaguely (p. 71).

Gould is blind to the contradictions of his position: "In him the strictly practical instinct was in profound discord with the almost mystic view he took of his right. The Gould Concession was symbolic of abstract justice" (p. 402). It is Decoud instead who sees and comments on these contradictions.

Democratic ideas, Decoud believes, fail because the means to their achievement are essentially rotten. It is idealists like Avellanos and Barrios who are the dangerous Caesars and Pompeys, not the Monteros. This is because the Monteros are motivated by greed rather than by idealism, and it is only the idealist like Bento, motivated though he is by fear and egoism, who, in the name of order and justice, commits horrendous atrocities which bring political stability to Costaguana. Avellanos is simply more sentimental than Guzman Bento. Decoud comments:

> "There is a curse of futility upon our character: Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, chivalry and materialism, high-sounding sentiments and a supine morality, violent efforts for an idea and a sullen acquiescence in every form of corruption. We convulsed a continent for our independence only to become the passive prey of a democratic parody, the helpless victims of scoundrels and cut-throats, our institutions a mockery, our laws a farce--a Guzman Bento our master!" (p. 171).

Decoud recognizes that the theory of "political purity" must fail because there are no pure motives: "What is a conviction? A particular view of our personal advantage either practical or emotional. No one is a patriot for nothing" (p. 189).

And yet it is paradoxically through his foresight and planning that the Occidental Republic comes into existence. It is the sceptic, not the idealist, who makes republican aspirations a reality. Indeed, it is ultimately the self-seeking egoist, Nostromo, who makes its existence possible. And yet both Decoud and Nostromo die physically and spiritually in the process. The ultimate paradox is that the state is built upon private misfortunes. Dr. Monygham sees this at the end of the novel:

> The working of the usual public institutions presented itself to him most distinctly as a series of calamities overtaking private individuals and flowing logically from each other through hate, revenge, folly, and rapacity, as though they had been part of a divine dispensation (p. 399).

The result of this is a complete transvaluation wrought by the development of material interests and the exploitation of spiritual values. Thus duplicity and cunning become heroic virtues when they serve apparently noble causes. Conrad comments on this, referring to primitive times:

> To overcome your adversary was the great affair of life. Courage was taken for granted. But the use of intelligence awakened wonder and respect. Stratagems, providing they did not fail, were honourable; the easy massacre of an unsuspecting enemy evoked no feelings but those of gladness, pride, and admiration. Not perhaps that primitive men were more faithless than their descendents of to-day, but they went straighter to their aim, and were more artless in their recognition of success as the only standard of morality (pp. 385-86).

Conrad unfolds these paradoxes by contrasting individuals who reflect those characteristics of material interests which result in total moral anarchy: scepticism in Decoud and Dr. Monygham; corrupted idealism in Charles Gould; egoism in Nostromo. No matter how much any character sees

about others, he never sees the truth about himself. Decoud is different from Dr. Monygham only because he substitutes the truth of sensations for faith in principles. Monygham is saved from spiritual desolation by an illusion, whereas Decoud is destroyed by one. Decoud does not see that disbelief cannot save him from the destructive force of solitude which is the logical end of ethical nihilism. Alone on the island, he thinks that his resolves and hopes have collapsed; and he contradicts his personal philosophy by wishing to leave a correct impression of his feeling of spiritual desolation for those who remain. His ultimate desire is to make a vision of truth prevail, even the conviction of an insuperable scepticism. Monygham is saved from spiritual desolation by his unspoken love for Mrs. Gould. This plainly contradicts his stated conviction: "I put no spiritual value into my desires, or my opinions, or my actions. They have not enough vastness to give me room for self-flattery" (p. 318). Perhaps he experiences love for Mrs. Gould only because he needs an excuse to go on living. For despite his awareness into the futility of egoism, he is himself an egoist:

> Having had to encounter singlehanded during his period of eclipse many physical dangers, he was well aware of the most dangerous element common to them all: of the crushing, paralyzing sense of human littleness, which is what really defeats a man struggling with natural forces, alone, far from the eyes of his fellows (p. 433).

Decoud and Monygham reflect the central paradox of man's existence. Action is the corrective to the fatalities of pursuing individual notions of heroism and truth. Thus it is the danger Decoud and Nostromo risk in transporting the

silver out to sea that gives their experience significance:

> This common danger brought their differences in aim . . . into absolute prominence in the private vision of each. There was no bond of conviction, of common idea; they were merely two adventurers pursuing each his own adventure, involved in the same imminence of deadly peril. Therefore they had nothing to say to each other. But this peril, this only incontrovertible truth in which they shared, seemed to act as an inspiration to their mental and bodily powers (p. 295).

This idea is at the heart of Conrad's conviction: "In our activity alone do we find the sustaining illusion of an independent existence as against the whole scheme of things of which we form a helpless part" (p. 497). Because Decoud "recognized no other virtue than intelligence, and had erected passions into duties" (p. 498), he was a victim of "the disillusioned weariness which is the retribution meted out to intellectual audacity" (p. 501); and he was thus "swallowed up in the immense indifference of things" (p. 501).

Such a contrast allows Conrad to explore the significance of the action without depending on interpreter characters. The difference between Marlow and Monygham is that Monygham is himself involved in the action and is blind to his own self-delusion; Marlow in Lord Jim is not involved directly in the action. Although Conrad makes statements in his own person which clearly reveal his point of view, the real meaning of the novel comes out only in the ironies of contrast. The elaborate time-shifts serve to contrast points of view, motives, and events. This intention to show the implications of limited consciousness also explains the absence of any complex characterization. There is in each character

"a complete singleness of motive" which clearly defines his function in the scheme of the novel. The characterization of Nostromo illustrates this. As a contrast to Decoud, he is a victim of "the disenchanted vanity which is the reward of audacious action" (p. 501). His story is the element that organizes the novel. Thus the first two sections present different views and interpretations of his egoism, and its effect on the lives of those around him; the last part shows his disintegration through deception and self-betrayal. Like Gould, he is propelled by a single motive. It is Teresa who first sees that pride rules him. Fearful because her family's safety depends on him, she attacks his egoism which she strongly believes will destroy them all. Decoud recognizes the illusion of his chivalrousness:

> "The only thing he seems to care for . . . is to be well spoken of. An ambition fit for noble souls, but also a profitable one for an exceptionally intelligent scoundrel" (p. 246).

> "He is more naive than shrewd, more masterful than crafty, more generous with his personality than the people who make use of him are with their money. At least, that is what he thinks himself with more pride than sentiment" (p. 248).

Decoud sees finally that Nostromo "would have preferred to die rather than deface the perfect form of his egoism. Such a man was safe" (p. 301). The third section of the novel shows that Decoud is wrong, that such a man is not safe after all. Here Monygham takes Decoud's place as a commentator on egoism. Monygham has a limited awareness of the problem, but not of its total implication. What he does see, however, is that civilization is built upon the vanities of such men

as Nostromo, Gould, and Decoud who do not recognize the power of an illusion.

In the final section, Nostromo comes to believe that he has never been taken into account by the people he has faithfully served. Unlike Decoud, he is incapable of scepticism; he does not realize the truth of Monygham's warning that he is safe because he is needed. He begins to disintegrate morally when he sees Hirsch's tortured body and hears that Teresa has died. Consequently he agrees to make the run to Cayta for a completely selfish reason. His desire for personal glory is the apparently heroic act which assures the creation of the Occidental Republic and the fulfillment of Decoud's dream. The realization of an ideal is the result, then, of personal expediency rather than the triumph of a moral principle. Scepticism, corrupted idealism, and egoism are the lofty aspirations which fire the counter-revolution and make the new republic possible.[1] Nostromo is

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[1] There is a difference for Conrad between altruism and fidelity. Monygham does not see a contradiction in the fact that Nostromo can be persuaded to make the run to Cayta only by an appeal to self-interest. The test of inconstancy is rather the fidelity with which Nostromo supports a plan of action once committing himself to it. The only moral absolutes that Conrad is willing to recognize are fidelity and solidarity. Crankshaw states the problem thus: "Conrad, judging by his villains, seems to have been oppressed by a sense of evil, and evil to him meant an irresponsible force wandering at large in an ordered and respectable society. There is nothing to be done at all. It is a perpetual menace. . . . Reduced to their barest fundamentals the motive power behind the majority of the affairs rendered by Conrad derives from the opposition of two forces, responsibility and irresponsibility. And the allies of one are those celebrated human virtues, notably fidelity, which itself, as Conrad viewed the world, is the fountainhead of all the human virtues; for fidelity translated from a concept of action

to enjoy the reputation of a Garibaldi; his success is founded on egoism. It is only an apparent success, however, for horror at the theft destroys his confidence in his seemingly indestructible virtue. As with Jim, his egoism is the cause of his tragic existence. When he sees the lighthouse being built on the Great Isabel, he does not commit suicide because "he was possessed too strongly by the sense of his own existence, a thing of infinite duration in its changes, to grasp the notion of finality" (pp. 525-26). At the end, Monygham believes that he has been defeated by Nostromo's rectitude: he is never to learn that the fidelity of this man was corrupted.

The corrupted idealism of Charles Gould is contrasted with Decoud and Nostromo. He differs from his idealist father in his basic unsentimentalism and calm of mind. Gould has limited awareness, but Conrad does not show us much of his inner conflict. He gives instead a foreshortened view of it:

> Unlike Decoud, Charles Gould could not play lightly a part in a tragic farce. It was tragic enough for him in all conscience, but he could see no farcical element. He suffered too much under a conviction of irremediable folly. He was too severely practical and too idealistic to look upon its terrible humours with amusement, as Martin Decoud, the imaginative materialist, was able to do in the dry light of his scepticism. To him, as to all of us, the compromises with his conscience appeared uglier than ever in the light of failure. . . . The mine had corrupted his judgment by making him sick of bribing and intriguing merely to have his work left alone from day to day (pp. 364-65).

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involves of necessity the smooth and ready functioning of other qualities, such as courage, endurance, decisiveness, humility, self-sacrifice." Joseph Conrad, p. 25. I believe that fidelity is what Monygham refers to as the "moral principle" which alone has rectitude and continuity.

Gould realizes that he is bound to the uses that he has made of the silver, but "for all the uprightness of his character, he had something of an adventurer's easy morality which takes count of personal risk in the ethical appraising of his action" (p. 365). Monygham, not Gould, recognizes the price that the mine has exacted. At the end of the novel, when she hears of the invasion Father Corbelàn is plotting, Mrs. Gould wonders if there will be peace and rest in the country. She cannot admit that the concession can ever become as oppressive as the barbarism of Guzman Bento. And Monygham wonders: "Was it for this that her life had been robbed of all the intimate felicities of daily affection which her tenderness needed as the human body needs air to breathe?" (p. 512). We see little of Gould after the first section of the novel. His moral disintegration is seen in its effect upon his wife.

In the beginning, Emilia Gould does not want to admit the power of "material interests." Gradually she comes to sense that her husband has changed: "A man haunted by a fixed idea is insane. He is dangerous even if that idea is an idea of justice; for may he not bring the heaven down pitilessly upon a loved head?" (p. 379). In his portrayal of Mrs. Gould, Conrad moves closer to a statement of the one positive value he commits himself to in Chance and afterwards--the power of love. Material interests fail Gould because they rob him of his power to love. It is activity alone which saves him from complete negation. It was action that gave Decoud's enterprise meaning; it is at the heart of

Nostromo's egoism. But there is no refuge in action for Mrs. Gould even though she deludes herself that she is "needed": "Small and dainty, as if radiating a light of her own in the deep shade of the interlaced boughs, she resembled a good fairy, weary with a long career of well-doing, touched by the withering suspicion of the uselessness of her labours, the powerlessness of her magic" (p. 520). At first she is passive before her husband's acceptance of "a puerile and bloodthirsty game of murder and rapine played with terrible earnestness by depraved children" (p. 49). Her complete desolation emerges only in the final pages of the novel. At the end she gains a factitious power when she decides to keep the secret of the silver even from Monygham. To assume that Mrs. Gould represents "the power of love" is to ignore the fact that her love is powerless to work any good even as Linda's cry is lost above the unhuman sea.[1]

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[1] Some critics have assumed that Mrs. Gould and Linda Viola show the positive value of absolute love. Paul Wiley states: "Love as a corrective to tragic error is eulogized more forthrightly in Nostromo . . . it stands forth as the single value transcending the egotism of a materialistic world. At the end of the novel the storm created by the passions of men subsides to give place to the image of the solitary Linda tending the light above the darkness in which lies the treasure of the mine." Conrad's Measure of Man, p. 99. Miss Winifred Lynskey states: "Nevertheless, if the evil wins, it does not do so before the human beings who resist it have shown magnificent qualities of faith, compassion, and courage. These qualities evil cannot destroy. They are Conrad's answer to the problem of evil." "The Silver of the Mine," Modern Fiction Studies, I (February, 1955), 21. It is true that love becomes a provisional saving power in the later novels even in the face of its ambiguous tendency for misunderstanding and evil. Love could not save Jim from the destructiveness of his illusion; it does not save Heyst from the necessity of personal sacrifice; it does not save Gould, Nostromo, or Decoud from the spiritual deaths worked upon them by the silver.

The minor characters of Nostromo serve similar functions. This is evident in the way Guzman Bento, Sotillo, Hirsch, and Mitchell are contrasts in fear and cowardice. Even though he is an idealist, Bento is motivated by fear; and, like Montero and Sotillo, he dies at the hands of his own soldiers. Sotillo, however, has none of Bento's idealism. Anxious to discover where the silver is hidden, he is driven by greed to torture the cowardly Hirsch. Sotillo is always visibly trembling in a half-rage at the thought of lost opportunities. He is a contrast to Captain Mitchell. Mitchell has none of Sotillo's cunning, and he remains cool-headed in the face of possible torture only because of his obsession with the loss of his gold chronometer watch which Sotillo's soldiers have filched:

> The old sailor, with all his small weaknesses and absurdities, was constitutionally incapable of entertaining for any length of time a fear of his personal safety. It was not so much firmness of soul as the lack of a certain kind of imagination--the kind whose undue development caused intense suffering to Señor Hirsch; that sort of imagination which adds the blind terror of bodily suffering and of death, envisaged as an accident to the body alone, strictly--to all the other apprehensions on which the sense of one's existence is based. Unfortunately, Captain Mitchell had not much penetration of any kind; characteristic, illuminating trifles of expression, action, or movement, escaped him completely. He was too pompously and innocently aware of his own existence to observe that of others (p. 338).

The central irony here is that it is the cowardly Hirsch who, in his complete terror, attains a spurious heroism by desperately spitting in Sotillo's face. Here once again is the essential meaninglessness of personal heroism and the dangers of imagination.

These minor characters also serve as reflectors of the events of the novel. It is the stupid and pompous Captain Mitchell who describes some of the events of the uprising in his own short-sighted way. Instead of introducing other reflector characters to put these events into another focus, Conrad takes over the narrative and describes the events of the revolution directly, allowing his meaning to come out in contrasts as much as possible. The sections of the novel are organized to make these contrasts stand out. Thus the first section, "The Silver of the Mine," deals with the influences and events which lead to Gould's disintegration. Conrad is concerned mainly with the stages of the initial corruption, and only cursorily with its aftermath. As we have seen, it is not until the third section that the effect of this disintegration on Mrs. Gould is shown. In the first section, the Bento and Ribiera regimes, despotic and parliamentary democracy, are contrasted. Both are more "ideal" in conception than the more oppressive imperialist democracy of the last section. The section "The Isabels," shows the disintegration of Decoud. The main event is the transportation of the silver, an experience which tests and ultimately destroys Decoud's scepticism. The section significantly does not show the entrance of Sotillo's and Montero's forces into Sulaco. Nor is the story of Nostromo's "fatality" told as Captain Mitchell promises it will be at the end of the first section. The section ends once the reasons for Decoud's disintegration are established. Conrad waits until after he describes Nostromo's defection to narrate the circumstances of Decoud's

suicide. The second section concludes as Nostromo sinks the lighter and prepares to swim to shore. The third section, "The Lighthouse," shows the moral disintegration of Nostromo. Nostromo ends with the provisional triumph of material interests in the face of a possible revolt at the mine, and the death of Nostromo--a death which brings to a climax the series of personal catastrophes which inexorably follow provisional successes.

In this way, Conrad creates meaning without using second-degree interpreter characters. It will be objected that Conrad extensively comments in his own person, but this commentary is never an omniscient one. It never assumes to know or see more than the characters themselves. Unlike Marlow, Stein, and the French lieutenant in Lord Jim, characters in Nostromo who have any awareness at all are directly implicated in an action which determines the limitation of what they see and know.

The Problem of Awareness: "Heart of Darkness"

In Nostromo Conrad is sceptical still of the power of insight to protect the individual from the doom of solitude which, for Decoud, was the apex of awareness. Morton D. Zabel states: ". . . it is the obedience of his characters to some law of action or honor that saves them from the nihilism of their private worlds of solitude or negation."[1]

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[1] The Portable Conrad, p. 35. Zabel also states: "Thus love, or the sense of honor, or the obligation of duty, or even the social instinct itself, enters the novels as a means whereby the individual is forced out of his isolation and morbid surrender" (p. 29).

Conrad was unwilling to say that awareness without action was a kind of salvation. The stupid man like Captain McWhirr might go through life never facing the shock of self-knowledge; but most men are not fortunate enough to be stupid. In The Nigger of the Narcissus and Nostromo, Conrad shows that it is through forms of egoism that man is shocked into insight. And such insight, the simple awareness that all men die, that isolation is the central fact of human existence, leads to delusion or suicide. The question for Conrad, as Stein says, is not how to be cured but rather how to live. Salvation either through awareness or tenaciousness of character is a delusion because man's nature is flawed by forms of egoism. The answer for man, if an answer is to be found, is in forms of activity which take an unhuman code as their measure. This makes endurance possible. The point that Conrad makes in The Nigger of the Narcissus is that such a solution is possible only for a time because man is inevitably faced with the reality of death.

It might be asked, in fact, how aware any character in these early novels actually is of the corruption of his hopes and values. Perhaps the only character who reaches any real awareness is Willems in An Outcast of the Islands. The rest like Almayer find temporary escapes in forgetfulness and delusion. As we have seen, imagination is one form of egoism, scepticism another. Jim is destroyed because he exaggerates his fear of what will happen to a point where he is robbed of action. Captain Mitchell is saved because he

has not imagination enough to be afraid: all that he sees is a life of disorder because he has been robbed of his gold chronometer watch. Imagination is the flaw in man which mars his existence, for it allows man to believe that he is centrally important in a world where individuals are merely the means to the realization of material ends. It is his lack of imagination which saves Captain McWhirr from destruction and helps him to guide the Nan-Shan to safety; he may lack the passion and imagination of bolder men, but he endures, like Singleton in The Nigger of the Narcissus, who "steered with care." The least contemptible man for Conrad is he who fails magnificently even as he reaches for an ideal impossible of realization.

Thus Conrad denies the possibility of any enduring personal salvation. There is nothing really heroic in striving against fate. In one of his letters to Madame Poradowska he writes:

> The fact is, however, that one becomes useful only on realizing the utter insignificance of the individual in the scheme of the universe. When one well understands that in oneself one is nothing and that a man is worth neither more nor less than the work he accomplishes with honesty of purpose and means, and within the strict limits of his duty towards society, only then is one the master of his conscience, with the right to call himself a man. Otherwise, were he more attractive than Prince Charming, richer than Midas, wiser than Doctor Faust himself, the two-legged featherless creature is only a despicable thing sunk in the mud of all the passions.[1]

Like Dr. Monygham, Conrad believed in "the continuity and the

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[1] J. A. Gee and P. J. Sturm, Letters of Joseph Conrad to Marguerite Poradowska (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), pp. 45-46.

force that can be found only in a moral principle," for such a principle is essentially unhuman and fosters action only for the sake of principle--hence his judgment on Singleton.[1]

In "Heart of Darkness," the failure of man to admit the corruption of his egoism, his powerlessness to reach a personal conception of Godhead, brings catastrophe. Conrad's technique in this story marks an important transition in his treatment of awareness. Unlike Lord Jim and Nostromo, "Heart of Darkness" is concerned with a man, like Hervey in "The Return," who is moving toward a conscious realization of the ravages wrought by egoism. The significance of its technique is that Marlow, the reflector character who tells the story, is directly implicated in the action. Kurtz's tragedy is registered entirely through Marlow's own consciousness. For the first time, Marlow changes as a result of his intensified awareness of evil. Before he even meets Kurtz, he experiences a deep kinship with the savage darkness where natives dance in frenzied excitement:

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[1] Paul Wiley states the problem in incisive terms: "It is not unjustifiable to suppose that there lingered in Conrad's thought a trace of regret for the replacement of a man-centered design of creation with one in which the individual and his values become insignificant" (p. 19). "It is often his practice to set virtues closely associated with a Christian tradition, like those of asceticism and chivalry, beside impulses of sensuality and vanity; and although the resulting incongruity often serves an ironic aim in ridiculing the mere pretense of ascetic or chivalric action as a departure from the norm of conduct, the emphasis also falls upon the decline of these ideals as determinants of behavior. In parts of his work, and especially those wherein he deals with loss of the will to live, he seems to betray apprehension that this split between systems of belief may affect the survival of Western man" (p. 20).

> "Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you--you so remote from the night of first ages--could comprehend."[1]

Perhaps the truth about man is in these primitive urges:

> "Let the fool gape and shudder--the man knows, and can look on without a wink. But he must at least be as much of a man as these on the shore. He must meet that truth with his own true stuff--with his own inborn strength. Principles won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags--rags that would fly off at the first good shake" (p. 540).

Marlow believes that he is saved from "a howl and a dance" by the mundane facts, the "surface truth" of life:

> "I had to mess about with white lead and strips of woolen blanket helping to put bandages on those leaky steam pipes--I tell you. I had to watch the steering, and circumvent those snags, and get the tin-pot along by hook or by crook. There was surface truth enough in these things to save a wiser man" (pp. 540-41).

He and his helmsman understand each other because of their fidelity to the code of seamanship.

Marlow knows that he must defeat the symbolic embodiment of evil in Kurtz, and he recognizes that the bonds of human intercourse are broken between Kurtz and himself: ". . . I had to deal with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low" (p. 586). Kurtz confuses pragmatic means with ideal ends in his statement, "My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river" (p. 559). Kurtz's exultation of will gives Marlow "the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence" (p. 561), yet he wants to do good. His idealism ends with his terrible vision

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[1] The Portable Conrad, p. 540. All subsequent references are to this edition.

into the meaning of evil and his warning to Marlow to "Exterminate all the brutes!" (p. 562). Marlow collapses from the experience, recovering to find himself walking the streets of the city in search of Kurtz's "Intended."

Conrad introduces Kurtz gradually through the rich consciousness of Marlow. As in his treatment of Charles Gould, Conrad gives few glimpses into Kurtz's troubled consciousness in a reflected view. This is because the significance of Kurtz's existence lies in its effect on Marlow, in what he feels and does as a result of knowing Kurtz. The real subject of the work is the effect of "the mysterious life of the wilderness" on the individual for whom such initiation into darkness is detestable and incomprehensible. The psychological reality that Conrad creates is Marlow's reality. Kurtz shows Marlow the horror of self-betrayal. What impresses him most is Kurtz's complete unrestraint. The wilderness had awakened "forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions" (p. 586). Earlier in the tale, Marlow had marvelled at the restraint of the cannibals working on the steamer and suffering from hunger:

> "What possible restraint? Was it superstition, disgust, patience, fear--or some kind of primitive honor? No fear can stand up to hunger, no patience can wear it out, disgust simply does not exist where hunger is; and as to superstition, beliefs, and what you may call principles, they are less than chaff in a breeze" (pp. 548-49).

Ultimately Marlow affirms his belief that Kurtz is a remarkable man because he accepts self-knowledge:

> "If such is the form of ultimate wisdom, then life is a greater riddle than some of us think it to be. I was within a hair's-breadth of the last opportunity for

> pronouncement, and I found with humiliation that probably I would have nothing to say. This is the reason why I affirm that Kurtz was a remarkable man. He had something to say. He said it. Since I had peeped over the edge myself, I understand better the meaning of his stare, that could not see the flame of the candle, but was wide enough to embrace the whole universe, piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness. He had summed up--he had judged. 'The horror!" (p. 592).

It is only through Marlow that we have this glimpse into Kurtz's awareness of his moral disintegration: "I saw on that ivory face the expression of somber pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror--of an intense and hopeless despair" (p. 591). Conrad sums up in this sentence his tragic vision of man. At the end it is Marlow who makes possible for Kurtz's "Intended" "that great and saving illusion that shone with an unearthly glow in the darkness" (p. 601). There is a suggestion at the end that she sees in Kurtz the same Christ-like figure dying for a vision that Mrs. Haldin sees in her son. It does not seem to me accidental that Kurtz and Christ are close in sound. There is a larger, more encompassing ironic meaning conveyed through Marlow in the closing pages of the story: a fallen hero, corrupted by a personal vision of a compelling destiny, becomes divine in the eyes of those who reflect his glory. Conrad thus uses Marlow to reflect a double vision.

The Emergent Consciousness: Under Western Eyes

In "Heart of Darkness," the major reflector character, Marlow, is directly involved in the action and is changed by his experience, as he is not in Lord Jim. As in Lord Jim and Nostromo, the technique of "Heart of Darkness" seems to

have been developed by Conrad as one solution to the problem of the representation of emergent consciousness. In "Heart of Darkness," Conrad explored the emergent consciousness of Marlow to the reality of evil; the emergent consciousness of Kurtz is seen from the outside. In Under Western Eyes, Conrad develops the representation of emergent consciousness in the central character of the novel, Razumov, rather than in a reflector character like Marlow. Under Western Eyes has four main parts. The first part ends sharply with Razumov's recognition that he has been deluding himself; the subsequent scenes show the effect of his actions and final confession on other characters. Conrad's intention is to bring individuals to sudden revelations and show their reactions to these revelations. These reactions are shown directly without the interposition of reflector characters. Conrad states in the preface that he used the professor of languages "to produce the effect of actuality."[1] He was concerned with "the aspect, the character, and the fate of the individuals as they appeared to the Western Eyes of the old teacher of languages" (p. viii).

In the first part of the novel, the teacher imaginatively reconstructs the psychological motivation for the betrayal. He reconstructs in his own words, with Razumov's diary as his source of information, the surprise visit of Haldin in Razumov's rooms, the reactions of the police and the students to the assassination, Razumov's inner conflict

[1] Joseph Conrad, Under Western Eyes (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1947), p. ix. All subsequent references are to this edition.

and ultimate decision to betray Haldin, and the visit to Ziemianitch. The narrative is foreshortened. The second part begins shortly after Razumov has come to Geneva on a mission for the Russian secret police. This part is almost entirely concerned with Nathalia Haldin, whose experience is again interpreted by the teacher. Nathalia reveals another facet of the central experience of the novel, the initiation of the idealist into evil. She is an important contrast to Razumov in this respect. Her life seems to begin where her brother's ends, for the last thing we hear of him is that he became deathly silent when he heard from the police that it was Razumov who betrayed him. The evil that Nathalia meets is the corrupted idealism of Peter Ivanovitch and his circle. She meets Razumov just after witnessing the cruel mistreatment of Tekla. Meeting Razumov immediately afterwards, she sees in him the lofty and solitary grandeur of untarnished idealism. The second part thus contrasts two essentially idealistic people meeting for the first time the test of evil. For Razumov, his meeting with Nathalia is the beginning of his realization of the meaning of betrayal. The third section brings Razumov's moral crisis to a climax by having Razumov and Nathalia fall in love. Razumov, for the first time, is assured that his secret is safe when he hears from Sophia Antonovna that Ziemianitch has committed suicide and is believed to have been Haldin's betrayer. But because he has fallen in love with Nathalia, Razumov is forced to face the reality of self-betrayal. In the last section, most of the action is seen through Razumov's eyes because

of the fullness of his awareness. Only the final view of his collapse and the visit of Nathalia and the professor to the conspirators are seen through the eyes of the teacher.

Conrad, like James, constructs his plot to involve individuals in inescapable dilemmas from which, if they have moral stature, they cannot release themselves without suffering and sacrifice. He so constructs Under Western Eyes that the crucial moment comes in Razumov's self-betrayal rather than in the betrayal of Haldin. In a letter to John Galsworthy, written just before he began the novel, Conrad revealed the original conception, a plan that would have considerably changed the kind of moral choice Razumov would have to make:

> The psychological developments leading to Razumov's betrayal of Haldin, to his confession of the fact to his wife and to the death of these people (brought about mainly by the resemblance of their child to the late Haldin), form the real subject of the story.[1]

By having Razumov make the choice at the point where he realizes the success of his deception, Conrad minimizes the importance of chance as the force that brings the hero to a dilemma. As Thomas Hardy said, fate is character. The four-part structure of the novel is designed to contrast the experience of persons growing into knowledge of their hidden potentialities. This is true of Haldin too, for he slowly comes to realize the nature of his guilt in his final moments with Razumov.

What we have in Under Western Eyes is the depiction

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[1] Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad, Vol. II, p. 65.

of a central consciousness. Razumov, "a solitary individuality," "lonely in the world as a man swimming in the deep sea" (p. 10), has secretly yearned for the kind of respect that will be earned by his merits as a scholar rather than by social position. Like Hyacinth Robinson in The Princess Casamassima, Razumov is the son of an aristocrat; but unlike Robinson, he is driven to a respect for stability and tradition by an enforced solitude which causes him to put material security above any fanatical ideal. And yet Razumov is latently fanatical, unlike Haldin who is tragically committed to methods he instinctively loathes and believes wrong. His fanaticism is one truth about himself that Razumov has to face. Haldin senses this in him from the first; like his sister Nathalia, he could himself never have sacrificed a person bound to him by some enduring or even temporary need as Razumov has done. Like Avellanos and Barrios who can and will sacrifice human interests for an idea, Razumov finds the strength to sacrifice Haldin to his own fears. Perhaps it is this fanaticism which Haldin suspects vaguely about Razumov when he watches him after Razumov has returned. Haldin, in any case, speaks of something else:

> "But consider that the true destroyers are they who destroy the spirit of progress and truth, not the avengers who merely kill the bodies of the persecutors of human dignity. Men like me are necessary to make room for self-contained, thinking men like you" (p. 19).

It is ironic that after the betrayal Razumov cannot think; he is to make the tragic discovery that there is no such thing as "a self-contained existence." Haldin, on the other hand, is remorseful because he realizes that he has sacrificed

human life for a supposedly ideal end. What Haldin sees about Razumov in that last moment is that terrorism is not the proper means to the achievement of order in the world, as Razumov tries to tell him. Haldin ignores Razumov's declaration that tradition is sacred and sees only the horror in Razumov's view of what he has done.

The four-part structure further reveals the extent to which Razumov is torn between two political views. In his need to rationalize the betrayal, he sees autocratic rule differently than when he originally faced General T. Before, he had found a rationale for autocratic brutality and the suppression of the individual: "Better that thousands should suffer than that a people should become a disintegrated mass, helpless like dust in the wind. Obscurantism is better than the light of incendiary torches" (p. 34). The real reason for the betrayal, however, is Razumov's fear that his involvement with Haldin will rob him of the feeling of security given to him by an authoritarian tradition. The teacher comments:

> Who knows what true loneliness is--not the conventional word, but the naked terror? To the lonely themselves it wears a mask. The most miserable outcast hugs some memory or some illusion. Now and then a fatal conjunction of events may lift the veil for an instant. For an instant only. No human being could bear a steady view of moral solitude without going mad (p. 39).

Conrad reiterates the impossibility of personal striving, the futility of a personal heroism and idealism. It is the routine of everyday life that makes faith in an ordered reality possible, and when this faith is destroyed, security is

destroyed with it: "The sense of life's continuity depended on trifling bodily impressions" (p. 53). It is consistent with Conrad's ironic vision that Razumov should immerse himself in illusory aspirations. His torment is as much a result of his inescapable disillusion and insecurity as it is of self-deception and betrayal. The police raid undermines his confidence in a safe existence. What Mikulin shows him is the merciless logic that autocracy shares with the revolutionary philosophy: the unimportance of the individual. In a world where the individual is unimportant, moral isolation means nothing. And yet Razumov knows that it means everything. He is coming to see the evil of a system which destroyed Haldin and himself, which forced them into murder and betrayal.

It is for this reason that he reacts so violently against Peter Ivanovitch in the third part. It is just as well to have no illusions about the conspirators, he tells Peter Ivanovitch. Peter Ivanovitch answers that "the man who says that he has no illusions has at least that one," (p. 207), recognizing in Razumov "something of a Brutus" (p. 208). When he attacks the hypocrisy of Peter Ivanovitch's dealings with Mme. de S. to Sophia Antonovna, she echoes Mikulin that the wealthy lady has her uses. Are we to assume that Razumov accepts this insight into the psychology of the autocrat and the revolutionist? Like other Conrad characters, Razumov rejects the insight his experience has brought him to. Gradually he begins to feel that the Revolution has sought him out through Haldin:

> Back to his rooms, where the Revolution had sought him out to put to a sudden test his dormant instincts, his half-conscious thoughts and almost wholly unconscious ambitions, by the touch as of some furious and dogmatic religion, with its call to frantic sacrifices, its tender resignations, its dreams and hopes uplifting the soul by the side of the most sombre moods of despair (p. 294).

He feels that the "dark prestige of the Haldin mystery fell on him, clung to him like a poisoned robe it was impossible to fling off" (p. 299). The imagery suggests the transformation of the Judas-betrayer into a disciple haunted by the sacrifice of Christ-Haldin. Mrs. Haldin thinks of her son's betrayer as a Judas: "Even amongst the Apostles of Christ there was found a Judas" (p. 115). Haldin is Christ-like in his acceptance of what Razumov reveals to him. Haldin has followed the logic of an impassioned ideal to its terrible consequences; his new insight into the meaning of evil comes only when he begins to examine his act in doubt and horror. Ironically, it is Razumov who comes to accept the rightness of Haldin's act. He begins to look upon Haldin as a Christ-figure. He does not see that Haldin has left his room and died in complete despair. Razumov's perception of Haldin as a Christ-figure is clear in the indirect narration of Haldin's interrogation, and in his refusal to answer any questions knowing that Razumov has betrayed him. Razumov even thinks that he may have been "the chosen instrument of Providence" (p. 301). The final scene is climactic because Razumov challenges the validity of an impossible ideal in the figure of Nathalia. He brings before her the terrible truth of his solitude, the price a man must pay for an ideal; he has alienated himself from the society of man like Haldin

who, in his few moments with Razumov, found himself isolated from the one person in whom he had complete confidence. Razumov cannot finish his lie to Nathalia because he sees that the solidarity of personal relationships, of love, stands above any idea. And Nathalia has put her confidence in him, just as Victor had, without being certain of his worth. And more than this, she has loved him. Razumov had earlier been upset by the awareness that he was the kind of man the secret police could have "confidence" in. He expresses the importance of confidence to him to Nathália:

> "It meant that there is in you no guile, no deception, no falsehood, no suspicion--nothing in your heart that could give you a conception of a living, acting, speaking lie, if ever it came in your way. That you are a predestined victim" (p. 349).

After revealing to Nathalia that he is the betrayer of her brother, Razumov leaves, carrying off her veil, for him the veil of a saint. Her vision at the end is apocalyptic:

> "I believe that the future will be merciful to us all. Revolutionist and reactionary, victim and executioner, betrayer and betrayed, they shall all be pitied together when the light breaks on our black sky at last. Pitied and forgotten; for without that there can be no union and no love" (p. 353).

In his diary, Razumov communicates his vision to Nathalia:

> You were appointed to undo the evil by making me betray myself back into truth and peace. . . . And you have done it in the same way, too, in which he ruined me: by forcing upon me your confidence. Only what I detested him for, in you ended by appearing noble and exalted. . . . I was given up to evil. . . . I had to confirm myself in my contempt and hate for what I betrayed. . . . To save me, your trustful eyes had to entice my thought to the very edge of the blackest treachery (pp. 358-59).

There is also his remarkable perception of the limitations

of personal striving: "I had neither the simplicity nor the courage nor the self-possession to be a scoundrel, or an exceptionally able man" (p. 362). But this perception is lost in the turmoil of his personal sacrifice, his intuition that he has been marked by the revolution. When he makes his confession before the conspirators, he speaks the language of the revolutionist; he pays tribute to the worthless Ziemianitch as "a man of the people--a bright Russian soul" (p. 365). He finds in his deaf and crippled state a factitious independence in which he has only Tekla to love and care for him. In his unhappy exile, he has become a prophet talking endlessly of aspirations. After reading his diary, Sophia Antonovna sees that Razumov has experienced a true conversion to the cause of the Revolution. What the teacher sees, however, is that the best people have given themselves up to self-suppression so that the worst may emerge to take over. The teacher comments on

> . . . the moral corruption of an oppressed society where the noblest aspirations of humanity, the desire of freedom, an ardent patriotism, the love of justice, the sense of pity, and even the fidelity of simple minds are prostituted to the lusts of hate and fear, the inseparable companions of an uneasy despotism (p. 7).

It is this view of the moral consequences of political anarchy that Conrad confirms in the preface to the novel:

> The ferocity and imbecility of an autocratic rule rejecting all legality and in fact basing itself upon complete moral anarchism provokes the no less imbecile and atrocious answer of a purely Utopian revolutionism encompassing destruction by the first means to hand, in the strange conviction that a fundamental change of hearts must follow the downfall of any given human institution (p. x).

Here is the ultimate significance of his experience that

Razumov himself does not see. Conrad uses the teacher of languages to express this view: it is the view of Razumov's experience that the "Western eyes" of the teacher reflects. Thus Conrad is even here faced with the depiction of a limitation of vision. His solution to this problem at the end of Under Western Eyes points directly to his handling of emergent consciousness in Chance where, for the first time, he combines the technique of Lord Jim and "Heart of Darkness" with the direct depiction of emergent awareness.

The Principles of Characterization

Paul Wiley argues in Conrad's Measure of Man that Conrad sought to project "the most subtle moral and psychological matters through dramatic and concrete situations."[1] Wiley refers to this as a "visual technique,"[2] and seems to agree with Crankshaw that Conrad abandoned psychological analysis after his first two novels in favor of objective description. What Wiley says about Conrad's "visual technique" seems true, but he does not explain the complex techniques of characterization in the novels just examined. In these novels, the amount of psychological analysis depends on whether the emphasis is on a reconstruction of events as in Nostromo, on a reconstruction of motives as in Under Western Eyes, or on the philosophical implications of evident motives as in Lord Jim. In Chance, Marlow, with the help of other reflector characters, explores possible psychological reasons for what has happened, and in the second part of the novel,

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[1] Conrad's Measure of Man, p. 13. [2] Ibid., p. 120.

reconstructs events from new insights into the psychology of the principals.

Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Conrad inclines in these novels to what Lubbock describes as "picture," which is "the reflection of somebody's mind."[1] Lubbock explains the reason for this in words that reflect Ford's defense of "the New Form of the Novel":

> After all, the book is torn away from its author and given out to the world; the author is no longer a wandering jongleur who enters the hall and utters his book to the company assembled, retaining his book as his own inalienable possession, himself and his actual presence and his real voice indivisibly a part of it. The book that we read has no such support; it must bring its own recognisances. And in the fictitious picture of life the effect of validity is all in all and there can be no appeal to an external authority; and so there is an inherent weakness in it if the mind that knows the story and the eye that sees it remain unaccountable. At any moment they may be questioned, and the only way to silence the question is somehow to make the mind and the eye objective, to make them facts in the story. When the point of view is definitely included in the book, when it can be recognized and verified there, then every side of the book is equally wrought and fashioned. Otherwise it may seem like a thing meant to stand against a wall, with one side left in the rough; and there is no wall for a novel to stand against.[2]

Finally, the reflector technique makes it possible for Conrad to "dramatize the seeing eye" as well in "Heart of Darkness" and Under Western Eyes.

Thus the characterization of minor figures and second-degree interpreters like Marlow and the French lieutenant is determined almost entirely by thematic considerations. One important kind of character is the "flat" character who is distinguished by one or two traits which easily explain his

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[1] The Craft of Fiction, p. 115. [2] Ibid., p. 116.

attitudes and conduct. E. M. Forster first distinguished "flat" and "round" characters:

> We may divide characters into flat and round. Flat characters were called "humours" in the seventeenth century, and are sometimes called types, and sometimes caricatures. In their purest form, they are constructed round a single idea or quality: when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round. The really flat character can be expressed in one sentence such as "I never will desert Mr. Micawber."[1]

W. K. Wimsatt qualifies this distinction in an important way:

> It remains to be said, however, that the many traits of the round character . . . are harmonized or unified, and that if this is so, then all the traits are chosen by a principle, just as are the traits of the flat character. . . . Something further must be supposed--a special interrelation in the traits of the round character. . . . A kind of awareness of self . . . with a pleasure in the fact, is perhaps the central principle which instead of simplifying the attributes gives each one a special function in the whole, a double or reflex value.[2]

Like Captain Robinson in Lord Jim, the "flat" character serves as a contrast to other characters and never realizes the significance of what he represents. The difference between Captain Robinson and Kurtz is that Kurtz finally comes to an awareness of the "horror." Our impression of Kurtz is richer because his final moment of illumination increases the suggestion of complexity. In the novels that preceded Chance, characterization is the creation of a "known constant"; the reactions of such characters are usually of a kind because their psychology is simplified. The crucial difference between Monygham and Captain Robinson is that Monygham is

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[1] E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), pp. 103-104.

[2] W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., The Verbal Icon (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), pp. 78-79.

aware of something; Robinson is not. There are more Monyghams in the novels than Robinsons because insight for Conrad is the essence of experience. The meaning of Typhoon lies in what Jukes fails to see about Captain McWhirr. Almost all of the novels and stories that preceded and followed Chance have to do with progressions of insight. The climax is usually a moment when a character is brought to partial awareness, as in "The Return"; or to full awareness, as in Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands, and Under Western Eyes; or to no awareness at all, as in Lord Jim.

The extent to which the character is implicated in an action sometimes determines the degree of awareness the character can sustain. Conrad is usually concerned with the character like Monygham who has only limited insight. This character is never disinterested enough to be able to consider other possible views of a situation. He is often susceptible to the corruption wrought by a sustained or a fleeting awareness of mortal weakness. Thus Monygham is implicated in the action of Nostromo to the extent that he does not recognize the vanity of his personal illusion. In Typhoon, none of the characters through whom McWhirr's character is revealed has any insight into the man who saved their lives. McWhirr himself, "faithful to facts, which alone his consciousness reflected,"[1] has no awareness whatever of the implications of his experience:

> But he had never been given a glimpse of immeasurable strength and of immoderate wrath, the wrath that passes exhausted but never appeased--the wrath and fury of the passionate sea. He knew it existed, as we know that

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[1] The Portable Conrad, p. 203.

> crime and abominations exist; he had heard of it as a peaceable citizen in a town that hears of battles, famines, and floods, and yet knows nothing of what these things mean . . . . Captain MacWhirr had sailed over the surface of the oceans as some men go skimming over the years of existence to sink gently into a placid grave, ignorant of life to the last, without ever having been made to see all it may contain of perfidy, of violence, and of terror. There are on sea and land such men thus fortunate--or thus disdained by destiny or by the sea.[1]

Perhaps the most important kind of reflector character is the character who is not directly involved in the action, who often narrates the events of the story after they have taken place. Thus Marlow in "Heart of Darkness" contemplates the changes in his own consciousness that resulted from his experience with Kurtz. This kind of character may, however, be indirectly involved in the action. In Chance, Marlow indirectly prevents Flora from leaping from the cliff, but he does not influence her thinking or experience in any direct way; he is merely a sounding-board for her distraught emotions. In Lord Jim, Marlow offers advice, but he can in no way influence the forces that inexorably lead Jim to tragedy. There is no guarantee, moreover, that what such a commentator sees is ultimately true; usually his interpretation is true if it is psychologically coherent, and if statements and events confirm it. Conrad's intention was apparently to eliminate the omniscient narrator so that the experience would emerge indirectly. His idea was that "straight vision is bad form."[2] If the aim was, as Ford said, "to reproduce

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[1] The Portable Conrad, pp. 207-208.

[3] Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad, Vol. I, p. 208.

life in words, life as it presents itself to an intelligent observer,"[1] then a direct view of experience would violate psychological reality as any intelligent observer knows it. Certainly it would be a mistake to consider Marlow as a makeshift substitute for the conventional omniscient narrator. Marlow reflects the unconscious changes in awareness that the central characters themselves undergo as well as the "truth" as the author believes it to exist. The narrator of "Karain: A Memory" does reflect the author's view that Karain's fears are empty superstitions. It cannot be denied that the Marlow of Lord Jim and Chance does reflect many of Conrad's own views, but it is clear that these statements are not in themselves valid interpretations of experience just because it is Marlow who utters them. When Conrad begins to handle characters who become gradually and totally conscious of the truth, his method changes in important ways. In Under Western Eyes, the consciousness of Razumov is at the center of the novel, and the teacher of languages remains largely in the background. In Chance, Conrad was to use a combination of these techniques for his most complex treatment of psychological reality.

CHAPTER IV

THE STRUCTURE AND MEANING OF CHANCE

In certain novels which preceded Chance, Conrad worked out some of the problems of the "New Form of the Novel." In the last chapter we saw that characterization in these novels was a result of the special thematic problem each novel presented. In Chance, Conrad continued his search for "the atmosphere of authenticity" in a form where, to use Lubbock's description of the Jamesian novel, "the mind that knows the story and the eye that sees it" are objectified, and are made facts in the story.[1] Ford said that the "New Form," the novel of "Impressionism," would "reproduce in words life as it presents itself to the intelligent observer."[2] It should have "the general effect that life makes on mankind," for life does not narrate, but makes impressions on our brains.[3]

Chance has often been described as the novel in which Conrad occupied himself with technique to the exclusion of everything else. James saw in it pure technique. Crankshaw explains its method in a different way: "To Conrad, unable to render thought and feeling in sustained detail

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[1] The Craft of Fiction, p. 116.

[2] Thus to Revisit, p. 46.

[3] Ford, Joseph Conrad, p. 192.

objectively, the employment of the first person is imperative."[1] Critics have frequently commented on the complexity of its organization and have usually accepted the judgment that it is pure technique. This view would at first glance seem to be confirmed by Ford's interpretation of the "New Form." Ford implies that the "New Form" was an advancement in the novel as an art form. The central assumption of his argument is that Conrad conceived of technique separate from theme. But we have seen that this was not true of Lord Jim, Nostromo, "Heart of Darkness," and Under Western Eyes. It must be asked whether the technique of Chance, whether that of "Impressionism" or of the psychological realism that Conrad developed as his own distinctive contribution to the art of the novel, can be described as James and Crankshaw describe it, without considering the meaning of the novel. Is the technique of Chance, in other words, conceived by Conrad as one solution to specific problems created by the meanings he was trying to communicate? Critics like Lubbock assume, we have seen, that technique is a pure esthetic consideration. Thus Lubbock states that "the best form is that which makes the most of its subject."[2] Crankshaw denies that composition is an arbitrary process:

> A thousand characters analysed, the novelist has a large pile of qualities which he is free to combine again, to reassociate into new patterns, into new human beings. But obviously this can be no arbitrary process. There are laws governing the functioning of the various elements, and these laws must be understood so that the

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[1] Crankshaw, Joseph Conrad, p. 122.

[2] The Craft of Fiction, p. 40.

> right elements may be combined to give a required effect, just as the qualities of the primary colours must be understood by the painter before he can get his desired effects.[1]

One aim of this inquiry into the structure and meaning of Chance is to discover what critics like Ford, Lubbock, and Crankshaw mean by "necessities" of form. Ford was explicitly concerned with "organic" reality in the novel. What were the values of this kind of depiction?

The aim of this chapter is to determine the relationship between technique and meaning in Chance and determine the success of the rendering of "organic" reality. This chapter will try to distinguish between devices of "Impressionism" and those devices of psychological realism used in earlier novels and in Chance. In this way, the conception of the "New Form of the Novel" may be tested in its most distinguished and representative version.

A Trial Version of Chance: "A Smile of Fortune"

It is possible that the general conception of Chance as well as most of its basic motifs was developing even before the writing of Almayer's Folly. Like Dickens and James, Conrad reworked basic thematic patterns in different novels. One pattern basic to Chance which absorbed him in Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands, and The Rover was the father-daughter-lover conflict, the drama of divided loyalties. The themes of the illusory quest for unearned wealth and the tragic consequences of fixed ideas are basic to

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[1] Crankshaw, Joseph Conrad, pp. 111-12.

Almayer's Folly, Lord Jim, and Nostromo. The method of "A Smile of Fortune," a novelette written while Conrad was working out the intricacies of Chance, and subsequently published in 'Twixt Land and Sea (1912), is an excellent illustration of the way the artist reworked the same materials. The novelette reveals Conrad's preoccupation with motifs of temptation and desire and significant garden images. His drama of sexual temptation and sin are often enacted in paradisiacal jungle-gardens. Nature hides the death-struggle of the rank vegetation, shut off from the sun by entangled growths, by the flowering vegetation. Even the vegetation which reaches the sun will bloom and die. Metaphors of human involvement are often related to this imagery: "She had felt like one strayed in the thickets of tangled undergrowth of a great forest."[1]

But more important, "A Smile of Fortune" is an early treatment of a dominant theme of Chance--unconscious sexual motivation. Jacobus, a crafty ship-chandler in an East African port, is anxious to secure the business of a young captain who has docked to secure provisions and transact business. Jacobus, the young captain learns, had years ago fallen in love with a circus performer and had deserted his wife to follow her. After the birth of a child to his mistress and the deaths of both mistress and wife, Jacobus returned to the port to establish a chandlery in competition

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[1] Joseph Conrad, An Outcast of the Islands (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1949), p. 248.

with his prosperous brother. As a result of the social ostracism he and his daughter suffer, he becomes hardened and emotionally drained. The young captain notices that Jacobus has found refuge in a dull passivity:

> The grotesque image of a fat, pushing ship-chandler, enslaved by an unholy love-spell, fascinated me; and I listened rather open-mouthed to the tale as old as the world, a tale which had been the subject of legend, of moral fables, of poems, but which so ludicrously failed to fit the personality. What a strange victim for the gods![1]

He notices the "sleepy, broad mask with glued lips" (p. 40), but does not see that it hides the features of a predator.

Anxious not to lose the innocent captain to his brother, the old merchant tries to drive his bargain by tempting the captain with his daughter. The temptation significantly takes place in a garden. When he first meets Alice in the garden, the captain is immediately struck with her apparent passivity: "For quite a time she did not stir, staring straight before her as if watching the vision of some pageant passing through the garden in the deep rich glow of light and the splendour of flowers" (p. 43). The girl is watched by an old woman whom she calls a "sorceress." Her inner life is described in compelling images: She sits motionless, staring over the garden wall, dreaming of romance. For some reason that the captain cannot fathom, she is not free to admit her ambiguous interest in him. She has become the unconscious tool of her father's deceit, and she

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[1] Joseph Conrad, 'Twixt Land and Sea (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1947), p. 36. All subsequent references are to this edition.

cannot escape. The young captain soon comes under the spell of the garden and falls in love with Alice. She does nothing, however, except pretend indifference. He slowly comes to see that she is absorbed in him: "She was like a spellbound creature with the forehead of a goddess crowned by the dishevelled magnificent hair of a gipsy tramp. Even her indifference was seductive" (p. 59). He feels himself bound to her by an unrealizable desire. She, in turn, seems "beguiled by some extraordinary promise" (p. 59). Like Flora, her view of life is obsessed with horrors: "One could not make her understand that these horrors on which she fed her imagination were lost in the mass of orderly life like a few drops of blood in the ocean" (p. 61). The captain slowly discovers that he is seduced by her apparent plight: "And in the scent of the massed flowers I seemed to breathe her special and inexplicable charm, the heady perfume of the everlastingly irritated captive of the garden" (p. 62). He is torn with exasperation as he becomes increasingly aware of her conflicting desires to love him and yet to remain in the security of the garden. When she hears that he is planning to leave, "she extended her beautiful arms, with her hands clenched, her body swaying, her head thrown back a little, revelling contemptuously in a sense of relief, easing her limbs in freedom after all these days of crouching, motionless poses when she had been so furious and so afraid" (p. 69). When he kisses her, she struggles with a sudden violence that instantly frees her. His reaction, like that

of Anthony, is a desire for violence. It is in her awareness of this desire, of which she is most fearful, that Alice is most like Flora.

The young captain does not know that Jacobus has been watching this scene and he is immediately forced by Jacobus to buy thirty tons of potatoes as the price of averting a scandal. When Alice reappears, he discovers that his desire is gone, that the spell of the garden is broken:

> I felt more like wailing over the lost illusion of vague desire, over the sudden conviction that I would never find again near her the strange, half-evil, half-tender sensation which had given its acrid flavour to so many days, which had made her appear tragic and promising, pitiful and provoking. That was all over (pp. 77-78).

When she struggles to kiss him, he realizes his complete detachment. All that she can say as she sinks into the wicker-chair is that she loves nothing. His love has been destroyed by the awareness that he has been victimized. His memory of Alice is of "her heavy hair and empty eyes as black as the night itself, staring into the walled garden, silent, warm, odorous, with the perfume of imprisoned flowers, which, like herself, were lost to sight in a world buried in darkness" (p. 79). In a brilliant conclusion, the captain finds himself burdened with rotting potatoes, symbolic of the corruption of his desire. At another port he discovers a famine, and sells his potatoes at an enormous profit: "That night I dreamt of a pile of gold in the form of a grave in which a girl was buried, and woke up callous with greed" (p. 84). Haunted by the memory of Alice whose lips had missed his when she tried for the first time to kiss him, he resigns his

command and returns to England with his profit, "a smile of fortune."

It is clear that in his emphasis on bewitchment Conrad is absorbed with the fatalism of moral blindness. Yet he is concerned at the same time with the possibilities for awareness in Alice whose passivity is an exact counterpart of Flora's. Alice struggles at the end between her desire to find security in the world of the garden whose corruption she does not sense, and her desire to love the captain. This desire to love is thwarted at the very moment she admits her desire. The climax in both this story and Chance comes at the point where the heroine tries to admit the impulses which she has heretofore repressed. She misses the lips of the captain and sinks into the chair enveloped in a new and terrible awareness that ultimately leads to her death. At the end the captain hears that Jacobus has been dickering with his employers to have him return; the reason for this is not stated, but he obviously needs the captain to save his daughter's life. This suggestion of tragedy is juxtaposed at the end to the "smile of fortune" to create irony. The plot lines of the story are almost exactly those of Chance: the fundamental difference is that there is no psychological analysis. Alice and Jacobus are seen entirely through the eyes of the captain whose own awareness is necessarily small because of his own deception. It is interesting that Conrad linked the idea of fortune with the garden as a place of temptation. This juxtaposition is particularly

important since it helps to explain certain metaphors in Chance which are less obvious in their implication than they are in "A Smile of Fortune."

The Paradox of Determinism and Responsibility

What are the themes of Chance and what problems did they pose for Conrad? There are perhaps three complementary themes that can be distinguished: the paradox of determinism and moral responsibility, destiny as the force that enjoins moral responsibility, the nature of love. The first two of these are implicit in the organization of points of view and situations. Conrad first considers the extent to which good or bad fortune is determined by forces which the individual cannot control--the occurrence of blind accident or a fateful order of events. If chance experiences flaw the individual, is he responsible for what he does? In other words, if character is determined arbitrarily by chance influences, how is the paradox of determinism and moral responsibility to be resolved? This problem is directly connected with the problems of fatalism and evil and the consideration of consequence and motive as the measure of responsibility. Conrad's consideration of moral implication is part of his treatment of determinism and responsibility. Finally, there is the problem of love as the force that compels moral commitment, a theme that involves chivalric idealism and moral responsibility. Conrad examined these problems in Lord Jim, Nostromo, and Under Western Eyes. Chance develops another view, particularly of illusion and love as a positive moral commitment. Let us consider first these themes.

To what extent did Conrad believe that good or bad fortune was determined by chance? The epigraph to Chance, taken from Browne's Religio Medici, provides an initial context: "Those that held that all things were governed by fortune had not erred, had they not persisted there."[1] Browne explains that Fortune is equivalent to the Providence of God; Nature is the art of God, the result of his Providence. Fortune, then, is "that serpentine and crooked line, whereby he drawes those actions that his wisdome intends, in a more unknowne and secret way."[2] There is no place, therefore, for unexpected accidents which have their warrant from a universal and superior cause. It is clear that Conrad did not intend chance to mean Providence as Browne describes it, but he does allude to chance as Providence frequently. Chance is, for example, the force that directs young Powell to exorcise the force of evil at the end.

But this conception of chance is usually introduced by Conrad as an ironic view of causation. As in the earlier novels, he refers continually to a Divine Providence that orders the moral world. He qualifies this conception of chance as Providence elsewhere with intimations that a malevolent force, the "Crass Casualty" of Hardy's "purblind Doomsters," is active in the world. Conrad prefers to

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[1] Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici, ed. J. J. Denonain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 31. Conrad changes Browne's wording slightly: "Those that hold that all things are governed by fortune had not erred had they not persisted there."

[2] Religio Medici, p. 27.

contrast these two views of the order of the nature. He does not directly voice his own mechanistic views because he is concerned with showing that moral responsibility does exist despite the forces that determine man's behavior. In Lord Jim, Stein conjectures that the God who conceived man must have been a little mad. This remains merely a conjecture. In An Outcast of the Islands, Conrad writes that "the voice of thunder was heard, speaking in a sustained, emphatic, and vibrating roll, with violent louder bursts of crashing sounds, like a wrathful and threatening discourse of an angry god."[1] Willems sees in nature unconscious struggle and lofty indifference, "merciless and mysterious purpose, perpetuating strife and death through the march of ages."[2] This conception of nature is dominant in Typhoon and The Nigger of the Narcissus. In The Mirror of the Sea, Conrad affirms that "both men and ships live in an unstable element."[3] In Chance, Marlow sees "the brilliant evidence of the awful loneliness, of the hopeless obscure insignificance of our globe lost in the splendid revelation of a glittering, soulless universe."[4] Later he speaks of "this rather mediocre, but still idealistic fool's paradise in which each of us lives his own little life--the unit in the great sum of existence" (p. 144).

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[1] An Outcast of the Islands, p. 283. [2] Ibid., p. 337.

[3] Joseph Conrad, The Mirror of the Sea (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1950), p. 27.

[4] Joseph Conrad, Chance (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1949), p. 50. All subsequent references are to this edition.

Conrad did express his views in letters to R. B. Cunningham-Grahame:

> There is . . . a machine. It evolved itself . . . out of a chaos of scraps of iron . . . . And the most withering thought is that the infamous thing has made itself: made itself without thought, without conscience, without foresight, without eyes, without heart. It is tragic accident . . . . The last drop of bitterness is in the suspicion that you can't even smash it. In virtue of that truth one and immortal which lurks in the force that made it spring into existence it is what it is,--and it is indestructible!
>
> It knits us in and it knits us out. It has knitted time, space, pain, death, corruption, despair and all the illusions,--and nothing matters.[1]

> The machine is thinner than air and as evanescent as a flash of lightning. The attitude of cold unconcern is the only reasonable one. Of course reason is hateful,--but why? Because it demonstrates (to those who have the courage) that we, living, are out of life,--utterly out of it. The mysteries of a universe made of drops of fire and clods of mud do not concern us in the least. The fate of a humanity condemned ultimately to perish from cold is not worth troubling about. . . . If you believe in improvement you must weep, for the attained perfection must end in cold, darkness and silence. . . . Life knows us not and we do not know life,--we don't know even 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 folly and conceit.[2]

Bad fortune, Conrad tries to show, is not the result of chance or the intentional malevolence of an angry god even though it does seem that evil forces are imminent in the world. It is the result of character despite the "precise workmanship of chance, fate, providence, call it what you will" (p. 411). Powell tends to see chance as the force of Providence, a goddess of fortune: it is Providence which saved Jonah, he remarks to de Barral. This view is opposed at the end of

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[1] Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad, Vol. I, p. 216.

[2] Ibid., p. 222.

the novel by Marlow who comments that "the science of life consists in seizing every chance that presents itself" (p. 446). But there is a paradox here, for character in men of worth is shaped by the knowledge that they are helpless in a soulless universe where things happen by accident. In another letter to Cunningham-Grahame, Conrad explains this paradox:

> What makes mankind tragic is not that they are the victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it. To be part of the animal kingdom under the conditions of this earth is very well,--but as soon as you know of your slavery, the pain, the anger, the strife,--the tragedy begins. We can't return to nature since we can't change our place in it. Our refuge is in stupidity, in drunkenness of all kinds, in lies, in beliefs, in murder, in thieving, reforming, in negation, in contempt,--each man according to the promptings of his particular devil. There is no morality, no knowledge, and no hope: there is only the consciousness of ourselves which drives us about a world that, whether seen in a convex or a concave mirror, is always but a vain and floating appearance.[1]

Character is determined by the hapless condition of man in an indifferent universe where moral events originate in the will of man rather than in the will of a demoniac force at large in the world. Jim tended to see the idea of a demoniac force as an explanation for his luck, yet he jumped not because such a force compelled him to, but because of a flaw in his character. Chance singles Jim out to meet the challenge of an awareness that he is flawed. It is by chance that events should have conspired to influence the shaping of Flora's character as they do:

> ". . . all the chances were that de Barral should have fallen upon a perfectly harmless, naive, usual, inefficient specimen of respectable governess for his daughter;

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[1] Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad, Vol. I, p. 226.

> or a commonplace silly adventuress who would have tried, say, to marry him or work some other sort of common mischief in a small way" (p. 100).

Individuals are implicated in events by chance, but this is not what really matters. It is by chance, for example, that Haldin should mistake Razumov for an ardent revolutionist and confide in him. Yet the decision Razumov makes is a consequence of his character even though he feels that his personality is at the mercy of lawless forces. It is pure accident that Marlow catches sight of Flora at the edge of the quarry; that Anthony should meet her on the road the second time she goes to the quarry to commit suicide; that two individuals like Flora and Anthony should become involved with each other; that the ground of her appeal to Anthony from the first moment that they meet should be her distress. It is by chance that Powell becomes the second mate of the Ferndale and that he should be looking through the skylight just when de Barral poisons the glass. It is by chance that de Barral should discover the poison in his old suit when he is released from prison, a discovery which puts a weapon and the instrument of his own destruction into his hands. It is by chance that he is released from prison before Anthony and Flora have been able to work out their problems.

Yet this kind of chance implication has a more profound explanation. It is not simply chance that Flora should become involved with Anthony since his peculiar and strangely attractive attentiveness makes her respond with tears. It

is true that Anthony's life is miraculously saved by Powell, but the final change in his relationship with Flora is determined by her unimpeded choice, not because she knows her father tried to poison him. Powell reflects the notion that chance is the cause of fortune, but this is an innocent view of evil. Marlow shares this view when it is a question of the initial implication of individuals in events which determine their lives. In one passage, Marlow equates unconsciousness of evil with innocence and relates this idea to chance as a determining power:

> "Her last sleep, I won't say of innocence . . . of that ignorance . . . of that unconsciousness of the world's ways, the unconsciousness of danger, of pain, of humiliation, of bitterness, of falsehood. An unconsciousness which in the case of other beings like herself is removed by a gradual process of experience and information, often only partial at that, with saving reserves, softening doubts, veiling theories. Her unconsciousness of the evil which lives in the secret thoughts and therefore in the open acts of mankind, whenever it happens that evil thought meets evil courage; her unconsciousness was to be broken into with profane violence, with desecrating circumstances like a temple violated by a mad, vengeful, impiety. . . . And if you ask me how, wherefore, for what reason? I will answer you: Why, by chance! By the merest chance, as things do happen, lucky and unlucky, terrible or tender, important or unimportant; and even things which are neither, things so completely neutral in character that you would wonder why they do happen at all if you didn't know that they, too, carry in their insignificance the seeds of further incalculable chances" (pp. 99-100).

It is by chance, in other words, that her innocence should have been destroyed violently rather than by the "gradual process of experience and information" which usually brings the individual to terms with a soulless world. Marlow analyzes the attitude of Mrs. Fyne towards Flora as "the blind

working of the law that in our world of chances the luckless must be put in the wrong somehow" (pp. 193-94).

Destiny and Moral Responsibility

Moral responsibility is a paradoxical notion because man lives in a soulless universe created by accident. The answer to this paradox that Conrad works out in Chance and Victory is close to the idea that the best one can do with history is ignore it. The answer hinges upon the crucial and repeatedly emphasized idea of destiny. Heyst in Victory rejects responsibility because of his conviction that all action is sure to be harmful; he learns, however, that it is a fatal presumption to assume that negation can absolve him from the necessity of dealing with the forces of evil that pursue him. Conrad says in Chance and Victory that the illusion that one can realize a personal ideal is matched only by the illusion that fatalism is the answer to survival, to the question of "how to live." Flora's illusion is that her suffering, caused by vicious people, absolves her from responsibility for her unhappy marriage and for her deeper impulses. De Barral blames chance for his failures and for his daughter's marriage: "Never given him even half a chance. It was at the trial. They never gave him a chance" (p. 385). Yet de Barral's greatest failure is that he should never recognize his own potentialities for corruption. Heyst's destiny is that he cannot refuse to help Lena and should be compelled to acknowledge the error of his mistrust in life. His last words to Davidson are especially revealing:

". . . woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love--and to put its trust in life!"[1] It is Flora's destiny that she should give up the illusion that she cannot be loved and recognize her deeper impulses.

Destiny is for Conrad those forces and events which bring the individual to the possibility of a recognition of his potentialities and defects; he may as a result accept or renounce personal ideals for duty which alone can recover the spirit from moral isolation. Professor Zabel states:

> Thus love, or the sense of honor, or the obligation of duty, or even the social instinct itself, enters the novels as a means whereby the individual is forced out of his isolation and morbid surrender. The inward-driving, center-fathoming obsession of the tale becomes reversed toward external standards of value. It is finally the world that saves us--the world of human necessities and duty.[2]

Marlow comments that "the book of Destiny has been written up from the beginning to the last page" (p. 128). Destiny sometimes takes the form of need. In Chance, need is clearly the compelling force of love:-

> "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,

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[1] Joseph Conrad, Victory (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1948), p. 410.

[2] The Portable Conrad, p. 29. Professor Zabel defines destiny as the recognition of the tragedy of human existence: "When the moment comes, the victim must commit himself to it. It is the signal of his destiny, and there is no escape for the man who meets it unprepared. The terms of life are reversed by it. It is the stroke by which fate compels recognition--of one's self, of reality, of error or mistaken expectation or defeat. At that moment, if he can measure up to it, a man's conscious moral existence begins: 'We begin to live when we have conceived life as tragedy'" (pp. 19-20).

> resist the necessity, fail in understanding and voluntarily stop short of the--the embrace, in the noblest meaning of the word, then they are committing 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" (pp. 426-27).

Destiny calls out the lover in every man, "a lover who is called out in all his potentialities often by the most insignificant little things--as long as they come at the psychological moment" (p. 217). Conrad was inclined to believe that the stupid man could be happier than the man conscious of the meaning of life. He wrote to Cunningham-Grahame:

> However I think Singleton with an education is impossible. But first of all,--what education? If it is the knowledge of how to live, my man essentially possessed it. He was in perfect accord with his life. . . . Now he is simple and great like an elemental force.[1]

But he saw too that consciousness was not an act of will but a responsibility created by destiny itself. Most individuals cannot escape self-knowledge which is the mark of tragic greatness when the individual accepts and comes to terms with it.

Destiny is also indirectly related to the problem of order. Professor Wiley suggests that Conrad in his later writings was moving towards the idea that "a bond between men or a tradition like that of the seafaring order should exist to prevent division or the evil which follows man's

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[1] Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad, Vol. I, pp. 214-15.

indulgence in folly or egotism";[1] but it seems to me, as we have seen, that this is always the heart of his conviction. In A Personal Record, he makes this explicit:

> I will make bold to say that neither at sea nor ashore have I ever lost the sense of responsibility. There is more than one sort of intoxication. Even before the more seductive reveries I have remained mindful of that sobriety of interior life, that asceticism of sentiment, in which alone the naked form of truth, such as one conceives it, such as one feels it, can be rendered without shame. . . . I have tried to be a sober worker all my life--all my two lives. I did so from taste, no doubt, having an instinctive horror of losing my sense of full-possession, but also from artistic conviction.[2]

Suicide for Conrad is the ultimate negation of destiny: it is the "final symptom of complete collapse" (p. 183). Marlow states: "And I have come across too many dead souls lying . . . at the foot of high unscaleable places for a merely possible dead body at the bottom of a quarry to strike my sincerity dumb" (p. 53). Flora's conscious rejection of suicide as the solution to her problem marks the turning point of her destiny. Marlow states at the end of the first part that "she turned and began to walk slowly close to the curbstone, reminding me of the time when I discovered her walking near the edge of a ninety-foot sheer drop" (p. 249). Flora briefly considers a final evasion, but she turns instead and enters the hotel. And Marlow says: "But I will tell you my idea: my idea is that she went as far as she was able--as far as she could bear it--as far as she had to . . ." (p. 253). She accepts, in other words,

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[1] Conrad's Measure of Man, p. 213.

[2] Joseph Conrad, A Personal Record (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1950), pp. 111-12.

the challenge of her destiny. This is the significance Marlow sees in the decision she makes the night before her marriage to go through with it: "All she wanted was to get at the truth; to see what would come of it" (p. 341). Her decision to enter the hotel marks the climax of the first part of the novel just as her decision to admit her love for Anthony marks the climax of the second. At this point, too, Anthony accepts his destiny and rejects the illusion of chivalric idealism. Marlow says earlier of Anthony that "there is a Nemesis which overtakes generosity too, like all the other imprudences of men who dare to be lawless and proud . . ." (p. 350). The moment of suicide for Conrad is usually the moment when the individual chooses to accept or renounce forever his destiny. In Lord Jim, Jim paces the floor of Marlow's room anxiously. Marlow comments: "I felt it when he rushed out on the verandah as if to fling himself over--and didn't" (p. 177). He decides to go on dreaming that "some sort of chance" will restore his happiness.

Stein saw the ultimate paradox. If the individual learns that he cannot pursue his dream, he will drown in the destructive element of his illusion. On the other hand, the individual cannot escape forever the awareness that he is doomed. Whatever he does, he cannot escape "the curse of decay" which will extinguish the sun and stars and "spread a frozen darkness over the whole universe."[1] This is the meaning of Jim Wait's death in The Nigger of the Narcissus:

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[1] Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad, Vol. I, p. 215.

> Jimmy's death, after all, came as a tremendous surprise. We did not know till then how much faith we had put in his delusions. We had taken his chances of life so much at his valuation that his death, like the death of an old belief, shook the foundations of our society. A common bond was gone; the strong, effective and respectable bond of a sentimental lie.[1]

After his body has disappeared into the sea, the crew once more finds security in solidarity, but they are "lost, alone, forgetful, and doomed."[2] If this is true, why should the individual accept self-knowledge? This was the question Conrad asked Cunningham-Grahame: "Would you seriously, of malice prepense, cultivate in that unconscious man the power to think?"[3] Conrad's answer was that he would come to self-knowledge sooner or later, and if he did not accept it, he might destroy himself and others. Thus Jim rejects insight and sacrifices Jewel to his illusory quest. Professor Zabel suggests something else: "Such living may destroy, but it is a certainty that only such living can save."[4] Only when a man accepts error and defeat does his conscious moral existence begin.

The Measure of Good and Evil

Conrad frequently manipulates two basic views of morality. The first is that good and evil are measured by any principle other than love, for example, social responsibility. This measure is reflected in the principles which Razumov tacks to his wall: "History not Theory. Patriotism

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[1] The Portable Conrad, p. 436. [2] Ibid., p. 452.

[3] Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad, Vol. I, p. 215.

[4] The Portable Conrad, p. 20.

not Internationalism. Evolution not Revolution. Direction not Destruction. Unity not Disruption." Secondly, there is the idea that acts are good or bad according to their consequences for personal relationships. The distinction is usually an absolute one. Razumov reflects that a man can betray only his conscience. By this measure his betrayal of Haldin would be justified because of his conviction that the perpetuation of tradition is more compelling than personal responsibility to an individual. He soon learns that something more important than principle is involved, for he sees the consequences of his act for Nathalia whom he loves. Love has priority as a measure of good. For the thoroughgoing anarchist, the tragedy of Stevie's death in The Secret Agent would be cancelled by the incendiary value of his sacrifice. Awareness of the ultimate nihilism drives Winnie to kill Verloc.

Conrad was prone to accept the view that "an unselfish action is a moral action" (p. 191). But he develops in Chance an extremely complex context of values. Early in the first part, Marlow observes to Powell that it is unwise to take responsibility for actions whose consequences cannot be foreseen. Yet the determination of consequences is crucial for Marlow who observes that "transcendental good intentions" are morally valuable, yet cause more unhappiness than the most evil plots. Conrad states in the preface that men are responsible only for their intentions, but we see that the value of intentions is often cancelled by the unhappiness which they blindly cause. Marlow remarks that Anthony acts

innocent of consequences, and his good intentions certainly produce unhappiness. More than this, no vision of consequences would restrain him. The implication of these remarks raises the question of whether there can be responsibility when the individual is ignorant of consequences, including those resulting from flaws in character. Conrad answers the question by examining the consequences of the acceptance of fatalism, and by bringing Flora to an awareness that she alone can help herself. Throughout the novel Marlow is absorbed with her fatalism: "She felt also helpless, as if the whole enterprise had been too much for her. This is the sort of conviction which makes for quietude. She was becoming a fatalist" (p. 380). This context is developed in different ways. Thus Marlow moves in his narration from considerations of consequence to considerations of motive, from the consequences of Flora's involvement with Anthony to the reasons for this involvement, from effects to cause. He also faces the question from the familiar focal point of illusion. Just as it was an illusion for Jim to believe that he could realize an absolute standard of conduct in the face of his defection from his ideal, so it is an illusion to believe that fatalism can absolve one from responsibility and suffering. In a world where it is an illusion that intentions have any transcendent significance, an individual does have responsibility because of the consequences of his action for others. The intention of an "evil" person like the governess or de Barral is usually an intention to harm others.

Evil for Conrad is not a pervasive creative force in

its own right but the result of a defect caused by intense frustration. This conception of evil is emphasized in Marlow's reconstruction of the motives of the governess which result in her vicious attack on Flora. Her fury is described as an "emanation of evil." Marlow moves from the attack itself to its causes. It is the result of a "menaced passion," the subterfuges of which are not to be fathomed. Marlow states: "You think it is going on the way it looks, whereas it is capable, for its own ends, of walking backwards into a precipice" (p. 103). She had suffered in life from constant inferiority and self-repression. She is another version of Flora in that she believes that she cannot be loved, with the difference that her frustrations have transformed her into a predator. She has never lived in the illusion that she is loved for herself. When the governess realizes that her plans have come to nothing, Marlow examines the consequences of her deception:

> "The practise of hypocrisy is a relief in itself, a secret triumph of the vilest sort, no doubt, but still a way of getting even with the common morality, from which some of us appear to suffer so much. No! I will say the years, the passionate, bitter years, of restraint, the iron, admirably mannered restraint at every moment, in a never-failing correctness of speech, glances, movements, smiles, gestures, establishing for her a high reputation, an impressive record of success in her sphere. It had been like living half strangled for years.
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> "And all this torture for nothing in the end! What looked at last like a possible prize . . . broken in her hands, fallen in the dust, the bitter dust, of disappointment, she revelled in the miserable revenge . . . only regretting the unworthiness of the girlish figure which stood for so much she had longed to be able to spit venom at, if only once, in perfect liberty" (pp. 119-20).

Marlow asks the same questions about de Barral. De

Barral resembles Murdle in Dickens's Little Dorrit, for he is unconscious of the evil he has wrought, and ends his life by suicide. His victims are credulous investors who have trusted him without cause. At the funeral of his wife whom he has deserted to pursue a distorted dream of power, de Barral clings to Flora "like a drowning man" (p. 73). His quest differs from Jim's only in its maniacal intensity. Like Brierly he is ultimately destroyed by his incapacity to accept the truth about himself. If he had had any insight, he might have been able to help Flora rather than continue pursuing his corrupted ideals. He is an egoist, like Sotillo whose cruelty is also the result of frustration. He remains ignorant to the end of the consequences of his actions:

> "I don't know if it was from utter lack of all imagination or from the possession in undue proportion of a particular kind of it ... . but it was discovered that this man who had been raised to such a height by the credulity of the public was himself more gullible than any of his depositors. He had been the prey of all sorts of swindlers, adventurers, visionaries, and even lunatics" (p. 81).

Like Powell and Flora, de Barral is initiated into the moral life at a moment of intense revelation at the trial; he sees himself as a victim rather than as a victimizer, and continues to believe in his own innocence. Marlow comments that he looked like a lunatic visionary: "Sometimes, I am told, his appearance was ecstatic, his motionless pale eyes seemed to be gazing down the vista of future ages" (p. 83). Marlow is explicit about de Barral's initiation into evil:

> "I seemed to understand that, with the shock of the agonies and the perplexities of his trial, the imagination of that man, whose moods, notions, and motives

> wore frequently an air of grotesque mystery--that his imagination had been at last roused into activity. And this was awful. Just try to enter into the feelings of a man whose imagination wakes up the very moment he is about to enter the tomb" (p. 87).

Conrad seems to be asking whether that man is evil who acts for an apparent good, ignorant of the consequences. The consequences of his innocence are unfortunate for others: prison, deprivation, the danger of suicide. He has been given a poison by his physician which he does not use because he expects that Flora will save him. Like Jim, he wishes to pursue again a corrupt dream which he misreads for the challenge of destiny.

Marlow wonders at the end why de Barral did not use the poison. The answer is to be found in the scene in the carriage with Flora when he becomes almost demoniacal over the news of her marriage. Marlow suggests that "whether guilty or innocent, it was as if old de Barral had been down to the Nether Regions. Impossible to imagine what he would bring out from there to the light of this world of uncondemned men" (p. 347). His satanic aspect is carefully emphasized throughout the second part. Franklin shuns him as though he were the devil. Conrad tries to make his madness psychologically credible. He is dominated by a fixed idea:

> "A jealous rage affected his brain like the fumes of wine, rising from some secret depths of his being so long deprived of all emotions. The hollows at the corners of his lips became more pronounced in the puffy roundness of his cheeks. Images, visions, obsess with particular force men withdrawn from the sights and sounds of active life" (p. 360).

Aboard ship his desire to realize absolute power is absorbed into his fixed idea to save Flora from the man who had married

her against her will. Like the governess, he becomes sadistic, suggesting to Flora that she may someday throw herself overboard. In the end he resorts to poison. In the eyes of Marlow, he is despicable because he has refused to accept insight into his potentiality for moral corruption. He cries to Powell that Flora had lied and conspired to bring him down into the dirt. De Barral is evil because he works to destroy Anthony, masking his hatred behind the excuse that Anthony has victimized him. By this same belief that she has been victimized Flora justifies to Mrs. Fyne her marriage to a man she believes she does not love. De Barral dies, as Professor Haugh expresses it, "obedient to a facet of the same falsehood that had blighted the innocent Flora."[1]

Thus evil results even when the original intention is unselfish. De Barral's intention becomes evil only after he assumes that he has been victimized and suffers privation. On the other hand, evil also results when people are too innocent to see through deliberate deceptions. In the beginning, Flora is like other people in her ignorance of evil; the difference is that she meets evil by violence rather than through gradual maturation. By contrast Powell learns to adjust to evil because chance has allowed him to meet it gradually. The tragic result for Flora is that she cannot discriminate appearances from reality. She was led to believe that the governess and Charley and the servants loved her as subjects love their fairy princess, a deception which

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[1] Robert F. Haugh, "Conrad's Chance: Progression d'effet," Modern Fiction Studies, I (February, 1955), 15.

is rudely shattered when the governess confronts her with the truth. The shock of the moment "reached, stirred, set free that faculty of unreasoning explosive terror lying locked up at the bottom of all human hearts and of the hearts of animals as well" (p. 116). As a consequence, Flora comes to accept a destructive view of herself:

> "Even when she was asked violently whether she imagined that there was anything in her, apart from her money, to induce any intelligent person to take any sort of interest in her existence, she only caught her breath in one dry sob and said nothing, made no other sound, made no movement" (p. 119).

Consequently she learns to put the responsibility for her actions on other people; she cannot meet the choices that destiny forces upon her. She is like her father who shirked his problems because "he was born that way" (p. 73).

Flora's relationship to Anthony illustrates her passivity. She has written to Mrs. Fyne that she does not love him simply because she is sure that Mrs. Fyne will not approve: "It was the echo of her own stupid talk" (p. 443). She does not think to ask herself whether she really does love him. After Fyne reveals to Anthony the content of the letter, he confronts her with the accusation that she has never told him that she loved him. Marlow guesses at her reaction to this: "She waited, saying to herself that he had never given her time, that he had never asked her! And that, in truth, she did not know!" (p. 330) Characteristically she allows Anthony to decide for her whether she loves him. When he admits that she has never said anything to him which she did not mean, she can only agree to this. Marlow

conjectures that her letter to Mrs. Fyne was prompted by honesty: "But she reflected sadly that she had never known what to say to him. That perhaps she had nothing to say" (p. 333).

There is, however, one thing about which Flora is not passive. She is determined to save her father, for which reason she rationalizes her involvement and allows Anthony to marry her knowing that their marriage will not be consummated. She allows him, besides, to give everything that he owns to her. At the same time, however, she absolves herself of responsibility for the ambiguous reason that she wanted to get at the truth and see what would come of her actions. She is, in fact, blind to any responsibility for what she has done. She asks Marlow to convince Mrs. Fyne that there is no deceit involved. This is perhaps the crucial self-deception. Her view of her father is, of course, one motive for wishing to be straight with Anthony. It is a view, however, that reveals her blindness. Fyne comments that she looks upon her father as a saint and a martyr. This deception is almost a bewitchment, and consequently Flora must evaluate the worth of moral commitments and recognize her need and love of Anthony. As a result of her ignorance she becomes an unwitting tool as de Barral works devilishly to destroy Anthony. Her reaction to his hatred of Anthony is characteristically passive and qualified. When Anthony cries at the end that he renounces his "chance" and his life, she is indignant for the first time in her life, and refuses to

accept this rejection. She thus breaks the deception that she is insignificant and contemptible, that she cannot be loved. Only at the end of the novel is the extent to which she has absorbed the meaning of her experience evident. Marlow's view is confirmed:

> "The surprise, it is easy to understand, would arise from the inability to interpret aright the signs which experience (a thing mysterious in itself) makes to our understanding and emotions. For it is never more than that. Our experience never gets into our blood and bones. It always remains outside of us. That's why we look with wonder at the past. And this persists even when from practice and through growing callousness of fibre we come to the point when nothing that we meet in that rapid blinking stumble across a flick of sunshine--which our life is--nothing, I say, which we run against surprises us any more. Not at the time, I mean. If later on, we recover the faculty with some such exclamation: 'Well! Well! I'll be hanged if I ever, . . .' it is probably because this very thing that there should be a past to look back upon, other people's, is very astounding in itself when one has the time, a fleeting and immense instant to think of it . . ." (pp. 282-83).

In summary, reality for Conrad is the pervasive responsibility behind appearances which cause Flora to think she is a victim, and therefore absolved of any responsibility to Anthony. She is responsible because she has herself created her own problem. She unconsciously evades this fact. She is unable, in other words, to interpret correctly the signs of her destiny. Conrad complicates the action by involving her in the deceptions that Anthony suffers. In this way Conrad tries to answer the question of how there can be responsibility in a world of imperfect men and moral blindness, a world in which innocents like Flora suffer at the hands of the predatory. The answer is that the victim sometimes becomes the victimizer, half in ignorance and half

in knowledge. If there was to be a commitment that would transcend the paradox of determinism and responsibility, that commitment would have to be love.

The commitment to love is inherent in the condition of man. This is the meaning of Chance. In Victory, Lena dies for love even though she has come to realize Heyst's distrust of her. In Chance, where the motives of pity and love are closely examined with unusual insight, the point is made with more subtlety. The condition of love is first of all the key to the kinds of responsibility that both Flora and Anthony come to feel. Anthony recoils at the accusation that he has victimized Flora. He is frightened at the truth because he cannot admit his erotic tendencies, as his feelings after the marriage ceremony reveal:

> "He turned to the mental contemplation of the white, delicate and appealing face with great blue eyes which he had seen weep and wonder and look profoundly at him, sometimes with incredulity, sometimes with doubt and pain, but always irresistible in the power to find their way right into his breast, to stir there a deep response which was something more than love--he said to himself--as men understand it. More? Or was it only something other? Yes. It was something other. More or less. Something as incredible as the fulfilment of an amazing and startling dream in which he could take the world in his arms--all the suffering world--not to possess its pathetic fairness but to console and cherish its sorrow" (pp. 347-48).

Conrad continually emphasizes the importance of the "psychological moment" which is the challenge of destiny, the confrontation of the individual with the reality of love. Love is the only answer to nihilism.

The Depiction of Unconscious Motivation

The original technique of Chance was created by Conrad to solve certain problems resulting from the thematic patterns of the novel. The theme of chance versus character as the determinant of good and bad fortune involved the representation of opposite points of view, not only of what was seen but also of how it was seen. In Chance fatalism was a state of mind. Actions were the result of fatalism. Thus a fatalistic vision of life had to be clearly rendered.

Moreover, since a character chooses to narrate what he considers important, there was also the problem of showing the relationship between consequences and motives and arranging the time-shifts so as to establish this relationship. If character was to be the principal determinant of action, then direct psychological analysis might be one way to convey motivation. It would have to be conveyed through characters who had the kind of awareness that was absent in the central characters because of the deceptions which blinded them to the truth. Marlow specifies the partial awareness that Anthony gradually comes to. This partial awareness comes out in the significant contradictions which are never evident to Anthony even at the conclusion. Instead of dramatizing awareness through foreshortening as James did, using subordinate characters merely to reinforce what is seen, Conrad rendered motivation by having subordinate characters analyze action and reconstruct it from their analysis. Conrad faced the same crucial problem as in Lord Jim and Nostromo--in

whom does the insight lie? If there are different kinds of awareness, there must be more than one interpreter of the action. Finally, there is the problem of appearance and reality, the discrimination of what really happened from what seemed to happen--appearances mirrored by the interpreters.

Conrad was especially concerned with whether the awareness of one interpreter was shared by another. The epigraph to Lord Jim quotes Novalis: "It is certain any conviction gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it." As James pointed out, it has to be an awareness "insisting on a reciprocity with it throughout." The presence of listeners in many of the stories and novels was not just a device to get the story told. Marlow states at one point in Chance that "from that same provision of understanding, there springs in us compassion, charity, indignation, the sense of solidarity; and in minds of any largeness an inclination to that indulgence which is next to affection" (pp. 117-18). The sharing of insight creates solidarity which Conrad thought important. It is not accidental that there should be in Chance a distinction between characters who are men of the sea and those who are men of the land. Powell is the first to make this distinction: "This universal inefficiency of what he called 'the shore gang' he ascribed in general to the want of responsibility and to a sense of security" (p. 4). Men of the sea ascertain motives most accurately. It is the narrator,

a sailor himself, Anthony, and Powell who interpret coherently what has happened. Marlow suggests a reason for this:

> "The men of the sea understand each other very well in their view of earthly things, for simplicity is a good counsellor and isolation not a bad educator. A turn of mind composed of innocence and scepticism is common to them all, with the addition of an unexpected insight into motives, as of disinterested lookers-on at a game" (p. 33).

It is possible for them to observe and interpret the action disinterestedly and dispassionately, something that the central characters cannot do. Their views of the moral significance of an action are changed when new information warrants a reinterpretation. Their views are valid when they are psychologically coherent.

The structure of Chance, like that of Lord Jim, is essentially a structure of points of view. What seems to have happened emerges only as Marlow manages to piece together different versions; the validity of this reconstruction comes with the attainment of a psychological coherence between motive and consequence. This is the characteristic method of analysis in the novel. Marlow moves from effects, events, and images to considerations of motive. Because he is able to consider different views of the action disinterestedly, his consciousness dominates the novel. Marlow discounts the Fynes' account of the elopement because he has witnessed Flora's distress earlier and cannot believe that she is as Mrs. Fyne describes her. Yet he is puzzled by the letter in which Flora has admitted that she does not love Anthony. Thus he cannot find an answer to Mrs. Fynes' accusation that Flora is using Anthony to make herself and

her father secure. Marlow's reconstruction of her motives is entirely hypothetical, and is confirmed only in the final pages of the novel by Flora herself. On the pavement, she appears to support what she said in the letter because she does not really know why she said it; she merely says that she told Anthony she was thinking of someone who had no one else to think of him. Fyne's assertion that she consented to Anthony's proposal only because she wanted to help her father seems to give credence to her statements. But it does not explain whether she really wanted to victimize Anthony because he is a man. Marlow suspects earlier that she may really have absorbed Mrs. Fyne's philosophy, thus confirming Fyne's view. Marlow then moves to another view which he immediately drops: her passivity might explain her action were it not for the letter. Elsewhere Marlow is concerned with Anthony's motives. Again he moves from apparent contradictions to what he comes to recognize as Anthony's essential character. Anthony appears to be motivated by a chivalric idealism that is pure and sexually disinterested. But how does this help to explain his savage bursts of anger and his sensitivity to distressed women? These are the questions Marlow tries to answer. He searches for a coherent explanation which will account for both motive and its manifestations.

Marlow defends his method of analysis several times in the novel: "The purely human reality is capable of lyrism but not of abstraction. Nothing will serve for its understanding

but the evidence of rational linking up of characters and facts" (p. 310). If we wish to get at the reality behind the appearances of life, the intellect must link character or motives and facts or consequences. The impersonal narrator replies to this later:

> "You are the expert in the psychological wilderness. This is like one of those Redskin stories where the noble savages carry off a girl and the honest backwoodsman with his incomparable knowledge follows the track and reads the signs of her fate in a footprint here, a broken twig there, a trinket dropped by the way. I have always liked such stories" (p. 311).

Marlow later comments:

> "I was interested more by its moral atmosphere, that tension of falsehood, of desperate acting, which tainted the pure sea-atmosphere into which the magnanimous Anthony had carried off his conquest and--well--his self-conquest too, trying to act at the same time like a beast of prey, a pure spirit and 'the most generous of men'" (p. 415).

He has to discount and correct what is seen and interpreted by other characters; yet he has seen almost nothing of Flora and Anthony.

It is an error to assume that the views of the minor characters add nothing to the novel, or that their respective views of Flora are to be taken at face value.[1] James fully appreciated the method of Chance when he noted that "the reporters are thus multiplied from pitch to pitch."[2] Marlow's consciousness is "a prolonged hovering flight of the subjective over the outstretched ground of the case exposed."[3] The

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[1] This point is argued by Bruce Harkness in "The Epigraph of Chance," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, IX (December, 1954), 209-22.

[2] Notes on Novelists, p. 276. [3] Idem.

objectivity is Marlow's because he knows Flora's history and can explain the events that occur in the second part. By "reporters" James means those interpreters who are limited in what they see and are "expressive of the action itself."[1] The confirmation or rejection of an interpretation is of primary importance, "an immense question," since each interpretation is conveyed through another character, increasing the difficulty of discernment. The important thing was to distinguish between those characters whose interpretations are erroneous and those "expressive of the action itself and in whom the objectivity resides."[2]

Marlow characteristically moves from "situation" images to their meaning: Flora at the edge of the quarry, at the curb, at the edge of the dock. The movement is as a vortex, gradually accumulating meaning as it gains momentum in its movement toward the center. It is the method of Lord Jim and "Heart of Darkness." Perhaps there is a connection between this kind of movement and order. In The Secret Agent, Stevie finds order in drawing circles with a compass.[3] When Razumov returns to his room where Haldin is sleeping, he tries to restore order to his chaotic feelings by drawing circles and triangles. Such manifestations are important indications of the person's state of mind. Anthony's abstracted look through the second part of the novel is a

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[1] Idem. [2] Idem.

[3] I am indebted to Professor Robert Haugh for this idea. The phrase "situational image" is also his.

contrast to his nervous movements in the first. Marlow works with these kinds of clues as well as with apparent contradictions.

Having once established the shape of events in the first part, Marlow moves away from the narration of extended conversations with characters like the Fynes to a foreshortened narrative in which the views of other characters gradually disappear. The use of characters like Powell and the Fynes depends on how much they are needed to establish what has happened. Marlow moves to the heart of the experience from its fringes. The time-shifts are extremely important because they make possible this movement into the "psychological wilderness." Marlow comments at the end that he heard all the important details from Flora herself. But these details do not explain themselves. The psychological coherence of Marlow's reconstruction is his own. More importantly, the time-shifts make contrasts possible. The most important contrast is that of the two-part division which shows the ways in which Flora and Anthony meet the challenge of their destinies. There are other significant contrasts. Powell first tells of his luck at the shipping office and his first encounter with Anthony. This opening chapter in which Powell enjoys good fortune is a contrast to other chapters of the first part which deal with Flora's mischance.

Marlow takes up the story at this point and introduces different interpretations of the action. He tells how he was walking in the vicinity of the Fyne cottage when by chance

he caught sight of Flora at the edge of the quarry. It is significant that his first view of her should not be through the eyes of another character. When she comes down, he notices that she is deathly white. She is upset when the Fyne dog ignores her call. Marlow is moved to comment that the behavior of the dog is unchivalrous, and he notices at the same time that she has the clouded brow and pained mouth of a victim. This perception allows him to guess rightly at the impression she first makes on Anthony. He does not see her again until he meets her in front of the hotel, but he has in the meantime heard from the Fynes the bare story of her life. Once we have seen the wounds, we are shown the events which produced these wounds. Conrad emphasizes Flora's sexual experiences which culminate in her victimization by her German employer. This serves as a contrast to the view of her supposed sexual involvement with Anthony that Mrs. Fyne holds. Previous to his conversation with Flora on the pavement, Marlow is confronted with contradictory views of her motives. His gradual realization of the reason for the elopement is at first hindered because he sees Flora largely through the eyes of Mrs. Fyne who hates her. Mrs. Fyne is implicated in the action to the extent that her involvement determines the degree of insight she is able to sustain. Marlow states that he was not surprised to discover that she was blind. He also states that her innocence, her failure to read beneath the surface, prevents her from knowing the "real aspect of things" (p. 193). He adds that "what women's

acuteness really respects are the inept 'ideas' and the sheep-like impulses by which our actions and opinions are determined in matters of real importance" (p. 145). The feminist doctrine that Mrs. Fyne preaches to the girl-friends is a contrast to his own view of women, and shows how she has read the letter:

> ". . . no consideration, no delicacy, no tenderness, no scruples should stand in the way of a woman (who by the mere fact of her sex was the predestined victim of conditions created by men's selfish passions, their vices and their abominable tyranny) from taking the shortest cut towards securing for herself the easiest possible existence. She had even the right to go out of existence without considering any one's feelings or convenience, since some women's existences were made impossible by the short-sighted baseness of men" (p. 59).

She takes the view that Flora has secured for herself "the easiest possible existence," and the idea boomerangs since she cannot admit the rightness of Flora's action with her brother. Marlow remarks that she was a "good innocent creature, worthy wife, excellent mother (of the strict governess type), she was as guileless of consequences as any determinist philosopher ever was" (p. 63).

Mrs. Fyne's hatred of Flora is most evident as she tells how Flora's cousin has come to take her back after she has run away. Marlow comments that she lived with her cousins "a passive victim, quivering in every nerve, as if she were flayed" (p. 164). While her cousin pleads with her to return, she sits passively with her head lowered. He asks whether she has arranged with the Fynes to live with them. Since Flora has not, it is open to Mrs. Fyne to make an offer. Flora characteristically expects Mrs. Fyne to make the decision, and looks at her meaningfully: "There was that in

them which made her shut her own. She also felt as though she would have liked to put her fingers in her ears" (p. 170). Mrs. Fyne describes this incident objectively without really understanding what is happening. She hides certainly the fact that she wanted to be rid of the girl. When her cousin suggests that what she is doing may be hard on her father later, Flora jumps up so suddenly that he starts back. This is the one appeal that can stir her. She drops into the chair again, and looks to Mrs. Fyne for help. Mrs. Fyne shows no understanding of the incident she describes:

> "This time it was no accidental meeting of fugitive glances. It was a deliberate communication. To my question as to its nature Mrs. Fyne said she did not know. 'Was it appealing?' I suggested. 'No,' she said. 'Was it frightened, angry, crushed, resigned?' 'No, No! Nothing of these.' But it had frightened her. She remembered it to this day" (p. 170).

By contrast there is little distortion in what Fyne reveals to Marlow. This is because he does not have the motive for looking at the affair that his wife does. Marlow sees that there has been a disagreement between the Fynes concerning their course of action. Like his wife, Fyne has little insight. His relationship to his wife is like that between Anthony and Flora; they had married, like Anthony and Flora, by eloping. In his dependence on her, he remains a boy. Marlow remarks that Mrs. Fyne believed "the nicest men remained boys all their lives" (p. 155). She is disappointed that she cannot detect anything boyish in her brother. Despite his repeated assertions that his wife is correct in her interpretation, Fyne admits to Marlow several times that

he does not believe Flora took advantage of Anthony: "He hissed through his teeth in unexpectedly figurative style that it would take a lot to persuade him to 'push under the head of a poor devil of a girl quite sufficiently plucky'--and snorted" (p. 190). In his final conversation with Marlow on the pavement, Fyne remarks that Flora accepted Anthony because of her father. He later comments that Flora may have 'made eyes' at him, but he adds immediately he is sure that she did not. Fyne believes instead that Anthony himself victimized the helpless girl. He recognizes what his wife is too blind to see when she privately told him that Flora was actually terrified.

Faced with these contradictory views, Marlow must reconstruct what has happened. He comes only gradually to an understanding. When he is first told by Fyne that the elopement is the result of Flora's unscrupulousness, Marlow decides to suspend his judgment until he knows more. When Mrs. Fyne suggests that Flora has victimized her brother, he objects that "it's difficult to imagine a victim as passive as all that" (p. 158). Marlow is willing to urge Fyne to go to London because he is anxious to discover the truth. Marlow is aware of the malice Mrs. Fyne bears toward Flora and of the misconstructions she is prone to. Yet he offers Fyne another interpretation:

> "'What I see is that in dealing with reality Mrs. Fyne ceases to be tolerant. In other words, that she can't forgive Miss de Barral for being a woman and behaving like a woman. And yet this is not only reasonable and natural, but it is her only chance. A woman against the

> world has no resources but in herself. Her only means of action is to be what she is. You understand what I mean!" (pp. 187-88).

Marlow has already begun to suspect that Flora may have been put in the wrong in ways that he does not yet see: ". . . the fact of having shouted her away from the edge of a precipice seemed somehow to have engaged my responsibility as to this other leap" (p. 209). She has leaped into a "sinister solution" for reasons he cannot fathom. It seems to him that Anthony has not taken the initiative; it seems that he would have needed some slight encouragement. If this is true, then Mrs. Fyne might be correct in her suspicions about Flora. He is aware from what he has been told of Anthony's father that the chivalric motive has to be taken into account:

> "I don't know why I imagined Captain Anthony as the sort of man who would not be likely to take the initiative; not perhaps from indifference but from that peculiar timidity before women which often enough is found in conjunction with chivalrous instincts, with a great need for affection and great stability of feelings. Such men are easily moved. At the least encouragement they go foward with the eagerness, with the recklessness of starvation. This accounted for the suddenness of the affair. No! With all her inexperience this girl could not have found any great difficulty in her conquering enterprise. She must have begun it. And yet there she was, patient, almost unmoved, almost pitiful, waiting outside like a beggar, without a right to anything but compassion, for a promised dole" (p. 208).

Marlow is faced with a paradox. His conversation with Flora on the pavement is intended to reveal the peculiar nature of her relationship with Anthony.

Much of the significance of the scene on the pavement emerges in what Marlow finds meaningful in Flora's gestures and the peculiarities of her broken narrative. He suggests

at once her blindness to the truth of her inner being: "For my part, in the presence of a young girl I always become convinced that the dreams of sentiment--like the consoling mysteries of Faith--are invincible; that it is never, never reason which governs men and women" (p. 206). He remarks later that she did not have time to understand either her feelings or her actions. Not until the final scenes of the novel does she gain insight into herself. Marlow is puzzled at the beginning of their conversation: "She was not so much unreadable as blank; and I did not know whether to admire her for it or dismiss her from my thoughts as a passive butt of ferocious misfortune" (p. 207). She refers to her attempted suicide and tries to explain that her failure to jump was cowardly; she adds that this is not what she meant to say. It was the implication of what she was doing that restrained her; it was the idea of suicide that was cowardly. She admits later that she has experienced shame and remorse for having wanted to escape from "the ugliness rather than the pain of the struggle . . ." (p. 237). They talk for a while at cross-purposes:

> "She accepted my assurance in silence, without a sign. Her gravity had in it something acute, perhaps because of that chin. While we were still looking at each other she declared:
>
> "'There's no deception in it really. I want you to believe that if I am here, like this, to-day, it is not from fear. It is not!'
>
> "'I quite understand,' I said. But her firm yet self-conscious gaze became doubtful. 'I do,' I insisted. 'I understand perfectly that it was not of death that you were afraid.'
>
> "She lowered her eyes slowly, and I went on:
>
> "'As to life, that's another thing. And I don't know that one ought to blame you very much--though it seemed

> rather an excessive step. I wonder now if it isn't the ugliness rather than the pain of the struggle which . . .'
>
> "She shuddered visibly: 'But I do blame myself,' she exclaimed with feeling. 'I am ashamed.' And, dropping her head, she looked in a moment the very picture of remorse and shame" (pp. 236-37).

It would seem that she is remorseful about using Anthony, but Marlow sees later that she is remorseful because she momentarily forsook her father: "Now I understood the remorseful strain I had detected in her speeches" (p. 245). The reference goes back to the earlier mention of her attempted suicide. Because she insists that she did not elope with Anthony to exploit his generosity or because she was afraid of him, Marlow believes there must be a deeper reason. He is sure now that she has not been unscrupulous and has not struck a bargain with Anthony. The fact that she offers several explanations for her actions is important. What she does not realize is that she unconsciously accepts whatever she is told. She has been told by Anthony that she is loved, just as she is told by the governess that she cannot be loved. When Anthony attacks her later with the fact that she has not said she loved him, she reflects that she had never known what to say. She has, however, the capacity to love him, yet she cannot admit this intuitive impulsion that causes her to assume a passive role in their relationship. Because she has always allowed others to act for her, she cannot admit "every better impulse, every instinctive aspiration of her soul to trust and love." These impulses are fated to be stifled by treachery and lies. She gains insight only when she obeys the truth of her impulses and fights Anthony's

renunciation. She confirms Marlow's interpretation at the end of the novel when she explains to Marlow the reason for the letter:

> "I really believed I was selling myself, Mr. Marlow. And I was proud of it. What I suffered afterwards I couldn't tell you; because I only discovered my love for my poor Roderick through agonies of rage and humiliation. I came to suspect him of despising me; but I could not put it to the test because of my father. Oh! I would not have been too proud. But I had to spare poor papa's feelings. Roderick was perfect, but I felt as though I were on the rack and not allowed even to cry out. Papa's prejudice against Roderick was my greatest grief. It was distracting. It frightened me. . . . That night when my poor father died suddenly I am certain they had some sort of discussion about me. But I did not want to hold out any longer against my own heart! I could not" (pp. 443-44).

Because she does not understand her irrational impulses, Flora believes that remorse kept her from jumping into the quarry. Marlow does not see as he talks with her on the pavement what she means by remorse, but he has recognized earlier that she was afraid that the dog would follow her over the edge. When she meets Anthony on the road, she becomes passive, making no positive effort to send him away. When Marlow asks why she did not ask him to leave her, she answers that he would not have taken notice. But the real reason is that she had begun to cry, and she made no effort to stop her tears. It is important to remember that this is the view of herself that Flora gives Marlow only after she has come to love Anthony unconsciously. This is the reason why she rationalizes her passivity as an overbearing concern for her father. Marlow comments on her characteristic passivity later in the novel: "She would be passive (and that does not mean inanimate) in her circumstances, where the

mere fact of being a woman was enough to give her an occult and supreme significance. And she would be enduring, which is the essence of woman's visible, tangible power" (p. 310). It is ironic that her positive actions should center always on the fulfillment of death wishes, whereas her intermittent struggles to live should take the form of passive responses to obvious sexual advances from men. Thus she is helpless to do anything when her German employer makes advances to her. When his wife reviles her, she answers ambiguously that she is as honorable as the wife.

When Anthony tells her that he loves her, she can only shake her head the least bit. Clearly she is convinced that she cannot be loved. She allows Marlow to see that Anthony loves her because she is in distress. He tells her that he loves the whiteness of her cheeks. His desire to help her makes it possible for her to fix on the bargain as an excuse for why she has "sold" herself. When Anthony asks whether she rejects his help because she dislikes him, she answers that she was not thinking of him but of someone else. She significantly does not tell Marlow what was said in the garden, but gives him to understand that she had accepted Anthony's proposal as a bargain. She does not say this explicitly because she had not actually said this to Anthony. Marlow comments later on this: "I believe that the girl had been frank with him, with the frankness of women to whom perfect frankness is impossible, because so much of their safety depends on judicious reticences" (p. 261). Instead of recounting what really happened, she defends herself:

> "'I have written to Mrs. Fyne that I haven't been--that I have done nothing to make Captain Anthony behave to me as he has behaved. I haven't. . . . It isn't my doing. It isn't my fault--if she likes to put it that way. But she with her ideas, ought to understand that I couldn't'" (pp. 231-32).

Flora is divided between Mrs. Fyne's belief that no scruples should prevent a woman from getting what she wants and her knowledge that she could not resist Anthony. She mentions her fear of him several times, but adds that she was not thinking of her life while he was speaking to her. She then gives another reason for what she has done. "If you will have it that he saved my life, then he has got it" (p. 232). She admits that she did make a bargain, not because she was afraid to die, but because of her father. She continues to insist on Anthony's generosity. That she is firmly convinced that this is her reason for having consented to the proposal is evident in the conversation with her father in the cab. She describes "that generosity of a stormy type, which had come to her from sea, had caught her up on the brink of unmentionable failure, had whirled her away in its first ardent gust and could be trusted now . . . to carry them both, side by side, into absolute safety" (p. 365). She does not tell her father that Anthony had expressed his need of her.

Marlow sees that Flora does not know her own feelings. He recognizes that "she did not know herself then what sort of tryst she was coming down to keep" (p. 235). She strikes him as acting with the gestures of a sleepwalker. When Anthony attacks her in the hotel room, she is stunned and bewildered, "abandoning herself passively" (p. 331). He

connects passivity with sleep and mesmerism later in the novel: "The passive quietness with which she looked at him gave her the appearance of a person bewitched--or say, mesmerically put to sleep--beyond any notion of her surroundings" (p. 428). Sleep in Chance symbolizes innocence from which Flora awakens suddenly, like her father who, in the carriage, "started like a somnambulist awakened suddenly" (p. 358). Marlow comes to see that her passivity is the result of the conflict between her sense of inferiority and her impulses. She waits for someone to act for her. Her only means of action is to be what she is. At the end of the first part of the novel, he states: "My idea is that she went as far as she was able--as far as she could bear it--as far as she had to. . . ." (p. 253).

In the second part of the novel, Marlow depends on nothing except the signs of Flora's and Anthony's fate that he finds along the way. The time-shifts are extremely significant. Flora goes aboard the Ferndale with Anthony the same morning of her conversation on the street with Marlow. The events of the second part connect with the first chapter of the first part in which Powell described his chance. The characters who give Marlow the fact which he speculates upon are Powell, Franklin, and Flora herself. It is Powell who first sees de Barral and Flora. Conrad's method, as in the first part, is to show de Barral as he looks to others without immediately exploring his mind:

> "A thin, somewhat sunken face, with a tightly closed mouth, stared at the distant French coast, vague like

> a suggestion of solid darkness, lying abeam beyond the evening light reflected from the level waters, themselves growing more sombre than the sky; a stare, across which Powell had to pass and did pass with a quick side glance, noting its immovable stillness. His passage disturbed those eyes no more than if he had been as immaterial as a ghost" (p. 285).

There are other curious occurrences. De Barral whispers to Powell that he is being victimized by Anthony. Franklin relates that he has overheard de Barral call Anthony a "jailer," and that there was a scene when Flora brought her father aboard. Franklin speculates that something must have happened in the carriage. He also notes that Flora and Anthony never converse on deck. Flora remains resolutely on the steps of the passageway when the ship almost collides with another; she helps to avert a wreck. Anthony is surprised to hear of this from Powell. The opening chapters of the second part parallel those of the first: Marlow is concerned with the consequences of action that has not yet been narrated. The movement is from the fringe of appearances at the edge of moral experience to its interior. He works from apparent causation to the reality of motives.

Perhaps the longest sustained psychological analysis comes when Marlow reconstructs the scene between Flora and Anthony in the hotel room. This scene immediately follows in time Marlow's conversations with Flora and Fyne on the pavement; it is not presented until a hundred pages later in the novel. Marlow is faced with another paradox: "What could they have found to estrange them from each other with this rapidity and this thoroughness so far from all temptations"

(p. 326). Now he searches for the answer. Flora has passively consented to the accusation that she never admitted love for him. This means to Anthony that she agrees with Fyne that he has taken advantage of a helpless girl. Marlow implies that Flora has begun in the hotel room to consider more consciously than in her conversation with him the reasons for her action. Anthony is stung by the implication that she regards her relationship with him merely as a bargain. She wants him to believe that she has always been honest with him. He accepts her view that she has sold herself:

> "'Don't you understand that I won't let you buy shelter from me at the cost of your very soul. . . . I have found myself since I came upon you and I would rather sell my own soul to the devil than let you go out of my keeping. But I must have the right!'" (p. 335).

He knows only that he had insisted she come with him to London because he felt compelled to offer the security she needed. He does not decide what to do until he faces her in the cabin of the ship. He offers to marry her without consummating the marriage:

> "Then when she understood that he was giving her her liberty she went stiff all over, her hand resting on the edge of the table, her face set like a carving of white marble. It was all over. It was as that abominable governess had said. She was insignificant, contemptible. Nobody could love her. Humiliation clung to her like a cold shroud--never to be shaken off, unwarmed by this madness of generosity" (p. 335).

Flora has a terrible decision before her; she cannot admit that her feelings of insignificance and contemptibleness result from an unconscious wish to love and be loved. She abruptly walks out of the cabin. This new perfidy has taken the form of magnanimity. When Anthony follows her, her

strength fails her, just as it had when she first met him. He takes her silence for consent. Flora cannot meet the responsibility that his obvious suffering presents:

> "The catch in his voice astonished her by its resemblance to a sob. It frightened her too. The thought that came to her head was: 'He mustn't.' . . . she was still more frightened by the discovery that he was shaking all over. Bewildered, shrinking into the far-off corner, avoiding his eyes, she yet saw the quivering of his mouth and made a wild attempt at a smile, which broke the rigidity of her lips and set her teeth chattering" (p. 338).

What Flora does not see is the "special sort of exultation which seemed to take him by the throat like an enemy" (p. 339). Marlow then describes her feelings before the wedding night. She rationalizes that she is obligated to "accept the situation for ever and ever unless . . ." (p. 341). She cannot consciously admit that she means unless she learns to love him: "She dissembled all her sentiments, but it was not duplicity on her part. All she wanted was to get at the truth; to see what would come of it" (p. 341). When Anthony comes for her the following morning, she rationalizes again: "Well I am here. I am here without any nonsense. It is not my fault that I am a mere worthless object of pity" (p. 342). Thus her self-betrayal, as Marlow sees it, is complete.

Like Razumov, Flora becomes slowly aware of the truth. This is evident in the scene in the carriage with her father. His shock at hearing of the marriage forces her to defend herself by insisting that she did not love Anthony when she married him. She denies her love for him because of a "mysterious guilt" aroused by the conflict between her love for Anthony and for her father. Perhaps she dreads that she has

swindled Anthony out of his fortune just as her father had swindled hapless depositors who entrusted their savings to him on the basis of false confidence. The ambivalence which marked the earlier justification to Marlow is evident in her explanation to her father: she hesitates as she tries to explain what is not clear even to herself. Conrad reintroduces the motif of "trust" that is basic to Lord Jim and Nostromo to clarify the problem of responsibility.

Marlow then relates what happened during the second voyage. He foreshortens the narrative, presenting only a few of the incidents. After a short vacation in the country, Flora prepares to return to the ship with her father and her husband. When Anthony asks her jocularly how she feels about going away again, she answers that she is crushed by his magnanimity. She continually emphasizes the weight of responsibility that she feels towards Anthony, a responsibility she does nothing to meet. Aboard the ship she is tortured by her father about what she has done; he asks her whether she believes in eternal punishment. Her father, anxious to destroy her marriage, unwittingly pushes her to a firmer realization of her responsibility. At this point in the narrative Powell comes aboard the ship. The events leading up to the fateful night are then briefly traced; Marlow does not consider the states of mind of de Barral, Flora, and Anthony. From this point on, he is concerned entirely with the action in the cabin as Powell describes it; he does not try to establish the motives in this final

scene. There is a sharp break here with the method of the previous chapters.

Professor Wiley praises the scene in the cabin as "melodrama of the highest order,"[1] and finds in it allegory which "provides the book with a whole level of meaning over and above the narrative itself."[2] It is clear, however, that Conrad is using semi-allegorical methods earlier than this. He does this to offset the melodramatic effect of the action. More than this, he establishes another view of the theme of victim turned victimizer, the ambiguity of innocence and guilt. This aspect of the general design is evident in the characterization of Anthony.

The Characterization of Anthony

The theme of victim turned victimizer is involved in the deceptions which supposedly ensnare Anthony. Through most of the novel we have Flora's view of the situation conveyed and interpreted by Marlow. But Marlow presents another view of what has happened. Tormented by de Barral's accusation that he married Flora against her will and imprisoned her aboard his ship, Anthony begins to question his motives. He had asked Flora to meet him in the garden of the Fyne house the evening of the day following their first meeting. When she appeared, he assumed that she was doing what he had asked. He did not know that she had forgotten about her promise to meet him, and she was going to the quarry to attempt suicide again. Excited by her willingness to do what

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[1] Conrad's Measure of Man, p. 142. [2] Ibid., p. 150.

he asked, Anthony offered to rescue her from insecurity and protect her. Marlow comments that "such men are easily moved. At the least encouragement they go forward with eagerness, with the recklessness of starvation. This accounted for the suddenness of the affair" (p. 208). Being the son of a passionate poet, he had

> ". . . set up a standard for himself with that need for embodying in his conduct the dreams, the passion, the impulses the poet puts into arrangements of verses, which are dearer to him than his own self--and may make his own self appear sublime in the eyes of other people, and even in his own eyes" (p. 328).

Later when Fyne accused him of taking advantage of Flora, he hit upon the idea of renunciation. Marlow comments on this:

> "And I know also that a passion, dominating or tyrannical, invading the whole man and subjugating all his faculties to its own unique end, may conduct him whom it spurs and drives, into all sorts of adventures, to the brink of unfathomable dangers, to the limits of folly, and madness, and death" (p. 329).

Marlow describes what he believes Anthony thought to himself:

> "A man who has had his way is seldom happy, for generally he finds that the way does not lead very far on this earth of desires which can never be fully satisfied. Anthony had entered with extreme precipitation the enchanted gardens of Armida saying to himself 'At Last!' As to Armida, herself, he was not going to offer her any violence. But now he had discovered that all the enchantment was in Armida herself, in Armida's smiles. This Armida did not smile. She existed, unapproachable, behind the blank wall of his renunciation. His force, fit for action, experienced the impatience, the indignation, almost the despair of his vitality arrested, bound, stilled, progressively worn down, frittered away by Time; by the force blind and insensible, which seems inert and yet uses one's life up by its imperceptible action, dropping minute after minute on one's living heart like drops of water wearing down a stone. . . . He had rushed in like a ruffian; he had dragged the poor defenceless thing by the hair . . . on board that ship. It was really atrocious. Nothing assured him that his person could be attractive to this

> or any other woman. And his proceedings were enough in themselves to make any one odious. He must have been bereft of his senses. She must fatally detest and fear him" (pp. 396-97).

Anthony has come to an unconscious realization of what has happened; he is never to come to a conscious understanding. The allusion itself illuminates the motives that have been established previously. Reference is made to Book XIV, and possibly Book IV, of Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered. The enchantress, Armida, the niece of Satan, ensnares Rinaldo after he and nine other knights have succumbed to her charms at the camp of Godfrey of Bouillon. They succumbed when she revealed her distress in a pitiful display of tears and wringing of hands. She asks them to rescue her father who is imprisoned by his enemies. Rinaldo consents to champion her cause, and departs with her and the other knights. Satan had instructed Armida to employ all her tricks to move Rinaldo to pity, and she succeeds. Armida diverts Rinaldo from his mission and leads him to her enchanted gardens on a remote island, "the Isle of Fortunate." Here Rinaldo loses himself in pleasure.

As in "A Smile of Fortune," the garden in Chance symbolizes sexual temptation. Conrad uses this allusion to Tasso to organize parts of the novel. Armida, like Flora, is a damsel in distress championed by a knight like Anthony. Anthony, like Rinaldo, finds himself ensnared in an enchanted garden; he is bewitched by feminine beauty. Part I of the novel is titled "The Damsel," Part II "The Knight." Flora is actually in distress, and she wins Anthony through her

tears and her broken tale of grief and misfortune. But she is an enchantress in the eyes of Mrs. Fyne who believes she has used deceit to ensnare Anthony. It is clear that any deceit she displays is unconscious. The scene in the garden is not represented, but Marlow conjectures that Anthony must have been "gentleness itself" when Flora came down. It is possible that Conrad is playing on the word "gentleness" here. Flora, as we have seen, is unaware of the real reason for her passivity. She allows him to make his offer of marriage just as she later agrees to other conditions.

Anthony, on the other hand, has deceived himself into believing that passion has not entered into his pure act of sacrifice. His asceticism is not prompted by conviction but by vanity, by the fleeting awareness of something he cannot explain:

> "It was not pity alone . . . . It was something more spontaneous, perverse and exciting. It gave him the feeling that if only he could get hold of her, no woman would belong to him so completely as this woman" (p. 224).

It is no accident that Flora should remind him of Armida. Anthony had entered the gardens deceived about the true source of his enchantment, believing that he has "at last" come upon the means to the realization of his desires--desires which he masks as chivalric ideals. The phrase "as to Armida" refers to the immediately preceding paragraph which completes the context of the allusion:

> "It happens to the most resolute of men to find himself at grips not only with unknown forces, but with a well-known force the real might of which he had not understood. Anthony had discovered that he was not the proud master but the chafing captive of his generosity. It rose in front of him like a wall which his respect for himself forbade him to scale. He said to himself: 'Yes,

> I was a fool--but she has trusted me!! Trusted! A terrible word to any man somewhat exceptional in a world in which success has never been found in renunciation and good faith. And it must also be said, in order not to make Anthony more stupidly sublime than he was, that the behavior of Flora kept him at a distance. The girl was afraid to add to the exasperation of her father" (p. 395).

Aware that he has become a "chafing captive," Anthony is led to the further realization that his concern was perhaps not with an ideal but with the "unapproachable Armida" who existed behind "the blank wall of his renunciation," that is, with the sexual beauty of Flora that he could not approach. But he is quick to qualify this. "This" Armida did not smile, that is, she did not extend her sexual charms. This is the heart of his self-deception. And this is the reason why he should think that he was not going to offer violence to Armida herself. Rinaldo had not entered the enchanted garden to attack Armida. But it is almost the first thing that Anthony thinks of denying. For his chivalrous conduct is simply a refinement of his erotic tendencies. Like his father who transmuted the strain of his erotic impulses into the celebration of "six thousand years' evolution towards the refinement of thought, manners, and feelings" (p. 38), Anthony rationalizes his sexual involvement through a pretended commitment to chivalric conduct. Marlow comments that "the father, fastidious, cerebral, morbidly shrinking from all contacts, could only sing in harmonious numbers of what the son felt with a dumb and reckless sincerity" (p. 332). And yet his father had acted the tyrant to his family with the temperament of a cave-dweller. Marlow conjectures

that his love for Flora was

> ". . . born of that rare pity which is not akin to contempt because rooted in an overwhelmingly strong capacity for tenderness--the tenderness of the fiery predatory kind--the tenderness of silent solitary men, the voluntary, passionate outcasts of their kind. At the same time I am forced to think that his vanity must have been enormous" (p. 331).

This is why Fyne's accusation affected him as it did. Anthony always responds violently to the truth about himself.

The awareness of this erotic streak in his personality is developed with considerable skill by Conrad. As we have already seen, Flora is fully aware of it. At the Fyne dinner table, she sees how he turns on his niece savagely. His "mysterious ferocity" is repeatedly emphasized: "He waited a little in silence and immobility, then stamped his foot and lost control of himself. He growled at her in a savage passion" (p. 229). When she comes down to the garden, she remembers that she had promised to meet Anthony there:

> "She did not understand the mood of that man clearly. He was violent. But she had gone beyond the point where things matter. . . . She must have been light-headed because the thought came into her mind that should he get into ungovernable fury from disappointment, and perchance strangle her, it would be as good a way to be done with it as any" (p. 229).

At the end of the novel, Anthony is described as being "swarthy as an African, by the side of Flora whiter than the lilies" (p. 342). Like Othello, he is a man bewitched by the devil. He almost succumbs to the force of evil in the person of de Barral who plots his downfall.

The allusion to Armida may contain the explanation for his release from the spell. In Book XIV of Jerusalem

Delivered the spell which holds Rinaldo is broken by the voice of reason in the person of Ubaldo who persuades him to leave the gardens. In Chance, Marlow states that "the normal alone can overcome the abnormal" (p. 429). The force of innocence in the person of Powell is the only force that can withstand evil. Anthony is another Parsifal who faces temptation in the enchanted garden of Klingsor. But, unlike Parsifal, Anthony is not purity incarnate. It is also possible that Conrad was thinking of the temptations of St. Anthony in the wilderness. Professor Wiley has shown that Conrad was strongly influenced by Flaubert's La tentation de Saint Antoine. In one passage at the beginning of the second part, Marlow comments:

> "Powell felt in that way the more because the captain of a ship at sea is a remote, inaccessible creature, something like a prince in a fairy-tale, alone of his kind, depending on nobody, not to be called to account except by powers practically invisible and so distant, that they might be looked upon as supernatural for all that the rest of the crew knows of them, as a rule" (p. 288).

Still Powell is only able to save Anthony physically from the machinations of de Barral. Anthony possibly saves himself when he renounces his claim to Flora, for he thus reconciles the conflicting forces that rage in him. At the moment when Anthony is able to give up his pretension to chivalric idealism, his moral life begins.[1]

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[1] As in Lord Jim and other earlier works, the sea in Chance is closely related to Conrad's view of order and destiny. Again order is conferred through obedience to an impersonal code; this order is superior to the factitious order some men mistakenly seek outside the rules of an ordered society--rules which the incendiary presumes to evade and

Characterization of the "Reporters" and Other Figures

The time-shifts and imaginative reconstructions make possible discrimination of what really happened from what was thought to have happened. This is done through "reporters" whose "pitch" was that moral judgment of the principal characters which their experiences led them to make. The use of Powell illustrates "the fusion of what we see with how we see." Powell does not close his mind to other possible interpretations. He is different from Marlow who was once himself a "young" Powell. His is a "personality capable of perception and with a feeling for the vagaries of fate, but essentially simple in itself" (p. 40). He has "the bloom of innocence not quite rubbed off his smooth

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destroy. Conrad expresses this in an important letter to Cunningham-Grahame: "L'homme est un animal méchant. Sa méchanceté doit être organisée. Le crime est une condition nécessaire de l'existence organisée. La société est essentiellement criminelle,--ou elle n'existerait pas." Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad, Vol. I, p. 269. In Chance, Marlow opposes the incendiary view: ". . . the service of the sea and the service of a temple are both detached from the vanities and errors of a world which follows no severe rule" (pp. 32-33). Thus the sailor forgets that the sea is an uncertain element in the presence of its power to make him forget himself. Marlow repeatedly suggests that land is a world of bewitchment where men like Anthony succumb to the temptations of personal desire whereas the sea is a place of release. De Barral did not want to come aboard the ship because he sensed that the sea would rob him of his power. Faced with the fact that Flora does not love him, Anthony seeks the shelter of the "uncontaminated, honest ship" (p. 334). Franklin sees land as a place of bewitchment and suggests that talking to Anthony is like talking to a man standing on shore: he cannot be heard or reached from the ship. In this same way, the ship is related to the notion of saving responsibility. Anthony's emotional turbulence is reflected in the disruption that seizes the ship. There are defects in the ship's equipment; loose chain and rope-wire fall to the deck. There is discontent among the crew.

cheeks" (p. 282). Although he is implicated in the action, he is not prone to judge others as the more sophisticated Fynes are. What he sees is colored by his conviction that chance is a guide to happiness. Marlow himself once believed this, we know from "Youth." Powell characteristically assumes that luck helped him to pass the Marine Board examinations. Like the young captains of "The Secret Sharer" and The Shadow-Line, he underestimates his competence when he assumes his first position of responsibility. He had, in fact, gone to the "devil himself on the mere hint that he had a second mate's job to give away" (p. 7). The older Powell, experienced in the ways of the world, initiates him into life; he suggests that it is "human nature" that his fellow workers should be anxious to turn him out of his job. Powell comments that he "had never looked at mankind in that light before. When one's young human nature shocks one" (p. 15). Marlow comments that there was some malice in the way the older Powell seized the opportunity to serve him. It was as though he had knocked Powell overboard because he had asked for a bath. Powell does not see that character, not chance, determines his fortune.

When Powell's gear is almost stolen by a wharf-rat and "his little devil of a pal" (p. 28), the policeman at the gate comments that he has had extraordinary luck. He seems to have entered a world inhabited by demoniac forces, the gates symbolizing the entrance into a purgatorial world where innocence is to be tried and character possibly

strengthened. Powell, in his innocence, tends to miss the significance of what he relates to Marlow. Yet he does see the inadequacy of other interpretations with "his simple notions of psychology" (p. 308). The steward and the Franklin see in Flora an agent of the devil, but Powell is aware that appearances are deceptive; their explanation is "a result of simple causes which did not seem to him adequate" (p. 288). Thus he does not interpret what he sees; he merely reflects his objective awareness as his perceptions enlarge. He senses with Franklin that Anthony is avoiding the devil, "something purposeful like the avoidance of pain or temptation" (p. 313). He senses the imminence of evil in the disruptions in the atmosphere and the imposing figure of de Barral:

> "The very sea, with short flashes of foam bursting out here and there in the gloomy distances, the unchangeable, safe sea sheltering a man from all passions, except its own anger, seemed queer to the quick glance he threw to windward where the already effaced horizon traced no reassuring limit to the eye. In the expiring, diffused twilight, and before the clouded night dropped its mysterious veil, it was the immensity of space made visible--almost palpable. Young Powell felt it. He felt it in the sudden sense of his isolation; the trustworthy, powerful ship of his first acquaintance reduced to a speck, to something almost undistinguishable, the mere support for the soles of his two feet before that unexpected old man becoming so suddenly articulate in a darkening universe" (pp. 292-93).

Powell's conversations with de Barral increase his concern for Anthony's safety, particularly when he is almost killed by the falling chain. Conrad is careful not to suggest that his innocence has been corrupted. He watches Anthony through the sky-light because ostensibly he wants to see the title

of a book Anthony is reading: the cautious interest he begins to take in events after de Barral hints at murder is not marked by hate and suspicion. He is amazed to discover that the hand that reached out from behind the curtain to poison the glass is the hand of de Barral. Powell states that he was puzzled at his "low trick" of spying. Conrad refers to him as a "secret watcher," but it is not clear in what sense he means this. There is no suggestion anywhere in the final scene that he half expects evil. It is as though he were there under false pretenses, destined by invisible powers to guide the fortunes of Anthony and Flora. He wards off danger the first time when his clear-sightedness averts a collision; he has defeated "some invisible monster ambushed in the night amongst the waves" (p. 319). His experience aboard Anthony's ship completes his education. At the end of the novel Marlow comments on what he has learned:

> "'Listen Powell,' I said. 'We got to know each other by chance?'
> "'Oh, quite!' he admitted, adjusting his hat.
> "'And the science of life consists in seizing every chance that presents itself,' I pursued. 'Do you believe that?'" (p. 446).

Each of the minor characters of Chance, including de Barral, is constructed around a single idea. De Barral is a contrast to Powell. For him wealth is virtue, and the great moral evolution of character was towards the newly discovered virtue of Thrift. Yet Thrift made his fantastic speculations possible; he did not see the significance of the extravagances he lavished upon his daughter instead of himself. It is his way of expressing the love which he has

never actually felt either for his wife or his daughter. He tries to give Flora the breeding he missed in his own life. He cries at the conclusion of the trial that he would have ended by being made a peer. The veneer of his begrimed rat-infested headquarters symbolizes his hollow values. The villagers and the governess who formerly worked for a ducal family know that Mrs. de Barral is not a real lady. When the governess finally turns on Flora, she attacks her low birth. Flora and Anthony are both children of men who strive for aristocratic values. The central irony for Conrad is that lack of imagination deprives de Barral of the enjoyment of his wealth:

> "He had nothing out of them--nothing of the prestigious or the desirable things of the earth, craved for by predatory natures. He had gratified no tastes, had known no luxury, he had built no gorgeous palaces, had formed no splendid galleries out of these 'immense sums.' He had not even a home. He had gone into these rooms in an hotel and had stuck there for years, giving no doubt perfect satisfaction to the management. . . . He had bought for himself out of all the wealth streaming through his fingers neither adulation nor love, neither splendour nor comfort. There was something perfect in his consistent mediocrity. His very vanity seemed to miss the gratification of even the mere show of power. . . . He had handled millions without ever enjoying anything of what is counted precious in the community of men, because he had neither the brutality of temperament nor the fineness of mind to make him desire them with the will power of a masterful adventurer . . ." (p. 84).

In the second part of the novel, de Barral becomes symbolic of Satanic evil; he has actually emerged from a "real hell." Powell senses that Franklin "must have found in the restlessness of his thoughts the allusion of being engaged in an active contest with some power of evil" (p. 305). De Barral is the alter ego of Anthony in one important passage

where Powell sees the old man for the first time:

> "In fact, he had no occasion to go on the poop or even look that way much; but while the ship was about to anchor, casting his eyes in that direction, he received an absurd impression that his captain (he was up there, of course) was sitting on both sides of the aftermost skylight at once. He was too occupied to reflect on this curious delusion, this phenomenon of seeing double as though he had had a drop too much. He only smiled at himself" (p. 276).

This happens again shortly afterwards. De Barral is different from Anthony in the essential simplicity of his motives. Conrad shows us only as much of his consciousness as he needs to. In order to bring out those qualities which are most necessary to his purpose, Conrad introduces the cousin.

Thrift is the chief of the cousin's virtues; industry and punctuality are the equivalents of virtue and gentility. Marlow comments that he "possessed all the civic virtues in their very meanest form, and the finishing touch was given by a low sort of consciousness he manifested of possessing them" (p. 130). Yet he is essentially dishonest:

> "All the time Fyne felt subtly in that man's manner a derisive disapproval of everything that was not lower middle class, a profound respect for money, a mean sort of contempt for speculators that fail, and a conceited satisfaction with his own respectable vulgarity" (p. 129).

His pretensions to gentility are repeatedly emphasized; he has "risen to be an employer of labour and was bound to give a good example" (p. 167). He is contemptuous of the Fynes whose fine manners are inflated. He is clearly the embodiment of these false genteel values which have not had time to flower in de Barral: he is like the governess, corrupted by values which he could not understand or absorb, reduced by them to ironic pretensions.

F. R. Leavis notes "the vivid particularity with which things are seen" in Chance.[1] In this "vivid particularity" lies the secret of Conrad's minor characterization. We see Anthony and Flora as they react to life; we see the minor characters visually. The description of Franklin illustrates how perfectly Conrad was able to render psychological qualities visually:

> "The grotesque squat shape, with the knob of the head as if rammed down between the square shoulders by a blow from a club, moved vaguely in a circumscribed space limited by the two harness-casks lashed to the front rail of the poop, without gestures, hands in the pockets of the jacket, elbows pressed closely to its side; and the voice without resonance, passed from anger to dismay and back again without a single louder word in the hurried delivery, interrupted only by slight gasps for air as if the speaker were being choked by the suppressed passion of his grief" (pp. 303-304).

Fyne is described always in various states of motion which correspond to the degrees of anxiety he is experiencing. He is seen speeding along the platform at the train station, rushing through the narrow glass door of the hotel:

> "He skipped wildly out of the way and up on the curbstone with a purely instinctive precision; his mind had nothing to do with his movements. In the middle of his leap, and while in the act of sailing gravely through the air, he continued to relieve his outraged feelings" (p. 239).

Appearances are indications of character and temperament:

> "I saw outside a pair of grey eyes thatched by ragged yellowy-white eyebrows gazing at me solemnly over the toes of my slippers. There was a grave, furrowed brow surmounting that portentous gaze, a brown tweed cap set far back on the perspiring head" (p. 64).

The juxtaposition of minor characters is used by

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[1] F. R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1954), p. 271.

Conrad to show the nature of innocence and evil. Minor characters illustrate the extent to which Conrad achieved the fusion of what we see with how we see, one aim of "the New Form of the Novel." Perhaps it might be possible to relate this method of Impressionism and the "New Form of the Novel" described by Ford.

An Evaluation of the Technique of Chance

We have seen that characterization in Chance is the representation of changing states of consciousness and sometimes of the manifestations of "fixed ideas." Conrad shows, to use the words of Daiches, "a partially known variant" in different circumstances. In depicting Flora's consciousness, notably in the scene on the pavement, Conrad tries to suggest the dynamic quality of her experience through the revelation of contradictions in mood and awareness. These methods created certain problems that Conrad did not adequately solve. If there are to be changes in consciousness, it would be expected that these changes would be shown. Conrad fails to do this toward the end of the novel: we do not see enough to help us understand what is happening in the minds of the main characters. There is no dramatization of changes in Flora's awareness even within Marlow's consciousness. Thus the psychological delineation is essentially static rather than dynamic even though Conrad's intention was to show the growth of awareness.

Insisting that Flora is "a frail and passive vessel" is not enough to establish the depth of the shock she suffers.

There is inconsistency between what we see about Flora and what we sense through the remarkable imagery. Because Conrad seldom shows Flora directly, he relies on recurrent images, for example, Flora standing at the edge of the quarry, to suggest the quality of her inner life. But this method fails him in the second part. Conrad is always at the fringes of his experience, trying to "get hold" of Flora, yet he never fully realizes her: "Though loth to give her up I didn't see the way of pursuit clearly and was on the point of becoming discouraged when my natural liking for Captain Anthony came to my assistance. . . . Each of us was bent on capturing his own dream" (pp. vii-viii). There are times in the novel when views of Flora add nothing to the total impression Conrad is trying to create. If progression d'effet is the aim, then each situation, image, and response should add something to the total impression. This is what Ford means by Style as "a constant succession of tiny unobservable surprises."[1] Flora is as elusive and unspecified as the mythic fairy-princess Conrad suggests she is. She is never equal as a character to the weight of implication she is intended to bear. Conrad's intention, we have seen, is to shock Flora sharply out of her delusion that she is a victim, a fairy-princess, a "damsel" in distress, and into an awareness of her responsibility to Anthony. This conception is not completely realized in Chance, rich though the novel is in atmosphere and insight.

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[1] Ford, Joseph Conrad, p. 211.

James had certain reservations about Chance. He felt that the effect of the novel was diffuse and compromised its objectivity:

> His genius is what is left over from the other, the compromised and compromising quantities--the Marlows, and their determinant inventors and interlocutors, the Powells, the Franklins, the Fynes, the tell-tale little dogs, the successive members of a cue from one to the other of which the sense and the interest of the subject have to be passed on together, in the manner of the buckets of water for the improvised extinction of a fire, before reaching our apprehension: all with whatever result, to this apprehension, of a quantity to be allowed for as spilt by the way.[1]

James does not develop this theory further, but we may guess that he is referring to the value of "solidity of specification" which he often emphasizes. Focus is lost when too much is included in the picture. Complex motivation is not a prerequisite for good art. And certainly simple motivation has often been the basis for great characterizations. In Dickens, the richness of the presentation of a Pecksniff or a Mrs. Gamp is the result of continual repetitions of a basic pattern. Dickens shows simple hypocrisy operating in different situations. The pleasure for the reader is in the variety of the presentation. In his great novels of the fifties, Bleak House and Little Dorrit, insight into character is of no importance. What is important is the interaction of individuals representative of different classes of society and the moral implications of these interactions. Not until the later novels, particularly Great Expectations and The Mystery of Edwin Drood, does Dickens begin to be concerned with complex motivation.

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[1] Notes on Novelists, p. 278.

For Conrad, however, the important thing was the rendition of complex states of being. He fails to accomplish his purpose, perhaps because of the semi-allegorical elements in the final scenes. Flora's passivity is the key to what happens in the garden of the Fyne house and later on the boat. There could be no question of bewitchment until after her father is released from prison, and her crucial scenes with Anthony occur before this. The allusions reinforce the psychological motivation, give it immediacy and depth. Allegory also serves to create a romantic fairy-tale tragi-comedy atmosphere, perhaps to offset the melodrama. Yet the allegorical elements are at cross-purposes with the kind of psychological analysis that Conrad was trying to develop. It is credible that Flora should be impotent to act because of the mysterious guilt her father arouses in her; but this characterization of Flora is seriously flawed because there is no psychological explanation for why, in the scene in the cabin, she should awaken from the spell created by her guilt. It is true that Anthony's renunciation presents her with an extreme choice, but she faces equally severe choices in earlier parts of the novel. It is clear from the conclusion that Conrad was dissatisfied with Flora's surrender to Anthony. When he is accidentally killed, she faces the prospect of loneliness. But she is supposedly strong enough now to face life. At the end she is persuaded to accept Powell.

One possible use of the time-shift in the final pages

may have been to allow Flora to narrate in some detail the changes that took place in her consciousness in much the same way as she did at the end of the first part. But Conrad would not have been able to use that masterful indirection which makes the conversation of the pavement so compelling; and it would have considerably disturbed the balance of the second part, leaving the novel without a strong terminal climax. This theory would seem to be confirmed by the almost parallel structure of the two parts, the movement from the depiction of external events to the intensive representation of inner reality. Conrad did not adequately solve his compositional problem. Clearly he intended to make action a function of character. But there is a lag between the awareness of the "reporters" who occupy the foreground of the novel most of the time, and the major characters. Conrad's solution to this problem was to project the drama of Flora's inner consciousness from within the consciousness of Marlow. But the lag becomes apparent and considerably weakens the conclusion when the awareness of Powell and Marlow in the second part begins to overshadow the reflected consciousness of Flora to the point where this consciousness disappears. Conrad failed to complete the process he started in the first part. The change in Flora is not spontaneous because it is created out of the need to resolve the complications of the plot.

Chance as an Experiment in the "New Form of the Novel"

David Daiches argues that Conrad was interested in

the action primarily as it contributed to the dominant atmosphere. He believes that Conrad's emphasis on mood made him interested in psychological analysis. Daiches goes on to suggest that the characters are simple people, with few dominating vices or virtues: ". . . the subtlety is in the method, not in the subject to which the method is applied."[1] I think our analysis shows that in Chance this is true only of the minor characters. Yet it is true that we see the principals only as we experience their changing psychological states; we experience the minor characters as parts of a total "moral atmosphere," as Marlow puts it.

When Conrad referred in the preface to Under Western Eyes to the "effect of actuality," he was referring to this idea of characterization. He felt that he had to create a mood before characters could be known. There had to be an eye-witness of the action: "What I was concerned with mainly was the aspect, the character, and the fate of the individuals as they appeared to the Western Eyes of the old teacher of languages" (p. viii). It seems to me that this is what Conrad meant by "render" as he and Ford used it: "We in turn, if we wished to produce on you an effect of life, must not narrate but render impressions."[2] Certainly anything that an omniscient or any other kind of narrator tells is rendered insofar as it is fully described. But Conrad, like James, saw the artist as a painter, and believed that characters,

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[1] The Novel and the Modern World, p. 54.

[2] Ford, Joseph Conrad, pp. 194-95.

like backgrounds, were experienced only in a larger context in which the relation of part to part and part to whole conferred meaning. Daiches says that "states of mind interest him only to the extent that they illustrate the mood or atmosphere he is endeavoring to present."[1] For this reason the novelist had to remain aloof. Flaubert had stated that "an artist must be in his work like God in creation, invisible and all-powerful; he should be everywhere felt, but nowhere seen."[2] This is essentially what the "New Form" would accomplish--a "progression of effects." This is what Ford meant when he said that the novelist should show experience as it is known by an intelligent observer.

At this point Conrad and Ford depart from James. Like Joyce and Virginia Woolf after him, James was concerned with directly picturing consciousness as it reacted to experience. James called this method "the drama of consciousness." Edel refers to it as "internal monologue"; James called it "the atmosphere of mind." Conrad is concerned, however, with a view of consciousness, and although he often uses foreshortening to depict consciousness, he prefers to rely on "reporters." The reason may be that only a "reporter" can relate the character to the context of which he is an element. Conrad might have spoken in the novel in his own person as Thackeray did, but he preferred not to. Ford explains why: "Then just boldly and remorselessly you must

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[1] The Novel and the Modern World, p. 61.

[2] Steegmuller, Selected Letters, p. 195.

relate and risk the introduction of yourself as author, with the danger that you may destroy all the illusion of the story."[1]

The way in which Ford argues the superiority of the "New Form" over the old is particularly interesting, and may help to explain certain peculiarities of Chance. As Ford explained it, the "New Form" reveals the impressions made on the brain of an intelligent observer in just the order they are made. Ford does not see, as James did when he used the vocabulary of painting to talk about novels, that visual reality is never a bare transcription of detail as seen by an unsophisticated eye, but a picture whose organization is determined by what the observer wants to see. Martin Turnell has shown that the novelist who fails to take this fact into account is in danger of letting his detail do nothing. Ford does say that experience has to be rendered, but he qualifies this statement, saying that the rendering should approximate the visual reality of a slice of life. Thus he finds it important to consider how much of a conversation a person can remember two hours afterwards, "how the author or the narrator can possibly, even if they were present, have remembered every word of Mr. Slack's long speech."[2] Conrad, he continues, was willing to postulate the convention that "your author or your narrator is a person of prodigious memory for the spoken."[3] One unalterable rule was that no speech of one

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[1] Ford, Joseph Conrad, p. 196. [2] Ibid., p. 199.

[3] Ibid., p. 200.

character should ever answer the speech just before it because our impressions of conversations in life are actually discontinuous. The aim is to give "a sense of the complexity, the tantalisation, the shimmering, the haze, that life is."[1] As Ford saw it, one way to achieve authenticity was through the literal representation of time.

It is clear that Conrad was trying to realize this aim in Chance as well as in earlier works. In the preface to Lord Jim, he seriously considers the objection that no man can be expected to talk as long as Marlow did and other men listen. It was not credible. Conrad answers this in the following way: "As to the mere physical possibility we all know that some speeches in Parliament have taken nearer six than three hours in delivery; whereas all that part of the book which is Marlow's narrative can be read through aloud, I should say, in less than three hours" (p. vii). It is obvious that he is concerned with the authentic transcription of time intervals into the novel. By introducing a narrator who renders events in an imaginative and foreshortened reconstruction, he meets the objection that there could never be enough "time" to allow all the events to take place in the time limit circumscribed by the novel. It is significant that Conrad does not choose to ignore such a criticism.

In Chance, time intervals determine the division of the parts. There are three series of conversations, each included within three larger conversations. In the first

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[1] Ford, Joseph Conrad, p. 204.

extended conversation between Marlow and Powell, the subordinate theme of Chance as the purveyor of good fortune is introduced. This conversation includes no others. The second conversation between Marlow and the narrator immediately follows the first and recounts the events of Flora's early life. This is essentially an imaginative reconstruction based on a series of conversations between Marlow and the Fynes, and Mrs. Fyne and Flora among others. The second part develops as an extended private conversation with the narrator. Marlow does not directly convey the actual conversations he has had with Powell and Flora. Conrad has to manipulate these conversations in order to authenticate time intervals, but this is justified by the necessity of accounting for the fortunes of Flora and Powell after the extended narration of the events of the second voyage. It is significant that the time-unity of the novel is realized only through Marlow. The "time" of his extended narration is supposed to be equivalent to the time it ordinarily would take to tell the story in real life. The foreshortened passages are presented in this total time interval. In this same way, only the parts of those conversations relevant to the situation at hand are presented by Marlow. Foreshortening is used mainly in the second half of the novel where Marlow does not deal directly with reported conversations.

This meticulous concern for the authenticity of time intervals and the consequent "necessity" of discarding previous time conventions would most probably have seemed strange

to Richardson and Scott who used time conventions without concern for probabilities. Scott thought nothing of having the hero of Redgauntlet write sixty to one hundred page letters in intervals as short as two hours after a hard day's ride or fight. Richardson used the epistolary method to achieve immediacy and psychological depth, not to authenticate time intervals. In these earlier novelists, authenticity did not have the value it had for Ford and Conrad. The question immediately rises as to what extent the rendering of the "atmosphere of authenticity" produced a heightened sense of reality in Chance. An examination of one characteristic chapter, "The Tea-Party," may help to answer this.

The action of "The Tea-Party" occurs the afternoon of the day that Fyne describes to Marlow how Flora has come to his wife for help and is taken away by the cousin. Mrs. Fyne has already received the letter from Flora, and Conrad has to account for the time-interval between the reception of the letter and the departure of Fyne for London. Marlow invites the Fynes to tea. Throughout most of the chapter, there is a considerable amount of irrelevant detail about the cakes, the conditions under which Marlow has rented his rooms, and Marlow's relationship with his landlady. Conrad finds it necessary to represent as much as possible of the thoughts of Marlow and Mrs. Fyne. One example may suffice to illustrate this:

> "'The question is how to keep these two people apart,' she struck in. She had recovered. I admired the quickness of women's wit. Mental agility is a rare perfection. And aren't they agile! Aren't they--just! And

> tenacious! When they once get hold you may uproot the tree but you won't shake them off the branch. In fact the more you shake . . . But only look at the charm of contradictory perfections! No wonder men give in--generally. I won't say I was actually charmed by Mrs. Fyne. I was not delighted with her. What affected me was not what she displayed but something which she could not conceal. And that was emotion--nothing less. The form of her declaration was dry, almost peremptory--but not its tone. Her voice faltered just the least bit, she smiled faintly; and as we were looking straight at each other I observed that her eyes were glistening in a peculiar manner. She was distressed. And indeed that Mrs. Fyne should have appealed to me at all was in itself the evidence of her profound distress. 'By Jove she's desperate too,' I thought. This discovery was followed by a movement of instinctive shrinking from this unreasonable and unmasculine affair. They were all alike, with their supreme interest aroused only by fighting with each other about some man: a lover, a son, a brother" (pp. 152-53).

The intention of the passage is clear. Marlow works characteristically from exterior manifestation to inner cause, and builds up here an awareness of emotional intensity that suggests the stress Mrs. Fyne is unwilling to admit to. Yet this effect is marred by the irrelevance of the first six lines, the lack of particularity, and the almost total absence of style.

Crankshaw states that Chance reveals Conrad's ceaseless struggle "to get the last ounce out of his subject and at the same time to keep the structure firm . . . ."[1] The novel is different from a direct chronological narration in which each paragraph usually does one thing. The time-shift, according to Crankshaw, lets Conrad get the last ounce out of the subject. It may be asked, however, whether Conrad's concern for the literal representation of time-intervals did not

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[1] Crankshaw, Joseph Conrad, p. 167.

weaken rather than strengthen the structure of the novel because of its tendency to direct attention away from the crisis which faced Marlow and the Fynes. In Chance the multiplication of detail often does not add to what the reader has already seen.

Perhaps the problem of Chance is best explained by the distinction Edwin Muir makes between the "dramatic novel" and the "chronicle." In the dramatic novel, action is the growth of character which creates new possibilities:

> It will be logical in so far as the characters having something unchangeable in them which determines their responses to one another and to the situation. It will have a progression which is at once spontaneous and logical inasmuch as the characters will change, and the change will create new possibilities.[1]

There is tension between "their completeness seen as fate, and their progression seen as development."[2] In the chronicle, on the other hand, time is at the center of the novel:

> . . . it is not seized subjectively and humanly in the minds of the characters; it is seen from a fixed Newtonian point outside. It flows past the beholder; it flows over and through the figures he evokes. Instead of narrowing to a point, the point fixed by passion, or fear, or fate in the dramatic novel, it stretches away indefinitely, running with a scarcely perceptible check over all the barriers which might have marked its end. The figures who appear and disappear in this vast cycle of recurring movement may be involved in tragedies . . . but these will rarely be resolved, and if they are, the immense stretches of time called up will give the resolution a lesser significance, and make it merely one of the accidents of time.[3]

We may say that Chance is a dramatic novel because it is concerned with growth of character and with completeness seen

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[1] Edwin Muir, The Structure of the Novel (London: The Hogarth Press, 1928), p. 47.

[2] Ibid., p. 57.

[3] Ibid., p. 104.

as fate. The difficulty in Chance is that the time problem is not adequately solved. The action should simply happen in time; time must not become the center of the experience as it does in the chronicle. The time-shift at the end mars the work considerably. Time becomes the center of meaning, whereas the center should be in the consciousness of Flora and Anthony. The total effect is seriously weakened because there are two climaxes rather than one.

Yet, as Crankshaw argues, the broken narration allows each part to be experienced in the light of the whole. In the conventional novel where events are chronologically represented, "the reader is aware only of what he knows, of what has already been told him in a series of direct statements."[1] But this statement must be qualified. What the reader experiences at any point in any novel is always what he has come to know as a result of cumulative experience. This is a fundamental condition of prose art. But Crankshaw is certainly right when he suggests that the time-shifts create overtones of meaning, "a diffused radiance": "The result is that at any given moment in the narrative the reader is aware of more than he actually knows."[2] The contrapuntal movement of the first chapter is set against that of the following six, as we have seen. Crankshaw describes this perfectly:

> It is expressive of the conviction that all things are significant only in so far as they are related to a central core, a core which cannot be contemplated

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[1] Crankshaw, Joseph Conrad, p. 170. [2] Ibid., p. 172.

> directly since it is impalpable, which can only be known through a minute and delicate study of its emanations related constantly to a something unexpressed save through them alone, the nucleus from which they spring.[1]

Conrad defends this method when he has Marlow say in Chance that "it may be that a glimpse and no more is the proper way of seeing an individuality" (p. 85). It has already been shown that Conrad's chief device is the use of recurrent images. Actually it is here that the time-shifts operate best. They enable Conrad to move from consequences to motive; from multiple views of de Barral's attitude toward Anthony and the events of the second voyage, to the scene in the carriage which provides the psychological explanation for what has happened. Most important of all, time-shifts make the question of responsibility stand out through the juxtaposition of multiple views. In this way, to use Martin Turnell's description of the Flaubertian novel, "the novel was essentially an experience which must be felt as a whole, an emotional pattern in which the characters are simply strands."[2]

Conrad is concerned with time as a means to the fusion of disparate elements into a total emotional pattern, and as an aspect of consciousness which determines the way in which the "subject" of the novel is seen. In theory, the "New Form" was intended to convey the effect of inevitability: "The problem of the author is to make his then action the

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[1] Crankshaw, Joseph Conrad, p. 175.

[2] Martin Turnell, The Novel in France (New York: New Directions, 1951), p. 300.

only action that character could have taken."[1] Ford connects this idea of inevitability with Conrad's idea of destiny:

> It must be inevitable, because of his character, because of his ancestry, because of past illness or on account of the gradual coming together of the thousand small circumstances by which Destiny, who is inscrutable and august, will push us into one certain predicament.[2]

It has already been shown that the interrelation of thematic patterns was set up to depict this idea of Destiny. Conrad intended to give the hovering consciousness character so that it would be "an absolute manner of seeing things." He does this by making awareness of paradox the characteristic quality of Marlow's vision. Marlow notes, for example, that "there was in that fat, admirably washed, little man such a profound contempt for mankind that it amounted to a species of good nature; which, unlike the milk of genuine kindness, was never in danger of turning sour" (p. 76). He also speaks of "a silence made only more impressive by the inarticulate thunders and mutters of the great seas" (p. 329). Speaking of Anthony, he recognizes "a special sort of exultation which seemed to take him by the throat like an enemy" (p. 339). Flora's dress "went well in its suggestion of half mourning with the white face in which the unsmiling red lips alone seemed warm with the rich blood of life and passion" (p. 205). The Fynes' dog contrasts with their propriety and rectitude. Fyne's natural solemnity "flapped about him like a disordered garment" (p. 195). And, finally, Marlow says of the sea: "You hear no tormenting echoes of your own

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[1] Ford, Joseph Conrad, p. 219. [2] Idem.

littleness there, where either a great elemental voice rears defiantly under the sky or else an elemental silence seems to be part of the infinite stillness of the universe" (p. 326). These descriptive patterns parallel larger thematic patterns on other levels, for example, the paradox of transcendental good intentions. Marlow says at one point that the man preparing to cut his throat would experience relief from stropping his razor carefully. Ultimately Marlow sees the struggle between the forces of death and life for the souls of the hapless and innocent.

Clearly the Impressionism of the "New Form of the Novel" as Conrad wrote it was facilitated by the introduction of a character who would mirror appearances and interpret reality. By using such an intelligence, what Ford described as an "exhaustion of aspects" could be realized. By centering experience in the consciousness of an intelligent observer, it would be possible to realize "a psychological significance of the whole." Style was, in effect, the moral imagination which saw, "the absolute manner of seeing things" as Flaubert put it. There was thus a progression of effect, each word carrying the st forward with increasing intensity. In Chance Conrad realized an atmosphere of moral reality, what he referred to in the preface to Under Western Eyes as the "effect of actuality," what James described as "the atmosphere of authenticity."

This is what James meant when he referred to Chance as an "extraordinary exhibition of method," committed by its

first step to be art exclusively. The total thematic significance of the novel, the total implication of the paradox of determinism and responsibility, the question of the determinism of chance as against the determinism of character, was related organically to the structure. Chance is a notable attempt to realize the idea of the "New Form of the Novel." It would seem justifiable to say, then, that there was a progress in form, and that the technique of Chance is a coherent solution to the specific problems posed by its themes. As such it marks, even with its deficiencies, an important stage in the development of the English novel, a stage at which conventional ideas of the representation of time, character, and reality were breaking down and experimentation with new modes was beginning. Chance is a significant experiment in the development of the English novel.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Despite its unsuccessful aspects, Chance is distinctive because it is a departure from Conrad's earlier methods. David Daiches suggests that Conrad "can claim to be a realist in virtue of his vivid and accurate description of sense impressions."[1] But in Chance, Conrad for the first time experiments with depth psychology, anticipating the methods of later psychological realists. We have seen that Chance did not develop as an experiment in pure technique, but rather as a result of an attempt to solve thematic problems. It was the culmination of a series of novels in which Conrad tried to represent partial and emergent consciousness. Chance is the last novel in which Conrad uses a reflector technique.

It is interesting that Conrad did not experiment further with the methods used in Chance and the earlier novels. This shift in interest has often caused consternation to critics who see in the final novels a failure of technique. But it may be, considering Conrad's increased concern with emergent consciousness and its consequences, that experimentation with complex structures and "reporter"

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[1] The Novel and the Modern World, p. 53.

characters was necessarily limited to conveying the ultimate meaning of the experience of the principal characters. In Lord Jim, Nostromo, and "Heart of Darkness," all of the principal characters are only partially aware of the ultimate meaning of their experience. In Under Western Eyes, Razumov comes to total awareness, only to reject it at the end. In Chance, a character comes to total awareness and continues to sustain it after the climax of the action. In Victory and The Rescue, Conrad continues to explore the psychology of chivalric idealism as well as emergent consciousness and its consequences. Heyst commits suicide after he comes to see the futility of negative action. Lingard, a "man of infinite illusions,"[1] is doomed to contemplate the destruction of his illusions in solitude. Mrs. Travers sees this in a way that recalls Chance:

> She woke up, with her face wet with tears, out of a vivid dream of Lingard in chain-mail armour and vaguely recalling a Crusader, but bare-headed and walking away from her in the depths of an impossible landscape. She hurried on to catch up with him but a throng of barbarians with enormous turbans came between them at the last moment and she lost sight of him forever in the flurry of a ghastly sandstorm. What frightened her most was that she had not been able to see his face.[2]

It is sometimes said that in his final period Conrad came to a new, more positive view of life. But the novels that followed Chance do not support this theory. In The Rover, sacrificial idealism is meaningful only because it is action. Behind everything that Peyrol does lurks the bloodbath

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[1] Joseph Conrad, The Rescue (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1949), p. 466.

[2] Ibid., p. 458.

of the French revolution, symbolic of the consequences which result from moral and political chaos. All that Réal can say of Peyrol at the end is that "he was not a bad Frenchman."[1] Another character answers that everything is in that. Perhaps the epigraph to The Rover, quoted from Spenser, is most indicative of Conrad's final view of life: "Sleep after toyle, port after stormie seas, /Ease after warre, death after life, does greatly please."

Chance and the novels which immediately precede it place Conrad in the main current of twentieth-century fiction as Leon Edel defines it. Edel believes that the "inward turning to convey the flow of mental experience"[2] is its most significant aspect. The heart of his argument is that the novel is for the first time preoccupied with psychological reality:

> The author . . . seemed bent on effacing himself and confronting the reader with the direct mental experience of the characters. There were only occasional shifts from past to present, from present to past; what was happening seemed to occur largely at whatever moment the reader happened to be reading the story. . . . This removal of the author from the scene--he remained often an intruder, but was no longer omnipresent--made necessary a significant shift in narrative: it created the need to use the memory of the characters to place the reader into a relationship with their past. There was no "story," no "plot."[3]

Edel shows that novelists handled this "inward turning" in different ways. Conrad was not concerned with the depiction of mental experience as were Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, and

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[1] Joseph Conrad, The Rover (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1948), p. 286.

[2] The Psychological Novel, p. 7. [3] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

Virginia Woolf; but he was concerned, as was James, with unconscious motivation and the "atmosphere of mind."

In the preface to The Portrait of a Lady, James argues that the way in which the novelist sees determines the form of his work:

> The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million--a number of possible windows not to be reckoned, rather; every one of which has been pierced, or is still pierceable, in its vast front, by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will. These apertures, of dissimilar shape and size, hang so, all together, over the human scene that we might have expected of them a greater sameness of report than we find. They are but windows at the best, mere holes in a dead wall, disconnected, perched aloft; they are not hinged doors opening straight upon life. But they have this mark of their own that at each of them stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field glass, which forms again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other. . . . And so on, and so on; there is fortunately no saying on what, for the particular pair of eyes, the window may not open; "fortunately" by reason, precisely, of this incalculability of range. The spreading field, the human scene, is the "choice of subject"; the pierced aperture, either broad or balconied or slit-like and low-browed, is the "literary form"; but they are, singly or together, as nothing without the posted presence of the watcher--without, in other words, the consciousness of the artist. Tell me what the artist is, and I will tell you of what he has been conscious.[1]

This passage succinctly states the cardinal principle of realism. James believed that there had to be a distinction between subject and viewer lest the novel be saturated with "life" without selection. His critiques of Balzac and Zola reveal that he saw selection to be the supreme problem of fiction. The novel would achieve the appearance of truth, "the maximum of intensity," only through selection. For

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[1] The Art of the Novel, p. 46.

this reason he repeatedly emphasizes the proper centering of the "point of view." James was close in this respect to Ford and Conrad. Ford argued that the "New Form" would give the effect of life by making impressions on the brain of the reader. We have seen that in Chance Conrad's failure to apply the idea of selection from experience to the problem of time resulted in a major artistic difficulty. James saw that the novel was more than a rendering of surfaces if the novelist saw more than the surface of life. Maupassant shrewdly pointed out that the realist chose to represent the why and wherefore of every impulse only if he thought the reasons for action were more significant than the action itself. James states in "The Art of Fiction" that the novelist has to possess some sense of reality:

> The reality of Don Quixote or of Mr. Micawber is a very delicate shade; it is a reality so coloured by the author's vision that, vivid as it may be, one would hesitate to propose it as a model . . . . It goes without saying that you will not write a good novel unless you possess the sense of reality; but it will be difficult to give you a recipe for calling that sense into being. Humanity is immense and reality has a myriad forms; the most one can affirm is that some of the flowers of fiction have the odour of it, and others have not . . . .[1]

There are, then, as many realisms as there are novelists. The problem is to distinguish novelists not by their technique alone but by their subjects in relation to the treatment. This is how the relationship between James and Conrad can best be understood.

We have seen that James and Conrad are close in their

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[1] Morton Dauwen Zabel (ed.), The Portable Henry James (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), p. 401.

interest in partial and emergent consciousness and in their theories of art and the novel. They are both concerned with the fusion of all elements of the novel into a single emotional pattern or mood, what Marlow describes in Chance as "moral atmosphere." They are both concerned with communicating the experience of the novel. James's metaphor of the "field glass" is especially interesting. It seems to me that he is referring to his idea of the "register" or "reflector" of reality. (Percy Lubbock appears to echo this passage when he defines a reflector as some one who forms and reproduces an impression of a situation.) It is not accidental that James's criticism of Chance should focus on the use of "registers" to convey experience. The substance of his criticism is that the indirect method of Chance obscures the action almost to the point of obliterating it: "It has been the course . . . of his so multiplying his creators or . . . producers, as to make them almost more numerous and quite emphatically more material than the creatures and the production itself in whom and which we by the general law of fiction expect such agents to lose themselves."[1] The general law is that there is a "primary" author whom we forget "in proportion as he works upon us."[2] James states in the preface to The Portrait of a Lady, as we have noted before, that the question was that of "producing the maximum of intensity with the minimum of strain."[3] As

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[1] Notes on Novelists, p. 275. [2] Idem.

[3] The Art of the Novel, p. 56.

Percy Lubbock points out, the problem of maximum intensity is the crucial problem of technique that James faced in his own work.

Lubbock sees with Edel that the problem of the realist is to create "the illusion that there had been no selection."[1] These assumptions of the novel are grounded in what David Daiches describes as changes in the "schematization of reality." Daiches convincingly argues that plot decreased in importance when public truth in the twentieth century was shattered into numerous private truths:

> It is this public truth which provides the artist with his means of communication. It enables him to communicate emotion and attitude by simply describing incidents; it gives him a storehouse of symbols with guaranteed responses; it enables him to construct a plot by selecting and patterning events which, on this public criterion, are significant. Indeed, the fiction writer is more at its mercy than other types of artist, because for him plot is essential and the very existence of plot depends on agreement between writer and public on the significant in experience. . . . And all the other major effects of art will be found upon examination to be entirely dependent on a community of belief about value . . . .[2]

This is exactly what happened in Conrad, and it accounts for the peculiarities of the Jamesian novel and the "New Form of the Novel" as Conrad conceived and realized it in Chance. It must not be forgotten that James and Conrad faced similar technical problems because they were both concerned with partial and emergent consciousness. Yet James did something entirely different from Conrad. As Lubbock points out, his solution to the problem of emergent consciousness was to

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[1] The Psychological Novel, p. 30.

[2] The Novel and the Modern World, p. 5.

dramatize the picture of consciousness. The dominant "atmosphere of mind" becomes itself the center of experience as it does not in Chance. Conrad partly dramatizes another person's impression of the consciousness of the principal characters. But James produces "the most direct impression" on the reader. There is no intervening consciousness to limit the dramatic value.

Perhaps it would be useful to describe briefly James's method of characterization. Because his emphasis is on maximum intensity, James looks for a way of representing consciousness that will be the most effective. His solution is to dramatize changes in awareness entirely from the surface of the mind. He is concerned with motivation, with the why and wherefore of every impulse, but in a different way from Conrad. In James, a character is partially aware because he is intentionally being deceived by others, not because he deceives himself. His major theme is the growth of the disponible from innocence into knowledge of evil. Thus James was able to show the consciousness of the disponible as it reacts to these deceptions. When a character is blind to something in himself, James uses the ficelle or the confidante to interpret the action. James dramatizes partial awareness by making the action the changes in consciousness themselves. Perhaps Lubbock is mistaken when he suggests that James is not concerned with the depths of mind:

> Below the surface, behind the outer aspect of his mind, we do not penetrate; this is drama, and in drama the spectator must judge by appearances. When Strether's mind is dramatized, nothing is shown but the passing

> images that anybody might detect, looking down upon a mind grown visible. There is no drawing upon extraneous sources of information . . . .[1]

It would probably be more accurate to say that James does not dramatize unconscious motivation as Conrad does because he is not always concerned with self-deception. This is perhaps the crucial difference in subjects between Conrad and James as psychological realists.

Because James is concerned with representing experience that the central characters cannot possibly know, he uses alternating points of view:

> From the moment we proceed by "centres"--and I have never, I confess, embraced the logic of any superior process--they must be, each, as a basis, selected and fixed; after which it is that, in the high interest of economy of treatment, they determine and rule. There is no economy of treatment without an adopted, a related point of view, and though I understand, under certain degrees of pressure, a represented community of vision between several parties to the action when it makes for concentration, I understand no breaking-up of the register, no sacrifice of the recording consistency, that doesn't rather scatter and weaken. . . . My registers or "reflectors," as I so conveniently name them (burnished indeed as they generally are by the intelligence, the curiosity, the passion, the force of the moment, whatever it be, directing them), work, as we have seen, in arranged alternation . . . .[2]

The difference between the "reporters" of Chance and the "reflectors" of The Wings of the Dove is that the "reflectors" are the central characters themselves. The difference between the James ficelle and the Conrad "reporter" is that the ficelle is never limited in what he or she sees or interprets because of involvement in the action. In The Golden Bowl, James uses the Assinghams to interpret what has

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[1] The Craft of Fiction, p. 162.

[2] The Art of the Novel, pp. 300-301.

happened and predict what will happen. Fanny tells her husband that the Prince is not in love with Charlotte, and that Maggie will become acquainted with and learn to deal with evil. The reader of The Golden Bowl comes to accept the views of the Assinghams as valid. Because of the short-sightedness of the Ververs in the first book, James presents them by showing the effect of their short-sightedness on the Prince and Charlotte. The difference between characters like Jim and Anthony and James's disponibles is that the disponible is never in the end short-sighted in good and evil. Yet their crises do come when they are forced to meet or reject the responsibility of insight.

The structure of Chance shows that Conrad intended Marlow to describe Flora's growing awareness of her experience. Awareness is the basis for Conrad's distinction between characters who face the truth about themselves and characters like Captain McWhirr who go to their graves ignorant of the perfidy and violence of life. Like Conrad, James believes that awareness is the most important thing that a person can have. He expresses this in an early letter to Grace Norton:

> In other words consciousness is an illimitable power, and though at times it may seem to be all consciousness of misery, yet in the way it propagates itself from wave to wave, so that we never cease to feel, and though at moments we appear to, try to, pray to, there is something that holds one in one's place, makes it a standpoint in the universe which it is probably good not to forsake. You are right in your consciousness that we are all echoes and reverberations of the same . . . .[1]

James build his novels so that they culminate in a moment of

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[1] The Portable James, pp. 649-50.

complete insight for the central characters. The insight they gain is that life is tragic. The tragic moment in James is the final renunciation. We have seen that in Conrad the acceptance or rejection of insight leads inexorably to isolation, suicide, or sacrificial death. Conrad certainly appreciated the meaning of awareness in James, as his essay on James reveals:

> There is no other secret behind the curtain. All adventure, all love, every success is resumed in the supreme energy of an act of renunciation. It is the uttermost limit of our power; it is the most potent and effective force at our disposal on which rests the labours of a solitary man in his study . . . . Like a natural force which is obscured as much as illuminated by the multiplicity of phenomena, the power of renunciation is obscured by the mass of weaknesses, vacillations, secondary motives and false steps and compromises which make up the sum of our activity. But no man or woman worthy of the name can pretend to anything more, to anything greater.[1]

Awareness is perhaps the strongest bond between James and Conrad. It is likely that the "New Form of the Novel" as Conrad realized it in Chance, along with the Jamesian novel, exerted a greater influence on later fiction than has been recognized. Edel notes, for example, that Faulkner's Benjy is an excellent illustration of James's admonition that the writer must not make "a limited mind too perceptive, nor impose limitations where there is abundant capacity for perception."[2] Sherwood Anderson centers awareness in the youthful narrator of "Death in the Woods" because it was obviously impossible to center it in the principal characters

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[1] Notes on Life and Letters, p. 16.

[2] The Psychological Novel, p. 75.

who understand nothing of what has happened to them. The method of Absalom, Absalom! has an amazing resemblance to the method of Chance. Faulkner uses Quentin Compson and Shreve to penetrate through appearances to psychological reality. Throughout the novel, Faulkner stresses the deep significance this experience has for Quentin. In the Nick Adams stories as well as in such later novels as The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell to Arms, Hemingway is concerned with awareness as the apex of experience, awareness that cannot lead to anything beyond itself. This emphasis on awareness is close in some ways to the existentialist philosophy of Sartre and his associates.

A knowledge of James and Conrad is crucial to an understanding of the changing currents of twentieth century art. Their relationship and the influence they probably exerted confirms once again the truth of Malraux's contention that the "metamorphosis of forms" is basic to the establishment and perpetuation of a literary tradition.

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