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ONLOOKERS AT A GAME: A STUDY OF THE NARRATOR-
DEVICE IN JOSEPH CONRAD'S LORD JIM,
UNDER WESTERN EYES, AND CHANCE

by

Bonnie McLean Moriarty

A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

An understanding of the narrator-device is indispensable to a valid interpretation of Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim, Under Western Eyes, and Chance. Through this device Conrad directs the focus away from the lives of the central characters--Jim, Razumov, and Flora--to the narrator's attempts to understand those lives. Marlow, a sea captain, narrates Flora's and Jim's stories, and a professor of languages narrates Razumov's. In Lord Jim and Chance, an anonymous narrator records the process of Marlow's narration.

The underlying philosophy of these novels is Conrad's concept of the darkness as ultimate reality. The values, civilizations and institutions that man constructs are illusions necessary to enable him to control the ever-threatening darkness. Conrad describes these illusions as rules in a game; he believes man should understand the nature of these rules and of the underlying darkness.

Lord Jim is concerned with the values of the individual in opposition to the code of society. Jim triumphs over the darkness according to his own values. Jim's experience forces Marlow and the anonymous narrator to

acknowledge the possibility of another way of approaching the darkness than by means of society's rules.

In Under Western Eyes Conrad explores the illusions of politics as a means by which men deal with the darkness. When politics becomes an end in itself, it is a divisive force that separates men and creates barriers to understanding oneself and others. Through Razumov's story and the professor's perceptions of it, Conrad dramatizes the importance of breaking down such barriers.

Chance deals directly with the conventions and values of society. Flora's experiences illustrate for Marlow and the anonymous narrator the superiority of individual commitments as a bond against the darkness to the superficial relationships that society fosters. Their narrations are their attempts to communicate the need for probing beneath stereotypes and thus attaining greater understanding of others.

By employing the narrator-device in these novels Conrad presents alternative means of confronting the darkness and encourages his reader to evaluate them. His technique establishes ironic tension by revealing the misunderstanding that arises from too rigid an adherence to any one set of values. Though each man is essentially alone, the narrators' efforts to understand their subjects and to communicate their understanding, however limited it may be, results in a greater awareness of the struggles

of others. Such communication is the basis of solidarity. By illustrating the danger of misunderstanding, the narrator-device emphasizes the importance of withholding judgment and of acknowledging alternative means of dealing with the darkness. Even the limited degree of communication man achieves is a triumph over the darkness, and both the central characters and the narrators attain such a triumph. The narrators and Conrad himself are artists who accord their subjects the permanence of art. The greater the distance from the central characters, the wider the perspective the narrator has and the more valid are his perceptions. Thus Conrad, through the narrator-device, attains the distance necessary to capture in art the complexity of life as he sees it.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

An abiding principle of literary criticism is that in literature of quality technique is inseparable from theme. Obviously an author's content reflects his world picture and his philosophy, but so does the manner in which he conveys his ideas. Nevelle H. Newhouse, in his introductory study, Joseph Conrad, applies this principle in a comparison of Joseph Conrad with Jane Austen:

Jane Austen, like her readers, saw the world of her day very clearly--that is to say, she knew precisely what values she wished her novel to mirror. Conrad found the world much less clear. . . . Conrad's obliqueness is not a method specially assumed for writing a different kind of novel. It results naturally from his way of looking at life, from his wish to mirror the complexity of human beings. In Conrad, as in all serious art, technique and theme are intricately bound together.¹

One of the principal means by which Conrad achieves the effect of obliqueness is the narrator-device, that is, a character dramatized as telling all or part of a literary work. Conrad employs this technique frequently throughout his writing career, in short works such as "The Lagoon" and "Amy Foster," as well as in longer ones such as "Heart of Darkness," Lord Jim, and Under Western Eyes. The frequent appearance of the narrator suggests that Conrad's

use of the device is not accidental, that a significant relationship exists between what Conrad has to say and the means by which he chooses to say it. In this study I shall explore the narrator-technique in three representative novels from Conrad's early, middle and late career: Lord Jim (1900), Under Western Eyes (1911), and Chance (1913).²

Each of these novels is narrated by a fictional character who draws from various sources to create his narrative. In the first, Charles Marlow, a sea captain, narrates part of Jim's story to a group of friends and completes it in a narrative written to one of them. In turn, that man, identified only as "the privileged man," apparently constructs the entire novel from what he has learned from Marlow. In Under Western Eyes, the narrator, a teacher of languages, bases his narrative on the journal of a young Russian, Razumov, as well as on his own observations of Razumov. Marlow is again the narrator in Chance. He reconstructs for a friend the story of Flora de Barral from personal experience and information he acquires from several other characters. His friend is the narrator of the entire novel. Study of the individual novels reveals that Conrad uses the narrator-device somewhat differently in each, and certainly the device affords a variety of technical advantages. But the basic reason for the narrator is the same: Conrad found the narrator

the best means of dramatizing his ideas.

Critics have frequently commented on the narrator-device in Conrad, and several theories explaining its purpose and value have evolved. However, such discussions are usually general and subordinated to other concerns. Moreover, critics' interest has centered on Marlow, and other narrators have often been assumed to be similar to him rather than studied in their own right.

The most easily dismissed of critics' reactions to the narrator is the argument that the device is unnecessary, as C. K. Allen suggests in his essay, "Joseph Conrad."³ Maurice Beebe in "The Masks of Conrad" does not say that the narrator is unnecessary, but he does view the device as very simply explained: "Perhaps too much has been made of Conrad's use of Marlow as narrator, for he appears in only a few of the stories and may be easily enough understood as a simple technical device--a heritage from that oral tradition of the storyteller that lies behind the art of fiction."⁴ Douglas Hewitt opens Conrad: A Reassessment with the argument that "an excessive attention to [Conrad's] 'technique' can . . . be misleading."⁵ On the other hand, most critics, following the example of Henry James in "The Younger Generation,"⁶ emphasize the importance of the narrator and recognize, at least in theory, that the device must be considered in any meaningful reading of the novels.

One of the most common aspects of the narrator discussed by critics is that of his relationship to Conrad. One view is that Marlow is Conrad. R. L. Mégroz in Joseph Conrad's Mind and Method: A Study of Personality in Art makes this identification.⁷ Walter Allen in The English Novel sees Marlow as "a persona for Conrad himself," but concedes that "there are times, as in Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim, when he is more than a persona; a character in his own right involved in the action and changed by it."⁸ The main purpose of Charles Burkhardt's article, "Conrad the Victorian," is to demonstrate that Conrad is essentially a nineteenth century moralistic writer. To prove his point he assumes that Marlow and Conrad are one and attributes Marlow's moralizing to Conrad: "In Conrad the moralizing is omnipresent, particularly in those works in which Marlow is Conrad's mouthpiece. . . . Conrad uses Marlow as an excuse to indulge in interminable high-level platitudinizing, delivered in a world-weary patronizing tone that makes one question not so much the probability of tales of such length being delivered to a captive audience in one sitting, but the patience of that long-suffering group."⁹ In Joseph Conrad: A Short Study, Wilson Follett interprets Marlow as "a subdivision of Conrad's personality, objectified for the added sociability of enabling the author to converse with himself, walking audibly round

his subject and examining it from both sides at once."¹⁰

Related to the theory that Marlow is at least in part Conrad himself is the theory that the narrator is a means of conveying opinions, often tentative, that Conrad would or could not present as his own. Wilbur Cross, in Four Contemporary Novelists, points out that Marlow enabled Conrad to vary his opinions: "Marlow was created because Conrad felt the need of a character through whom he could speak in various moods."¹¹

One of the most important and influential studies advocating this theory is Edward Crankshaw's Joseph Conrad: Some Aspects of the Art of the Novel. Crankshaw postulates that Conrad used Marlow because he had to: "Marlow, in a word, was plainly the child of necessity. . . . Marlow was invented to enable his creator to do certain things which he could not otherwise have done."¹² In particular, "Conrad, as author, was inhibited from introducing his own comments on men and affairs, yet we find Marlow moralizing with ease, fluency, and conviction."¹³ Crankshaw insists, however, that Marlow is a character in his own right who shares his creator's view of life:

Although Marlow is a technical device and Conrad's right-hand man, he is not a puppet, a ventriloquist's doll. Conrad never concerned himself with puppets. This perambulating and much travelled technical device is a character as real as any other, with flesh, blood, mannerisms, idiosyncrasies, and private turns of thought, a man who can get up and walk of his own free will to lead a continued existence beyond the covers of a book, just as any other successful

character in Conrad. He has only one thing in common with his creator, but that for our purposes is all-important; he shared his fundamental outlook on life.¹⁴

Crankshaw believes, then, that Marlow was devised to allow Conrad to comment "without ruining his illusion, the illusion which was dependent on his, the author's aloofness and impersonality."¹⁵ But he pursues the question "why Marlow?" and concludes: "Conrad was temperamentally incapable of revealing objectively (that word thrice underlined) the train of thought of a character alien to himself."¹⁶ Instead, "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; and with that he will comment subjectively about their motives, thoughts, and general states of mind."¹⁷ And the narrator is his means of comment. Conrad employed the technique of a dramatized narrator "because he was a subjective visionary committed to the ideal of objectivity."¹⁸

Albert J. Guerard begins "Joseph Conrad," first published in Direction, with Crankshaw's premise, but he adds a discussion of some of the technical advantages of the narrator-device. He points out that even if these narrators are "children of necessity," the better Conradian narrators serve certain very genuine purposes. Given the ideal of nominal objectivity, they are a means of getting into the stories a maximum of intelligent

observation and a maximum of moral judgment."¹⁹

Such technical advantages of the narrator-device cannot be overlooked, and many critics have discussed them. In "Joseph Conrad: The Teacher as Artist," Sidney Cox points out the advantage of realism: "Something like Chance or Lord Jim is the way we learn stories of people who make an impression on us in everyday life. Similarly the employment of Marlowe [sic] and other narrators to assemble what we need in order to understand the characters saves Conrad from seeming to have other means of knowing people than as a normal, adventurous human being he actually had."²⁰ Hewitt notes that the narrator device extends the theme beyond the basic story. He writes that the purpose of Conrad's technique ". . . is constantly to reveal unexpected resemblances and to imply that the plight of his central characters is but one manifestation of the working of universal spiritual and moral laws."²¹ Most critics accept William York Tindall's conclusion in "Apology for Marlow" that Marlow serves the interests of aesthetic distance": and "those of realism."²²

Certainly the narrator-device, in a variety of ways, allows Conrad to tamper with chronology, juxtaposing events, people and even settings. The narrator can realistically acquire much information from widely varying sources. But more important than any merely technical functions of the device is its effect on the

theme of the work. Many critics have pointed out a connection between Conrad's philosophy and his use of the narrator-technique. In his chapter, "Joseph Conrad," in A Book of Prefaces, H. L. Mencken writes: "An author who knows just what is the matter with the world may be quite reasonably expected to know just what is the matter with his hero. Neither sort of assurance, I need not say, is to be found in Conrad."²³ Mencken cites this lack of assurance as the reason for Conrad's "scorn of conventional form, his tendency to approach his story from two directions at once."²⁴ In her illuminating discussion "Why Marlow?" Frances Wentworth Cutler also suggests a relationship between Conrad's complicated view of life and his choice of technique:

Here is a writer who deliberately complicates life, who, instead of putting his characters under the microscope, surrounds them with their reflections in the mirroring minds of tellers and listeners. In so doing he has . . . obeyed a higher law than that of text-books,--the law of his vision of reality created of human contact. And in so doing he has verily suggested another law and type for fiction. The older novel, the simplification of life, gave us the creative process achieved, the decision handed down. From the verdict on Becky Sharp or on Rosamond Lydgate there is no appeal. But in Conrad we actually enter into the creative process; we grope with him through blinding mists, we catch at fleeting glimpses and thrill with sudden illuminations. For the art of Conrad is literally a social art--the collaboration of many tellers and of many listeners.²⁵

Cutler's emphasis on the tentativeness of judgment which Conrad's method fosters is an important point, for it reflects Conrad's belief that there are no final answers.

Many later critics have shared her viewpoint.²⁶

And it is this premise upon which this study of Lord Jim, Under Western Eyes, and Chance is based: that in these novels the narrator-device is inextricably bound up with the view of life that permeates Conrad's works. Those critics previously mentioned who espouse this idea offer some insight into Conrad's philosophy. They emphasize the ambiguities of life as he portrays it, the difficulties of making judgments, and his awareness that there are in fact no final answers. However, their comments tend to be general, and one must look elsewhere for a full discussion of Conrad's philosophy. Three critics in particular have explored Conrad's philosophical ideas in detail: Robert Penn Warren in "Nostromo"; J. Hillis Miller in Poets of Reality; and Royal Roussel in The Metaphysics of Darkness: A Study in the Unity and Development of Conrad's Fiction.²⁷

Warren emphasizes Conrad's view of the role that illusion plays in men's lives. Man must of necessity "justify himself by the idea . . . idealize himself and his actions into moral significance of some order, to find sanctions."²⁸ But part of man, his animal nature, works against this idealism. However, if he tries to ignore his need for values, he becomes less than a man: "To surrender to the incorrigible and ironical necessity of the idea, that is man's fate and his only triumph."²⁹

Warren explains that the necessity of ideals is ironic because Conrad sees these values as illusory, with no basis in reality. Illusions are, therefore, necessary to man, the mark of his humanity, but because of them man lives in an unreal world. Warren, then, suggests that Conrad's philosophy is based on the idea that man lives in a world alien to him. In order to maintain his humanity, he must accept illusion, the "true lie," as the means of confronting that world.³⁰

Miller's view of Conrad's philosophy is similar, but he elaborates more fully. The logical extension of the illusory nature of values is that civilization is an accumulation of many illusions, "the metamorphosis of darkness into light."³¹ Civilization is really a covering up of what is irrational in man: "The lower regions of human consciousness have been forgotten as buried deep out of sight. . . . The strangeness of other people is hidden behind forms, clothes, institutions, and some convention always stands between man and man."³² The problem with civilization, then, is that it hides reality: "There is a gap between man and the world, and what remains within the human realm is illusory and unsubstantial."³³ Miller feels that in his fiction Conrad tries to "destroy in the reader his bondage to illusion, and to give him a glimpse of the truth, however dark and disquieting that truth may be. . . ."³⁴ However, many people never see

the truth:

Though all men live in a dream, many people are lucky enough to go on with their illusions untouched, in the serene and peaceful state of being deceived. . . . Some men, like Conrad himself, and like most of his heroes, are not so lucky. An experience of solitude, of adventure, of intense emotion, or simply of unfortunate perspicuity breaks the illusion, and leads such people to see that the dream is only a dream.³⁵

Miller identifies the basic matter of Conrad's universe as the darkness, out of which everything comes and to which everything returns. But, Miller says, the darkness is more than the beginning and end of all things: "The darkness is present at every moment and in every thing and person, underlying them as their secret substance, but also denying them as formlessness denies form, or as impersonality denies personality. . . . It is the basic stuff of the universe, the uninterrupted."³⁶ When a man becomes aware of this darkness, he realizes the illusory nature of "daylight intentions and ideals, the rational forms by which civilized man lives."³⁷ This awareness places man in a very dangerous position:

People in Conrad's world are in an intolerable situation. The Apollonian realm of reason and intention is a lie. The heart of darkness is the truth which makes ordinary human life impossible. It is the absorption of all forms in the shapeless night from which they came. A man who reaches the truth is swallowed up by a force which invades his reason and destroys his awareness of his individuality. To know the darkness is to know the falsity of life, and to understand the leap into emptiness man made when he separated himself from the wild clamor of primitive life.³⁸

Both Miller and Warren demonstrate that Conrad believes that man's situation is unreal, even false. Not having a place in this world, he tries to justify existence by creating "ideas" by which to live. These critics seem to differ on only one point, but the difference appears to be merely a semantic one. Warren says that illusions are man's only truth; Miller says that the darkness is the truth. But both agree that human life is impossible without illusions, difficult for a man aware of the darkness to maintain. And both suggest that that man is most aware who realizes that he is living in an illusory world and knows the real world which does exist.

Acknowledging his debt to Miller, Roussel adds further insight into the philosophy of Conrad's fiction. He sees the center of Conrad's vision as "a perception of the self's alienation from the source of its own existence,"³⁹ that is, the natural alienation of the consciousness from the darkness. Conrad's major characters are orphans, often literally, but at least in a figurative sense. Because of "this lack of an innate sense of a place in the world, of an identity,"⁴⁰ these characters are restless, trying to win the identity that they have not received. Roussel suggests that, although the approaches to winning this identity may vary, "the conditions which underlie the initial instability of all [Conrad's] characters remain constant throughout the

body of his fiction."⁴¹ The basic stuff of Conrad's universe is "inert matter," a "primal darkness" that "transcends even the most basic categories of time and space."⁴² Roussel explains further: "The darkness from which all being comes is an image of matter stripped of all attributes but existence. It is, but nothing more can be said about it; it has no accessory qualities."⁴³ Those things that have evolved from this matter are "if not its opposite . . . at least totally foreign to its nature,"⁴⁴ and the seeming order of the surface merely hides some chaotic and irrational principle."⁴⁵ Thus "all the created world is rooted in its own negation."⁴⁶ and the reality we accept is insubstantial and ephemeral. Human consciousness is an extension of the same process: "the material world . . . has produced the bare awareness of sensation and this primitive awareness has in turn produced progressively more complex modes of consciousness."⁴⁷ Consciousness then, like all of the apparent universe, finds its source in something alien to it. Conrad's characters "all are attempting to find the hidden source of their life and, by grounding themselves in it or by mastering it, to find the completeness of being. . . ."⁴⁸ They search not merely in the world of men but for "the more basic independence which would result from mind assimilating and controlling its own source."⁴⁹ But again that source is hostile to the nature

of mind. The very forces, sensation and emotion, from which consciousness derives can interfere with the fulfillment of conscious wishes. Thus the irrational, its source within man, can destroy the constructs created by his rational mind. And beneath the irrational lies then an even more basic darkness, a denial of emotion and sensation themselves. Awareness of this darkness is awareness of ultimate extinction. When man achieves such awareness of the true reality, he becomes aware of the "infinitely precarious place of mind in the world."⁵⁰

Thus even the concept of self is an illusion which one must work to maintain, and the realization of this fact is a dangerous step toward annihilation. Roussel postulates, "Conrad's novels are attempts to come to terms with this experience, to work out ways of living with or overcoming this knowledge, for only if some such way can be found can man ever attain a stable identity."⁵¹ Characters in Conrad's novels approach this problem in two ways. First, there is direct confrontation of the irrational aspect of human nature and an attempt to control it by a conscious effort of the mind. But such control is insufficient, for there is yet the darkness, the source of the irrational, the ultimate source, for man to deal with. Thus Conrad's heroes try to turn their dream, the ideal created in their mind to defeat the darkness, into a concrete physical

accomplishment, "an act of incarnation through which the physical world is moulded to a spiritual vision."⁵² And, Roussel points out, Conrad does not believe that this accomplishment is impossible:

It is not absurd for men to hope to master the darkness in this way. In Conrad's private mythology there was a time during the golden age of sail when men were able to control their world, a time when they had no destructive sense of a hostile force at the center of creation and were able to live in a fellowship with it which approached the medieval concept of the unity of man and nature in God.⁵³

However, Conrad believes that modern man is especially close to an awareness of the darkness and that this awareness is a separating and divisive force rendering civilization and society impossible: "Man's gathering sense of the darkness thus robs him not only of a sense of ontological security. It destroys any subsidiary foundation he might find in his relation to other men and, in this, we can see how, for Conrad, man's position in society is always related to the fundamental situation of consciousness in the world."⁵⁴

Another aspect of Conrad's view involves a questioning of the attempt to control the darkness, a recognition that such control is at best an illusion which, if once valid for man, is no longer so. An awareness of this fact calls into question "the validity and efficacy of any political movement. . . ."⁵⁵ Knowledge of the darkness causes men to be "obsessed by their own safety

and well-being"⁵⁶ and weakens social community: "If this is the inevitable condition of mankind, then politics is in truth a pointless game."⁵⁷

But Conrad suggests another approach to coping with awareness of the darkness: "He implies that man can escape destruction by accepting the fact that it does invalidate existence."⁵⁸ This attitude involves simply an acceptance of the fact that man's nature and consciousness are alien to the basic material of the universe: "If one is able to detach oneself from all ties to the world, to distinguish his 'personalite' from all positive involvement in existence, then he is impervious to any destructive sense of vulnerability precisely because the negation of life no longer means anything to him."⁵⁹ Such is the ironic basis of Conrad's view of man's position, a view which perceives the tension between two aspects of life, "two levels of existence or meaning, one of which undercuts the other."⁶⁰ Conrad depicts such perception to varying degrees through what Roussel calls his "ironic characters and narrators": "This tension exists between their initial commitment to the world of man and their awareness of a darkness which nullifies the validity of this world."⁶¹ A sympathetic response to man's situation is balanced by an awareness of its triviality in the immense reality of the darkness. The two basic approaches to an awareness

of the darkness are, then, commitment to a dream and commitment to the darkness. Conrad's works are an exploration of the possible ways of living in the universe as he understands it.

But what is the relationship between Conrad's philosophy and his decision to use the narrator-device in Lord Jim, Under Western Eyes, and Chance? The image of a game, one that Conrad often uses to describe man's attempts to deal with the darkness, provides a clue.⁶² The values that both the individual and society construct to enable them to cope with the darkness are like rules in a game; they are arbitrary and have no basis in reality. The central characters in these novels--Jim, Razumov, and Flora--are searching for a way to live in a situation in which their values have failed them. But a person so involved in finding his approach to life is not in a position to analyze or to comment on himself. He is too close to his situation to assume the role of spectator. For this reason Conrad creates another character who has sufficient distance from the action to offer perceptive, if not infallible, analysis. Marlow and the professor of languages, then, are "onlookers at a game," who see more than the central characters themselves. But they are also players and have their own set of rules that affects their perceptions. In Lord Jim and Chance the anonymous narrators

are lookers-on at Marlow and his game, but they too have a set of rules. The reader is an even more remote on-looker participating in the spectator roles of all the dramatized narrators. He has the opportunity both to grow in understanding with the narrators and to evaluate their role in the game. Conrad's technique actually challenges the reader to reassess his own values or "rules" and to see their relationship to reality.

In these three novels, then, the narrator-device creates a tension in the reader. The story of the central character exposes the darkness and points up the difficulty of the individual's finding a satisfactory means of dealing with it. The narrator-device makes the reader conscious of various ways, none final, of perceiving the central character's approach to the darkness. And the reader is aware of the darkness that invalidates any perception. Conrad does not finally resolve this tension. However, his works do suggest that cognizance of the darkness balanced with commitment to illusions that make such cognizance tolerable affords the individual a fuller understanding of himself and of others than is otherwise attainable. Such understanding is man's most effective tool in confronting the darkness. If man is aware of the ultimate reality and of the illusory nature of any set of rules, he is prepared for the possible inadequacy of his values,

values that are always in danger of failing. The more a man comprehends his own position, the more he understands that of others who are also facing these difficulties alone. Finally, understanding paves the way for establishing relationships with others, and the resulting solidarity, concretized in the use of the narrator-device, is for Conrad man's most valuable achievement. As Marlow comments in Chance, from understanding "'there springs in us compassion, charity, indignation, the sense of solidarity; and in minds of any largeness an inclination to indulgence which is next to affection'" (117-118). A study of the narrator-device in relationship to his philosophy of the darkness reveals that Conrad's technique breaks down the barriers between men that the "rules of the game" create and points the way to achieving solidarity through the greater understanding thus attained.

CHAPTER II

THE RULES OF THE GAME: LORD JIM

An understanding of the darkness is helpful in approaching Lord Jim, which has provoked probably more criticism than any other novel by Conrad. Critics have viewed Jim, the main character, as everything from a triumphant success to a deluded failure.¹ The principal narrator, Marlow, is sometimes interpreted as a mere device; sometimes he is regarded as the main character of the novel.² The novel itself has been explained as a clear statement of Conradian philosophy and as the embodiment of an unsolvable mystery.³ Undoubtedly the complex narrative structure is in part responsible for such diverse interpretations. And this structure is itself a manifestation of Conrad's understanding of the universe.

Critics are not in universal agreement even in their description of the narrative structure. In his chapter "Impressionism: Conrad" in The Twentieth Century English Novelists: Studies in Technique, Joseph Warren Beach assumes that the first three chapters are told in the "ordinary manner of third-person omniscience." In Chapter Four the omniscient narrator introduces Marlow,

who relates the story through Chapter Thirty-Six (a clear misreading of Thirty-Six, which describes Marlow from a third person point of view). The concluding chapters are read later by one of Marlow's auditors from documents written primarily by Marlow.⁴ Several other critics make similar assumptions.⁵ Still others, notably Osborne Andreas in Joseph Conrad: A Study of Non-Conformity, focus their interpretations of the novel on the character of Jim and pay little attention to Marlow.⁶ Only a few critics even mention a character in Lord Jim, identified in Chapter Thirty-Six as "the privileged man," whom Jocelyn Baines in Joseph Conrad describes as "the anonymous author of the book."⁷

The point of view in Lord Jim is indeed complex. At the heart of the novel we have Jim's story, most of which he tells to Marlow. Chapters One through Four summarize Jim's life up until the time of the Patna incident. We meet Marlow at the end of Chapter Four, and from Five through Thirty-Five, Marlow tells a group of friends about his personal experience with Jim. Chapter Thirty-Six is an important transitional chapter that describes the reaction of Marlow's audience to his narrative. We meet the privileged man and learn that two years later he receives a packet from Marlow which contains the rest of Jim's story. The last part of Chapter Thirty-Six and most of Thirty-Seven consist of Marlow's covering letter.

The remaining chapters of the novel, Thirty-Eight through Forty-Five, contain Marlow's written narrative of Jim's last days. The entire novel can be read as a recording by the privileged man of his own relationship to Jim's story.

As Frederick R. Karl and Marvin Magalaner suggest in A Reader's Guide to Great Twentieth Century English Novels, "The question of course arises, what did Conrad hope to gain by a narrative that keeps the reader almost constantly off balance and disallows any of the 'easiness' common to the nineteenth century novel?"⁸ Any interpretation that acknowledges the novel's complex technique must answer this question and several others as well. What is the meaning of Jim's life and death? What is Marlow's relationship to Jim's story? And what is the privileged man's relationship to Jim's story as Marlow relates it? Each of these men--Jim, Marlow, and the privileged man--represent an approach to life, a means of dealing with the darkness. Marlow is an onlooker at Jim's game; the privileged man is an onlooker at Marlow's and Jim's. And the reader becomes an onlooker at the games of all of them and is thus in a position to "see more."

It is necessary to outline Jim's story before we can interpret the meaning of the novel. Jim comes from an English country parsonage, apparently a stable and secure background. The living goes to his brother, and

Jim is sent "to a 'training-ship for officers of the mercantile marine'" (5), where he is successful and well-liked. He dreams of adventure and distinction, but his reactions to two crises--a collision near the training-ship and later a severe storm at sea--are not in keeping with those ideals. After recovering from an injury he incurs in the storm, Jim joins the crew of the Patna, a rundown ship carrying eight hundred pilgrims to Mecca. When the Patna hits a sunken wreck and begins to go down, the other officers, an unprincipled group, unfasten a lifeboat and abandon ship. Mistaking Jim for the third engineer, they call to him to jump--and he does, thus violating his heroic dream. The Avondale picks them up the next day, and later in port they learn that the Patna did not sink but was towed ashore by a French gunboat. Jim alone stands trial and loses his officer's certificate. At his trial he meets Marlow, who helps him find work, but Jim abandons job after job whenever his reputation catches up with him. Finally Marlow consults an old friend, Stein, for advice about Jim, and Stein places Jim as head of a remote trading post in Patusan.

Jim is very successful in Patusan and helps to establish peace there. He also falls in love with Jewel, the step-daughter of his predecessor, Cornelius. Cornelius hates Jim, but Jim is supported by the natives, especially by the ruler, Doramin, and his son, Dain Waris.

When Marlow visits Jim after two years in Patusan, it seems that nothing can spoil Jim's happiness.

However, a renegade named Brown and his men, in need of provisions, sail up the river to Patusan. They attack the village, and, though their position is weak, Brown succeeds in winning clear passage from Jim by inadvertently reminding him of his own past weakness. Jim promises the natives that if one life is lost he will forfeit his own. Down-river, encouraged and aided by Cornelius, Brown attacks a party of natives and kills Dain Waris. Jewel begs Jim to flee, but fulfilling his promise, he presents himself to Doramin who shoots him.

Jim's story raises many questions. On the Patna Jim behaves in an apparently cowardly manner; in Patusan, he acts heroically. His failure to respond to the situations on the training ship and the Patna is puzzling. His insistence on facing the ordeal of public inquiry is not easily reconcilable with his running away from every subsequent reminder of the Patna incident. Nor do we readily comprehend his decision to let Brown go at the risk of the lives of the people of Patusan. Finally the problem arises of deciding whether or not Jim's death is heroic.

The results of critics' explorations of the meaning of Jim's life are as ambiguous as the facts of his life. Andreas emphasizes Jim's "undisciplined

imagination" in his interpretation of the novel, and reads it as "the story of a man who lost his honor and tries to win it back. . . ." ⁹ Adam Gillon in The Eternal Solitary acknowledges more fully the novel's structure, but his interpretation, too, focuses on Jim's imagination "that separates Jim from the rest of mankind and makes him live in the dream world of romantic achievement. . . ." ¹⁰ Both of these critics believe that Jim successfully redeems himself through his death.

In "Marlow, Myth, and Structure in Lord Jim," Dale Kramer interprets Jim's death as a failure both to the society that depends on him and to himself: "Jim has failed even at the end, for in accepting death, Jim has taken the irresponsible way." ¹¹ In "Parallel Motives in Lord Jim," Cheris Kramer takes a similar position, pointing out parallels between Jim and Captain Brierly, a member of his board of inquiry, who commits suicide shortly after the trial. Kramer suggests that just as Brierly finds in Jim a possibility of his own failure, Jim finds in Brown the possibility that he may fail again. Thus his death may not be courageous at all: ". . . his death is horribly futile and self-defeating, for he destroys not only the society he has created and the mythic stature he has acquired in Patusan, but the possibility that in the future he might actually confront and triumph over a crisis similar to the Patna episode." ¹²

These critics illustrate two extremes in the interpretation of Jim's character. There are also many critics who find Jim ultimately inexplicable. Some view this mystery as a weakness in the novel; others see it as thematically significant. David Daiches, in The Novel and the Modern World, is typical of the latter group. He finds ambiguity in Jim's facing the inquiry, in his success in Patusan, and in his death: "Is it his ultimate vindication or his ultimate failure?"¹³ Eloise Knapp Hay, in The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad, has a similar view: the novel presents "an insoluble paradox of human perfectibility within imperfection."¹⁴ And Harold Kaplan, in the chapter entitled "Character as Reality: Joseph Conrad," in The Passive Voice, says:

We cannot be sure whether Jim is a romantic dreamer, a fool, or a hero, or whether he has any cause for action rooted in the actual world. The Quixotic pathos is with him throughout. With brilliant consistency Conrad draws the veil of ambiguity around the response of the world to his death, with Jewel, supposedly his greatest intimate in the world, being left at the end in her demoralized and embittered confusion.¹⁵

To be sure, much of what is said about Jim in the novel is ambiguous, but the ambiguity arises not from Jim's character but from the points of view that determine the way we see him. The reader discovers that deciding whether Jim is a success or a failure depends on the values according to which one judges him. Throughout

most of the novel we view Jim behaving according to his own rules through the eyes of Marlow who has another set of rules. Because we see the novel as a whole from the point of view of the privileged man, we are able to see the value systems of Jim and Marlow simultaneously, though, of course, their values cannot be finally reconciled. Conrad's technique, then, allows him to present dramatically a multiple viewpoint which encourages us to see differing possibilities in an assessment of Jim.

Before we can assess Marlow's point of view it is necessary to understand Jim. Marlow consistently assumes that Jim is "one of us" and fails to see that in a very important way he is not "one of us" at all. Both Jim and Marlow are aware of the darkness, but their methods of dealing with it are very different. Royal Roussel's chapter, "Lord Jim: The Search for a New Aesthetic" in the Metaphysics of Darkness, analyzes Jim's approach to the darkness. At first Jim "accepts as his starting point the apparent stability of the surface of creation, a stability which implicitly images the simplistic world of his reading."¹⁶ Given this assumption, the possibility of fulfilling his dreams of adventure and heroism is very real. Unlike several other critics, Roussel does not blame Jim's failure on his imagination but on "his more basic miscalculation that the shiny surface of the chart does in fact portray the depths of the ocean,"¹⁷ that what appears

on the surface is the truth. Thus, when the Patna collides with an unknown object, his world picture is shattered; he discovers "that the darkness qualifies the apparent order of existence."¹⁸ This discovery undermines Jim's belief in the reality of things as they appear; so too it undermines his moral commitment to the code that he acquired along with his illusory picture of the universe. His traumatic experience reveals to Jim that these beliefs are conventions which have their source in the society he comes from: "Jim's father possessed such certain knowledge of the Unknowable as made for the righteousness of people in cottages without disturbing the ease of mind of those whom an unerring Providence enables to live in mansions" (5). Such knowledge of the Unknowable is not adequate for Jim's situation.

Jim's response to the shattering of his metaphysical beliefs and ethical values is to create his own system of values. His experience does not cause him to relinquish his dream but only to realize that it is inconsistent with the values of society as he has known it. Thus he simply waits for an opportunity to carve out a world of his own, the opportunity that he eventually finds in Patusan: "'This was a chance he had been dreaming of'" (230). He is not disturbed by Marlow's emphasis on the degree to which he will be alone in Patusan: "'Once he got in, it would be for the outside world as though

he had never existed. He would have nothing but the soles of his two feet to stand upon, and he would have first to find his ground at that'" (232). The success of his dream depends on him alone.

In Patusan, then, Jim fulfills his dream. He establishes peace, finds love, and earns the unreserved respect of the natives. But the same darkness that underlies the world of society underlies Jim's created world in Patusan, and eventually it manifests itself in the form of Gentleman Brown. As Roussel writes, "In many ways . . . Jim's meeting with Gentleman Brown, a meeting which results in the destruction of his ordered world in Patusan and, eventually, in his death, is a repetition of the collision of the Patna."¹⁹ But Jim's forfeiting his life is in accordance with the demands of his own values. Even though he hurts Jewel and Marlow, Jim captures the dream, his ideal, in death; he would have to compromise it if he chose to try to live. His last sentence to Jewel, ""Nothing can touch me"" (413), suggests the total isolation and solitude of his world, a world that exists in and for himself. Jim is true to himself, but his truth is not of this world. He may die with a "placid and unflinching glance," but, like Stein's butterflies, his ideal is permanent only in death. We may not agree with Jim's choice, but we must acknowledge that it is consistent with his values. He chooses a way to live and die with the

knowledge of darkness and logically and relentlessly pursues his dream.

With this view of Jim established we are now ready to determine Marlow's role in Lord Jim. Although Marlow narrates a very large portion of the book, some critics refer to him as a mere technical device. As we saw in the Introduction, Beebe calls Marlow "a simple technical device--a heritage from that oral tradition of the storyteller that lies behind the art of fiction."²⁰ At the opposite extreme, Raymond Malbone, in "How to Be: Marlow's Quest in Lord Jim," cites Marlow as the protagonist of the novel: ". . . the opening four chapters . . . give a succinct characterization of Jim which the remainder of the novel does little to alter or develop--which to my mind indicates that the novel is not mainly concerned with Jim, but with Marlow, whose digressions from, and speculations about, the fairly simple and direct history of Jim make up the bulk of the novel."²¹

Marlow's response to Jim's story is certainly important, for he is responsible for underscoring and emphasizing its ambiguity. Kaplan supports this view: "Marlow is always with us to give the effect of the ubiquitous mind, doubting itself and screening the action subjectively."²² In fact, Marlow's telling of the story is his attempt to find its meaning; it is a process of discovery rather than a mere reporting of the facts.

Dayton Kohler, in the Introduction to his edition of Lord Jim, emphasizes that because ambiguity is purposeful in the novel, Marlow is necessary to it: "The truth is that in a story so shrouded in ambiguity and lighted at times only by suggestion, he is as essential to the meaning of the novel as to its structure."²³ As John A. Palmer points out in Joseph Conrad's Fiction, Marlow's importance must not be underestimated: ". . . Marlow's meditative history--not the train of physical events reflected in that history--must be taken as the reader's primary object of interest."²⁴ And Zdzislaw Nadjer, too, makes this point in "A Romantic Tragedy of Honor": "The cognitive process, the quest for truth, is equivalent with the narrative thrust itself. . . . The reader follows the process itself, the arduous and burdensome pursuit of a faithful description and just evaluation of Jim."²⁵

Because we see most of Jim's story through Marlow, we must examine the philosophy and values which he brings to that story. A middle-aged British seaman, Marlow has definite fixed beliefs about the nature of the universe and man's position in it. Marlow is aware of the underlying darkness and sees civilization, specifically the civilization in which he has his roots, as providing the best structure, the best rules, for dealing with the darkness. Thus the code--of the sea and more generally of society--is very important to Marlow. Marlow is aware

that the code is an illusion, but believes this illusion is necessary to prevent chaos. Society for Marlow is a large number of men who support the same illusion and thus strengthen it. Thus most of the value of the code comes from the sense of community it fosters. Marlow is not always completely comfortable with his beliefs, however. They are not totally satisfactory to him, for he is constantly aware of the tenuousness of illusions and the precariousness of man's position in the face of the darkness. And Jim, who appears to him as "one of us," causes Marlow to ask questions about his code.

Marlow's instinctive liking of Jim is in keeping with his values: "'I liked his appearance, I knew his appearance; he came from the right place; 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 upon honest faith, upon the instinct of courage'" (43). Roussel points out that because of these assumptions Jim becomes a symbolic test of Marlow's values: "Jim is most obviously a test case for Marlow's allegiance to the group and the ethos defined by the phrase 'one of us.'"²⁶ Jim's jump from the Patna, a violation of Marlow's code, causes Marlow to doubt, and he takes an interest in Jim in hopes of allaying that doubt--"'the doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct'" (50). Marlow is aware of

the dark potential within men, including himself: "' . . . each of us has a familiar devil . . . I know I have him--the devil, I mean'" (34). And speaking of his tendency to draw confidences from others, he adds: "' . . . as though, forsooth, I had no confidences to make myself, as though--God help me!--I didn't have enough confidential information about myself to harrow my own soul till the end of my appointed time'" (34). Marlow has dealt with his self-knowledge by adhering to his code, and that code is called into question by Jim's action, "' . . . as though he had been an individual in the forefront of his kind, as if the obscure truth involved were momentous enough to affect mankind's conception of itself.'" (93). Marlow feels cheated by Jim: "'I was aggrieved against him, as though he had cheated me--me!--of a splendid opportunity to keep up the illusion of my beginnings, as though he had robbed our common life of the last spark of its glamour'" (131). In spite of his sympathy for Jim, Marlow judges Jim's action according to his own code: "'The real significance of crime is in its being a breach of faith with the community of mankind, and from that point of view he was no mean traitor . . .'" (157).

We gain insight into why Marlow's code is so important to him from a statement that reveals his attitudes about the meaning of society and about man's place in the universe:

"And it's easy enough to talk of Master Jim, after a good spread, two hundred feet above the sea-level, with a box of decent cigars handy, on a blessed evening of freshness and starlight that would make the best of us forget 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--but not so sure of it after all--and with dashed little help to expect from those we touch elbows with right and left. Of course there are men here and there to whom the whole of life is like an after-dinner hour with a cigar; easy, pleasant, empty, perhaps enlivened by some fable of strife to be forgotten before the end is told--before the end is told--even if there happens to be any end to it." (35)

Man is "'only on sufferance here'" and has to watch his every step in order to have any assurance of departing with decency. Marlow sees each man as alone, receiving little help from his neighbor. He can never be sure of the outcome of his actions. Marlow recognizes, however, that some are not aware of the position of man in the universe, but go through life passive and unthinking.

But Marlow is aware and chooses to adhere to the values of his society in order to cope with his knowledge. These values, shared by those at "home," are social values, other-directed, and dependent on others for approval:

"I was going home. . . . We wander in our thousands over the face of the earth, the illustrious and the obscure, earning beyond the seas our fame, our money, or only a crust of bread; but it seems to me that for each of us going home must be like going to render an account. . . . Even those for whom home holds no dear face, no familiar voice,--even they have to meet the spirit that dwells within the land, under its sky, in its air, in its valleys, and on its rises, in its fields, in its waters and its trees. . . . Each blade of grass has its spot on earth whence it draws its life, its strength; and so is man rooted

to the land from which he draws his faith together with his life." (221-222)

In spite of the "'saving power'" he attributes to society's code, Marlow calls it "'some such truth or some such illusion . . . there is so little difference, and the difference means so little'" (222). He is aware that society and its values are simply human constructs to deal with the darkness, but constructs which gain strength in numbers. Although the world that underlies civilization has "'a vast and dismal aspect of disorder,'" Marlow adds, "'in truth, thanks to our unwearied efforts, it is as sunny an arrangement of small conveniences as the mind of man can conceive'" (313). He values the means by which society confronts the darkness.

Jim's experience on the Patna, however, is a painful reminder to Marlow of the tenuousness of his approach to living, a reminder of the darkness within every man: "'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 life-time, not one of us is safe'" (43). Marlow sees the implications of Jim's jump for himself and his standards, but he does not see the positive

implications of Jim's private values, which are not compromised for the sake of social acceptance. Speaking of Jim, Marlow insists that man consistently tries to avoid the truth about himself: "' . . . it is my belief no man ever understands quite his own artful dodges to escape from the grim shadow of self-knowledge'" (80); but ironically, despite his attempts to understand Jim, he cannot abandon his adherence to a code and free himself from his prejudices. He assumes that Jim shares his values and judges him accordingly: "'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'" (81).

Interestingly, though, Marlow speaks of society as analogous to a game, an image which suggests that its values are arbitrary and conventional. We apply rules to create a concept of ourselves, an identity, largely determined by convention. But the awful truth of the matter is, implies Marlow, that this game and its rules are very serious, for they are our means of controlling our chaotic instincts. Without control, without men abiding by the rules, inconceivable chaos would prevail.

But Marlow seems to allow for the possibility of only one set of rules. He is almost contradictory in his acknowledgment of society as a game and his insistence that this particular game is indispensable.

Such then is Marlow's philosophical posture when he meets Jim, and, as we have seen, Jim becomes a test of the code for Marlow. As Roussel writes, "If Jim is symbolic of that aspect of fellowship which for the world of the sea unites man and nature, he is perhaps even more obviously a representative of the brotherhood which in this world should bind each man to his fellow-men."²⁷ Ironically, when Marlow meets him, Jim is in the process of evolving his own values because experience has taught him the falseness of society's. When their eyes meet in the courtroom, Jim is becoming increasingly aware of the invalidity of the code, even the words of the code, for him: "At present he was answering questions that did not matter though they had a purpose, but he doubted whether he would ever again speak out as long as he lived. The sound of his own truthful statements confirmed his deliberate opinion that speech was of no use to him any longer" (33). Thus at the very time Marlow is viewing Jim as a symbol of the validity of the code, Jim is abandoning it, and Marlow's subsequent judgment in terms of the code has no validity. From the beginning there is a basic misunderstanding between them, which the history

of Marlow's and Jim's relationship reflects.

Marlow's initial curiosity about the motives for Jim's jump arises because the action does not coincide with Jim's appearance but, of course, Marlow assumes that Jim's appearance--"'clean-limbed, clean-faced, firm on his feet, as promising a boy as the sun ever shone on . . .'" (40)--is indicative of his being "one of us." Judging Jim by his own standards, Marlow assumes that Jim will feel as he himself would when he hears about the rescue of the Patna. On one level he actually wants to see Jim suffer for his violation of the code; but he sympathizes with Jim for the pain of facing his weakness: "'I waited to see him overwhelmed, confounded, pierced through and through, squirming like an impaled beetle--and I was half afraid to see it too--if you understand what I mean. Nothing more awful than to watch a man who has been found out, not in a crime, but in a more than criminal weakness.'" (42). Unaware of Jim's real feelings, Marlow makes him symbolic of his code: "' . . . he was outwardly so typical of that good, stupid kind we like to feel marching right and left of us in life, of the kind that is not disturbed by the vagaries of intelligence and the perversions of--nerves, let us say. He was the kind of fellow you would, on the strength of his looks, leave in charge of the deck--figuratively and professionally speaking'" (44). Marlow takes an interest in Jim's case

in hopes of finding an explanation that leaves his code intact.

The inquiry into the Patna affair does not provide that explanation: "' . . . the questions put to [Jim] necessarily led him away from what to me, for instance, would have been the only truth worth knowing'" (56). As Roussel points out, there is really a danger in Marlow's interest in Jim: "Precisely because there is 'something indefinite and attractive in the man' . . . which seems to suggest to others the best part of their own character, those who come in contact with Jim run the risk of seeing his experience as their own and of feeling the effects of the Patna incident as if they had undergone it themselves."²⁸ In fact, Captain Brierly's identification with Jim is fatal. Marlow may not gain the knowledge he seeks from the inquiry, but he is aware that Brierly's suggestion of simply covering up Jim's action is no answer either. Assuming that Jim's attitude toward the code is his own and that Jim feels guilty for violating it, Marlow is somewhat satisfied that Jim faces the consequences: "'I became positive in my mind that the inquiry was a severe punishment to Jim, and that his facing it--practically of his own free will--was a redeeming feature in his abominable case'" (68).

Marlow's narration of his first actual meeting with Jim reinforces the idea that Jim is judging himself

by standards other than Marlow's, though Marlow does not understand at the time. As they leave the courtroom, Jim mistakingly thinks that Marlow calls him a "wretched cur" (70) and becomes very angry. Marlow, assuming that he understands what Jim is feeling, concludes that Jim reacts so violently because he actually thinks of himself as a cur: "'There had never been a man so mercilessly shown up by his own natural impulse. A single word had stripped him of his discretion--of that discretion which is more necessary to the decencies of our inner being than clothing is to the decorum of our body'" (74).²⁹ Marlow's assessment is incorrect, however. Jim is angry precisely because he does not think of himself as a cur nor does he accept any standards that so judge him. Marlow is attributing his own feelings to Jim, what he would feel if he were in Jim's place. He is puzzled that Jim is able so easily to dismiss the incident: "'I don't pretend I understood him. The views he let me have of himself were like those glimpses through the shifting rents in a thick fog--bits of vivid and vanishing detail, giving no connected idea of the general aspect of a country. They fed one's curiosity without satisfying it; they were no good for the purposes of orientation'" (76). Marlow seems able to add details to his picture of Jim, and each detail is in itself true, but Marlow cannot form a coherent picture: "'Upon the whole he was misleading'" (76).

Marlow's difficulty stems, of course, from their different sets of values.

Later Jim and Marlow dine together and Jim talks about his situation. He has freed himself of the code and its judgments, but he has not freed himself of the need for someone with whom to share his understanding. But Marlow does not understand. Though Jim seems convinced of his "'innate blamelessness'" (79), Marlow assumes that he is hiding his real feelings. According to Marlow's code, Jim must feel guilty. Actually, because of his experience, Jim possesses more self-knowledge than Marlow, as he points out, "'Do you know what you would have done? Do you? And you don't think yourself . . . you don't think yourself a--a--cur?'" (81). The truth is, of course, that for all his adherence to a code, Marlow does not know, but, instead of facing the challenge Jim offers, he judges Jim to be "'solemn and a little ridiculous, too,'" (81). In an effort to save face, Marlow, by judging Jim, tries to avoid questioning his code which Jim has violated.

Finally Marlow realizes that Jim's despondency over his jump arises not from shame at violating the rules of the game but from missing a chance for glory. Actually it is not at all clear that Jim regrets the jump, for regardless of the code, common sense and logic certainly indicate it was the best course of action.

Thus Jim, to Marlow's surprise, can still cherish his dreams of heroism. Marlow can share with Jim the train of thought that made him decide the ship was doomed, but he does not share the realization that the rule that officers stay with a sinking ship is ridiculous in light of the facts. Marlow says:

"You must remember he believed, as any other man would have done in his place, that the ship would go down at any moment; the bulging, rust-eaten plates that kept back the ocean, fatally must give way, all at once like an undermined dam, and let in a sudden and overwhelming flood. He stood still looking at these recumbent bodies, a doomed man aware of his fate, surveying the silent company of the dead. They were dead! Nothing could save them! There were boats enough for half of them perhaps, but there was no time. No time! It did not seem worth while to open his lips, to stir hand or foot. Before he could shout three words, or make three steps, he would be floundering in a sea whitened awfully by the desperate struggles of human beings, clamorous with the distress of cries for help. There was no help. He imagined what would happen perfectly; he went through it all motionless by the hatchway with the lamp in his hand--he went through it to the last harrowing detail." (86)

Jim questions the validity of the code that tells him to remain in such a situation. And, of course, Jim did do everything in his power to save the pilgrims.

The questions raised by Jim's case disturb Marlow, but he is unwilling to tamper with his beliefs. Although he recognizes that Jim's repudiation of the code has far-reaching implications, he prefers to avoid facing them:

"These were issues beyond the competency of a court of inquiry: it was a subtle and momentous quarrel as to the true essence of life, and did not want a judge. . . . I felt the risk I ran of being

circumvented, blinded, decoyed, bullied, perhaps, into taking a definite part in a dispute impossible of decision if one had to be fair to all the phantoms in possession--to the reputable that had its claims and to the disreputable that had its exigencies. I can't explain to you who haven't seen him and who hear his words only at second hand the mixed nature of my feelings. . . . The mystery of his attitude got hold of me as though he had been an individual in the forefront of his kind, as if the obscure truth involved were momentous enough to affect mankind's conception of itself. . . ." (93)

Marlow's choice of the words "reputable and "disreputable" is, of course, judgmental, and he clearly thinks it is dangerous to pursue a line of thinking that questions the validity of this judgment.

Although Marlow tries to avoid confrontation with himself and his values, Jim continues to challenge him. Implying that his jump was instinctive, he asks: ""What would you have done? You are sure of yourself--aren't you? What would you do if you felt now--this minute--the house here move, just move a little under your chair. Leap! By heavens! you would take one spring from where you sit and land in that clump of bushes yonder""(106). Marlow tries to avoid the question:

"It behooved me to make no sign lest by a gesture or a word I should be drawn into a fatal admission about myself which would have had some bearing on the case. I was not disposed to take any risk of that sort. Don't forget I had him before me, and really he was too much like one of us not to be dangerous. But if you want to know I don't mind telling you that I did, with a rapid glance, estimate the distance to the grass-plot before the verandah. He exaggerated, I would have landed short by several feet--and that's the only thing of which I am fairly certain." (106-107)

If the code does not take into account that leaping from a dangerous situation to safety is the natural impulse and that leaping from a hopeless situation is logical, then it is not adequate. Marlow is too honest to dismiss this realization without thought. But he cannot take the step Jim has taken and repudiate the code. Because of his confrontation with the darkness, Jim has abandoned the system of values that says he should not have jumped; Marlow retains his belief in the system in spite of its weaknesses.

Marlow and Jim, then, are approaching the facts of Jim's case from very different viewpoints. Marlow listens sympathetically to Jim but ultimately he believes, albeit reluctantly, that Jim is guilty: "'He was guilty, too. He was guilty--as I had told myself repeatedly, guilty and done for . . .'" (152). He assumes that Jim must in truth feel guilty and is angry that Jim can continue to have illusions of the possibility of heroic achievement. But Jim does not see the jump as a failure of himself but of the code. He does not see himself as representative of the code of the sea but as a self-sufficient individual seeking to meet his own ideal, which is independent of the code. Jim sees, as a result of his confrontation with the darkness, that Marlow's code is illusory. Marlow is more willing to face the possibility that he himself could fail his code than he

is to question the code itself.

Marlow's judgment of Jim does not free him from the doubts and questions Jim has raised. Even though Jim has violated Marlow's code, Marlow likes him and cares what happens to him. He knows he does not really understand Jim and recognizes that men never really know one another. He knows he may be unaware of factors that motivate Jim:

"It is when we try to grapple with another man's intimate need that we perceive how incomprehensible, wavering, and misty are the beings that share with us the sight of the stars and the warmth of the sun. It is as if loneliness were a hard and absolute condition of existence; the envelope of flesh and blood on which our eyes are fixed melts before the outstretched hand, and there remains only the capricious, inconsolable, and elusive spirit that no eye can follow, no hand can grasp." (179-180)

Thus Marlow does not understand Jim's reaction when he offers to help the young man find a position. What he sees as a means of avoiding starvation, Jim sees as an opportunity. When Jim leaves job after job, Marlow, according to his code, can only interpret him as fleeing his reputation. But Jim is not running away from anything so much as he is running to something. Marlow's comments on Jim's departures reveal both his own practicality and his inability to comprehend Jim's idealism:

"They were all equally tinged by a high-minded absurdity of intention which made their futility profound and touching. To fling away your daily bread so as to get your hands free for a grapple with a ghost may be an act of prosaic heroism. Men had done it before (though we who have lived know full

well that it is not the haunted soul but the hungry body that makes an outcast), and men who had eaten and meant to eat every day had applauded the creditable folly. He was indeed unfortunate, for all his recklessness could not carry him out from under the shadow. There was always a doubt of his courage. The truth seems to be that it is impossible to lay the ghost of a fact. You can face it or shirk it--and I have come across a man or two who could wink at their familiar shades. Obviously Jim was not of the winking sort; but what I could never make up my mind about was whether his line of conduct amounted to shirking his ghost or to facing him out." (197)

Obviously, as Marlow's relationship with Jim develops, he at least becomes more aware of Jim's complexity, even if he does not understand him. He no longer assumes that their values are identical, but realizes that his inability to understand Jim may indicate that their values differ.

In his attempt to understand Jim, Marlow solicits the reactions of others to him. Shortly after the trial, Marlow meets Chester, an acquaintance who is trying to enlist workers for a guano island he has discovered. Chester refers to Jim as "'no good'" (161) and offers to hire him to supervise his workers. As Marlow does, Chester judges Jim according to his own values or, in this case, lack of them. He is committed to nothing but his own profit. Jim is "no good" for society but he will serve Chester's purpose. When Marlow rejects Chester's offer, Chester comments: "'He is no earthly good for anything, . . . He would just have done for me. If you only could see a thing as it is, you would see it's the very thing

for him. . . . I must have a man"" (167-168). Chester has absolutely no commitment to the illusions of society or to any illusions. He certainly does not even value human life, for he plans to leave his workers on an island where there is no water supply. Chester's attitude has no validity for Marlow; he recognizes Jim's worth, even if he has failed the code: "'There were his fine sensibilities, his fine feelings, his fine longings--a sort of sublimated, idealised selfishness. He was . . . very fine very fine--and very unfortunate'" (177).

The French Lieutenant judges the affair of Jim's jump more narrowly from the viewpoint of the code than does Marlow. For a moment this respected and brave man seems to forgive Jim. He believes that ""Man is born a coward"" (147) and that only habit, arising from necessity and ""the eye of others"" (147), fostered by good example, allows man to live with his fear. But Marlow is very disappointed when the French Lieutenant adds:

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

Though he recognizes that honor is an illusion, he values

that illusion in and for itself, not as a tool for dealing with the darkness. The concept of honor is more important than the humans for whom it is supposed to be an aid in controlling instinct. Marlow cannot easily accept this rigid judgment. Jim's case has caused him to question this word "honour." His acquaintance with Jim has made unquestioning acceptance of the code impossible for Marlow.

Disappointed by the French Lieutenant, Marlow, still in need of a confidant and advisor to help him deal with his difficulty, turns to Stein, "'one of the most trustworthy men I have ever known'" (202) and "'an eminently suitable person to receive my confidences about Jim's difficulties as well as my own'" (203). Many critics cite this section of the novel as a key to the meaning of the whole.³⁰ Such critics are probably influenced by Marlow's admiration. Even though Stein does come closer than Chester or the French Lieutenant to understanding Jim because of a similarity of temperament, we must be cognizant of his limitations as a judge.

Marlow finds Stein at his butterfly collection, admiring the perfection of the insect. Marlow asks, "'And what of man?'" (208). Stein replies that man is out of place in the universe: "'Man is amazing, but he is not a masterpiece. . . . Perhaps the artist was a little mad. . . . Sometimes it seems to me that man is

come where he is not wanted, where there is no place for him; for if not, why should he want all the place? Why should he run about here and there making a great noise about himself, talking about the stars, disturbing the blades of grass? . . ."" (208). Stein has shared Jim's tendency to dream and to tenaciously cling to the belief that the dream can become reality. In fact, his dream was reality for a time: ""On that day I had nothing to desire; I had greatly annoyed my principal enemy; I was young, strong; I had friendship; I had the love . . . of woman, a child I had, to make my heart very full--and even what I had once dreamed in my sleep had come into my hand, too!"" (211). But he lost his wife and child to a fever and had to leave the country to avoid reminders of his loss. He is an old man now, left with material success and a dead butterfly. Stein knows that outside forces can invade and shatter the world created by one's dreams.

When he hears Jim's story, Stein seems to understand him better than any other who has been in contact with him: ""I understand very well. He is romantic"" (212). He sees that Jim, like other romantics before him, has repudiated society and its values and is creating his own identity rather than passively accepting an identity thrust upon him by a society whose absurdity he has experienced. Like Jim, Stein sees the creation of

one's own dream outside of society's as one way of dealing with the darkness. But what Stein recognizes and Jim does not is that it is impossible to keep one's dream isolated. One man alone does not have the strength of numbers society has: ""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 not strong enough are, or not clever enough"" (213). Stein has apparently suffered this realization, and he has retreated into the sedentary life; he no longer pursues a dream but he recognizes the validity of following one.

Thus his advice to Marlow is that Jim should submit himself totally to the dream, his romantic illusions: ""A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns--nicht war . . . 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 you ask me--how to be?"" (214). Although he manifests a great deal of uncertainty, Stein continues with his prescription: ""In the destructive element immerse . . ."" He spoke in a subdued tone, without looking at me, one hand on each side of his

face. "That was the way. To follow the dream, and again to follow the dream--and so--ewig--usque ad finem. . ."" (215).³¹

Roussel offers a helpful analysis of Stein:

"The pattern of Stein's life . . . seems to suggest that for him the only way to have the dream is to recognize it for what it is. It is to realize that it is a product of imagination opposed to the nature of man's life and capable of only the kind of imaginative expression which art affords."³² Roussel points out that Stein has moved "from the active world of commerce and adventure to the insubstantial twilight of his collection."³³ Although Stein has abandoned this way himself, he has not given it up as impossible, and Stein's use of the past tense-- "That was the way"--supports this view. But, as Roussel suggests, the dream can be destructive "when you try to climb out of it; when, like Jim or the young Stein, you actually try to make your dream come true. It is this attempt, rather than the dream itself, which leads Jim, and by implication Stein, to their encounter with the darkness. Stein, however, suggests that the dream can be preserved by giving oneself over to it entirely, submitting oneself to it, and withdrawing completely from an involvement with the world."³⁴ Marlow finds Stein's philosophy puzzling and unsatisfying, but, because he assumes that Stein is successful, he continues to believe

he will be helpful to Jim.

But just as Marlow has frequently made incorrect assumptions about Jim, so he does about Stein. For there is clear evidence that suggests shame and regret in Stein's life. Stein tells Marlow: "'And do you know how many dreams I had lost that had come in my way?" He shook his head regretfully. "It seemed to me that some would have been very fine--if I had made them come true. Do you know how many? Perhaps I myself don't know"'" (217). Yet, in spite of this hint from Stein, when he says "'There's Patusan . . . And the woman is dead now,'" Marlow's reaction is, "'Of course I don't know that story; I can only guess that once before Patusan had been used as a grave for some sin, transgression, or misfortune. It is impossible to suspect Stein'" (219). Stein's references to lost opportunities and to the dead woman in Patusan coupled with Cornelius' resentment suggest that Stein may be Jewel's father and thus the man who cruelly deserted her mother. Roussel supports this interpretation and adds, "There is, then, at least the implication of a biographical basis for the shadows which fill Stein's house, a suggestion that somewhere in Stein's past there is an act of desertion as shattering in its implications as Jim's desertion of the Patna, and that his knowledge of 'the heart pain--the world pain' . . . has its roots in personal experience."³⁵ But regardless

of his own withdrawal to mere contemplation rather than action, Stein advises Jim to go to Patusan. Perhaps he wishes to test through Jim the viability of making dreams a reality.

The difference between Jim and Marlow is emphasized in their reactions to Stein's idea. Marlow sees Patusan as a place for Jim to hide, where his reputation will not haunt him. Jim reacts with "'surprise, interest, wonder, and . . . boyish eagerness. This was a chance he had been dreaming of'" (230). Marlow still assumes that Jim wants to redeem himself according to Marlow's standards and fears that he will feel isolated in Patusan--"'Once he got in, it would be for the outside world as though he had never existed'"(232). But Jim is undaunted as though such is precisely the condition he requires: "'Never existed--that's it, by Jove!'" (232). Marlow is actually annoyed at Jim's exuberance. He thinks it is sufficient that Jim has simply found a place of refuge, and he cannot see why Jim must insist on extracting more than existence from it--"'Why hurl defiance at the universe?'" (236). He expresses his reservation to Jim, and Jim's reply emphasizes the chasm between them: "'I spoke like that because I--even I, who had been no end kind to him--even I remembered--remembered--against him--what--what had happened. And what about the others--the--the--world? Where's the wonder he wanted

to get out, meant to get out, meant to stay out--by heavens! And I talked about the proper frames of mind'" (236). Jim knows that he has not avoided judgment by the code even with Marlow. He wants to be in a position where he can live by his own values, not those of Marlow's society. He does not have what Marlow thinks is the "proper" frame of mind; he has his own frame of mind. Jim, always following his dream, has faith in himself.

Even when Marlow sees how successful Jim is in Patusan, he continues to judge Jim by the standards of the outside world. He does not see that success in Patusan is valuable for its own sake and need not be measured by external standards. And Marlow cannot forget the Patna; he cannot see that the incident has no place in the world over which Jim is lord:

"And there I was with him, high in the sunshine on the top of that historic hill of his. He dominated the forest, the secular gloom, the old mankind. He was like a figure set up on a pedestal, to represent in his persistent youth the power, and perhaps the virtues, of races that never grow old, that have emerged from the gloom. I don't know why he should always have appeared to me symbolic. Perhaps this is the real cause of my interest in his fate. I don't know whether it was exactly fair to him to remember the incident which had given a new direction to his life, but at that very moment I remembered very distinctly. It was like a shadow in the light." (265)

Marlow does not seem able to accept the fact that Jim may have found a satisfactory means of living other than his own. He thinks that because Jim is successful in a different setting from that in which he failed and

according to a different set of conditions, the success is not real. To satisfy Marlow, Jim's success must be acknowledged by those who accept the code.

We do have to acknowledge that there are limitations in Jim's solution. He has succeeded in building up his own world, but he cannot ensure its isolation and separation from the larger world. And no man, no matter what his way, can anticipate everything that may happen; none has total control over his fate. But the fact that there are weaknesses in Jim's world does not make it inferior to the world of Marlow's code. It is another way, equal to, and different from Marlow's. But what is important to our understanding of Marlow is that he can judge it only in his own terms. And if at times he seems to appreciate Jim's world, at others he is critical of it. And because Jim senses this reservation on Marlow's part, he is not totally satisfied. He would like someone to share his triumph. Apparently Jim, although he has repudiated the code, would appreciate someone who hasn't acknowledging his dream as a possible way. But he, rightfully, doubts Marlow's faith in him: "'But all the same, you wouldn't like to have me aboard your own ship--hey?'" (306).

Marlow's feelings, however, are almost contradictory. Within a short space of time he moves from saying, "'Nothing on earth seemed less real now than

his plans, his energy, and his enthusiasm'" (322) to "'Ah! he was romantic, romantic. I recalled some words of Stein's . . . "In the destructive element immerse! . . . To follow the dream and again to follow the dream--and so--always--usque ad finem. . . ." He was romantic, but none the less true. Who could tell what forms, what visions, what faces, what forgiveness he could see in the glow of the west!'" (334). Marlow's ambivalence is captured in the image in which he describes his last view of Jim: "'The twilight was ebbing fast from the sky above his head, the strip of sand had sunk already under his feet, he himself appeared no bigger than a child--then only a speck, a tiny white speck, that seemed to catch all the light left in a darkened world. . . . And, suddenly, I lost him . . .'" (336).

Marlow's continuing interest in Jim is indicated by the fact that he repeatedly relates the story of their relationship to friends. As we have seen, Marlow's narration reveals the difference between Jim's and Marlow's values as well as Marlow's attempt to bridge the distance between them. Marlow's repetition of his narrative over the years is a sign of its importance to him; so too is his manner of telling: Marlow is "willing to remember Jim, to remember him at length, in detail and audibly" (33). Even Marlow's characteristic position reveals the intensity of his involvement: ". . . and with the very

first word uttered Marlow's body, extended at rest in the seat, would become very still, as though his spirit had winged its way back into the lapse of time and were speaking through his lips from the past" (33). Marlow's articulation of Jim's experience reveals one of the most important distinctions between them. Marlow approaches the case with contemplation; Jim deals with life through action. Throughout the novel Marlow is talking or writing; Jim is constantly moving.

The need that Marlow has to go over and over Jim's story seems to indicate either that he is as yet unsatisfied with the outcome of Jim's story or that he does not feel that the issue is really settled. His opening words indicate that his involvement with Jim, from the time of the inquiry, has been a source of difficulty for him: "'Oh yes I attended the inquiry,' he would say, 'and to this day I haven't left off wondering why I went'" (34). He can no longer accept his own beliefs without question; yet he continues to doubt the validity of Jim's values, and he is not sure that Jim's story is complete. Nor is he certain that his audience will respond to the problem he is trying to convey: "'Of course there are men here and there to whom the whole of life is like an after-dinner hour with a cigar; easy, pleasant, empty, perhaps enlivened by a fable of strife to be forgotten before the end is told--before the end is told--even if

there happens to be any end to it'" (35). His contact with Jim has made Marlow sufficiently aware to contrast the placid acceptance of life characteristic of his audience with Jim's active striving. As Marlow recalls his relationship with Jim, he labors to offer his audience every shred of evidence he can bring to bear on the case. He wanders occasionally back or forth in time to enable his audience to see new meaning in events juxtaposed to one another.³⁶ He fills in background about minor characters, like Chester, in his narrative and provides anecdotes of some that offer analogies to Jim's story (Brierly and Bob Stanton, for example). And throughout his narration Marlow's comments reveal his attitudes and feelings about Jim. He tries to challenge his audience, friends who share his respectability with him, to take a look at the basis of their lives, to share his doubts with him. And by repeatedly insisting that Jim is "one of us," he is asking his audience to see the implications for their own standards and values of Jim's supposed weakness:

"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 upon honest faith, and upon the instinct of courage. I don't mean military courage, or civil courage, or any special kind of courage. I mean just that inborn ability to look temptations straight in the face--a readiness un-intellectual enough, goodness knows, but without pose--a power of resistance, don't you see, ungracious if you like, but priceless--an unthinking and blessed stiffness before the outward and inward terrors, before the might of nature, the seductive corruption of men--backed by a faith invulnerable to the strength

of facts, to the contagion of example, to the solicitation of ideas. Hang 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." (43)

As we have seen before, however, Marlow is mistaken in seeing Jim this way. Jim does not share his values nor those of Marlow's audience. Jim is vulnerable to ideas, to his dream, and is thus open to possibilities that Marlow and his audience have eliminated from their lives by adhering to "belief in a few simple notions." And Marlow's exclamation "Hang ideas!" suggests his annoyance with Jim's deviation from respectability. From Marlow's point of view, Jim's idea of heroism has distracted him from the effort to cling to just enough belief to endure, to live from day to day. Jim's choice is risky, and by Marlow's standards he has failed once; those who simply endure do not take risks.

But Marlow knows he doesn't have the final word on Jim: "'I wanted to know--and to this day I don't know, I can only guess'" (79). Marlow is so committed to his code as the best way for man to live that he assumes that all good and decent men share it or grow to share it eventually. Rather than interpret Jim's illusions as another way of living, he identifies them simply as youthful illusions that Jim is giving up less easily than most. He can identify with Jim's dream, but he believes

that it is necessary to compromise, as he has done. He recalls the illusions of young men at sea:

"Surely in no other craft as in that of the sea do the hearts of those already launched to sink or swim go out so much to the youth on the brink, looking with shining eyes upon that glitter of the vast surface which is only a reflection of his own glances full of fire. There is such magnificent vagueness in the expectations that had driven each of us to the sea, such a glorious indefiniteness, such a beautiful greed of adventures that are their own and only reward. What we get--well, we won't talk of that; but can one of us restrain a smile?" (128-129)

A young man has illusions and hopes, ideals toward which he strives with assurance that he will reach them.

Certainly Jim has, and Marlow tells us clearly that he once did. Tony Tanner in Conrad: Lord Jim describes Marlow as "a Don Quixote who has lived long enough to change into a Sancho Panza, an Idealist turned empiricist, a romanticist turned ironist."³⁷ Marlow assumes that his audience has experienced the same youthful idealism and discovered that chance and inner weakness render these illusions unattainable. But Marlow still finds that fact difficult to accept, and Jim's refusal to accept it raises the question whether one must really give up his dreams.

Because Marlow does not really recognize why Jim is so important to him, he often simply projects his frustration at the difficulty of conveying his meaning: "'I can't explain to you who haven't seen him and who hear his words only at second hand the mixed nature of my feelings'" (93). His relationship with Jim painfully

forces Marlow out of the ordinary way of looking at things to examine his values: "'I was made to look at the convention that lurks in all truth and on the essential sincerity of falsehood'" (93). He feels compelled to face the darkness because of Jim: "'He appealed to all sides at once--to the side turned perpetually to the light of day, and to that side of us which, like the other hemisphere of the moon, exists stealthily in perpetual darkness, with only a fearful ashy light falling at times on the edge'" (93). Convention ordinarily causes men to ignore the darkness in others and to cover it up in themselves. Jim no longer follows such convention, but Marlow assumes he does: "' . . . but then he was one of us; an incident as completely devoid of importance as the flooding of an ant-heap, and yet the mystery of his attitude got hold of me as though he had been an individual in the forefront of his kind, as if the obscure truth involved were momentous enough to affect mankind's conception of itself. . . .'" (93). Jim's case is just that momentous, but Marlow cannot break out of his code enough to acknowledge that fact.

Marlow occasionally seeks a response from his audience, not only because it is difficult to deal with his relationship to Jim, but because it is also difficult to convey his experience. His hearers do not seem to see the implications in Jim's action that Marlow does. Their

response is not encouraging: "He paused again to wait for an encouraging remark perhaps, but nobody spoke; only the host, as if reluctantly performing a duty, murmured-- 'You are so subtle, Marlow'" (94). Marlow is not receiving the response he seeks: "'Who? I?' said Marlow in a low voice. "Oh no! But he was; and try as I may for the success of this yarn I am missing innumerable shades-- they were so fine, so difficult to render in colourless words'" (94). The consistent lack of response emphasizes to Marlow man's aloneness, an awareness which compares with Jim's feeling of isolation on the small boat with the other officers of the Patna:

"There is something peculiar in a small boat upon the wide sea. Over the lives borne from under the shadow of death there seems to fall the shadow of madness. When your ship fails you, your whole world seems to fail you; the world that made you, restrained you, taken [sic] care of you. It is as if the souls of men floating on an abyss and in touch with immensity had been set free for any excess of heroism, absurdity, or abomination. Of course, as with belief, thought, love, hate, conviction, or even the visual aspect of material things, there are as many shipwrecks as there are men, and in this one there was something abject which made the isolation more complete--there was a villainy of circumstances that cut these men off completely from the rest of mankind, whose ideal of conduct had never undergone the trial of a fiendish and appalling joke." (120-121)

His confrontation with Jim is in a sense a shipwreck for Marlow, for it raises serious questions about his way of life. Marlow is no longer certain that the code that holds his world together is valid. He fears that when the rules fail or are violated, the darkness has free

rein. Without the human constructs, the restraints of civilization that provide the bond among men, man is totally alone and on his own. What Marlow doesn't see is that Jim has had the self-reliance in this situation to value his own code, outside the constructs of civilization. Marlow is not that sure of himself. What Jim knows and Marlow is afraid to face is that each man is really alone anyway, for civilization and its values are an illusion, though a necessary one, enabling men to live together. Marlow cannot step outside of this code and view Jim's action from another point of view as Jim has done. Marlow wants to believe that "'it is the guilt alone that matters'" (177), but he cannot so easily dismiss Jim.

Marlow employs various strategies to avoid facing the challenge that Jim's success in Patusan holds for him. He constantly emphasizes, for example, that Patusan is "another world": "' . . . there's many a heavenly body in the lot crowding upon us of a night that mankind had never heard of, it being outside the sphere of its activities and of no earthly importance to anybody but to the astronomers who are paid to talk learnedly about its composition, weight, path--the irregularities of its conduct, the aberrations of its light--a sort of scientific scandal-mongering. Thus with Patusan'" (218).

Of course, the human condition is the same in Patusan, but Jim is able to deal with it differently

there: "'He left his earthly failings behind him and what sort of reputation he had, and there was a totally new set of conditions for his imaginative faculty to work upon'" (219). Marlow is not sure that success in Patusan can expiate Jim's failure to follow the code on the Patna. Although he speaks of the immensity of his success, he emphasizes "'the solitude of his achievement'" (272).

Ironically, in spite of his doubts about the reality of Jim's triumph, Marlow perpetuates his success and in so doing enables others, if they wish, to contrast Jim's approach to life with his own. In repeating his story, Marlow is acknowledging Jim's reality: "'He existed for me, and after all it is only through me that he exists for you'" (224). Marlow is appealing to his listeners for some help in answering his questions and alleviating his doubts: "'You may be able to tell better, since the proverb has it that the on-lookers see most of the game'" (224). What puzzles Marlow now is that although "'[Jim] did not go out, not at all; on the contrary, he came on wonderfully'" (224), he is "'not so pleased as I would have expected to be'" (224). Jim may have satisfied himself, but he has not satisfied Marlow's code and thus his position is questionable to Marlow. But its reality is assured by the very fact that it disturbs him so much that he

wants to communicate his feelings.

Marlow's experience with Jim certainly enables him to assess civilization for what it is, though he cannot acknowledge all the implications of his assessment. He consistently sees Jim's alternative as remote and unreal, but as he talks about Jim's life in Patusan, there can be no doubt that he sees a unique beauty in it by comparison with his own society: "'But do you notice how, three hundred miles beyond the end of telegraph cables and mail-boat lines, the haggard utilitarian lies of our civilization wither and die, to be replaced by pure exercises of the imagination, that have the futility, often the charm, and sometimes the deep hidden truthfulness, of works of art? Romance had singled Jim out for its own--and that was the true part of the story'" (282). Such a judgment is unsatisfactory to Marlow, however. Jim's success does not reassure Marlow; rather he sees the fragility of all attempts to deal with the darkness. When, in his conversation with Jewel, he has "a view of a world that seemed to wear a vast and dismal aspect of disorder," it is not only Jim's values he doubts but his own "sunny . . . arrangement of small conveniences" (313). Marlow sees the constructs of man, the light of civilization, even the words man has invented to order his existence as temporary and illusory. They are necessary and we must cling to them, but they are not reality. The

darkness outside our "tortoise-shell" of civilization is real. Marlow's perception and its effect on him point up a major difference between him and Jim. Jim is willing to face the darkness alone; Marlow needs the company of other men. But his relationship with Jim and his experiencing of utter solitude in Jim's setting have revealed something to Marlow about his illusions: "'This was, indeed, one of the lost, forgotten, unknown places of the earth; I had looked under its obscure surface; and I felt that when to-morrow I had left it forever, it would slip out of existence, to live only in my memory till I myself passed into oblivion. I have that feeling about me now; perhaps it is that feeling which has incited me to tell you the story, to try to hand over to you, as it were, its very existence, its reality--the truth disclosed in a moment of illusion'" (323). His experience with Jim has offered Marlow an insight into the inseparability of truth and illusion, a concept very difficult for Marlow to accept, for it acknowledges nothingness, the darkness, as the basis for reality.

Marlow's last memory of Jim revolves around their parting as Marlow leaves Patusan. He recalls Patusan as "'a picture created by fancy on a canvas'" and as "'motionless, unfaded, with its life arrested, in an unchanging light'" (330). Everything is suspended in his memory; he cannot imagine any change there. Recalling

the people he met in Patusan, he says: "' . . . I am certain of them. They exist as if under an enchanter's wand. But the figure round which all these are grouped-- that one lives, and I am not certain of him. No magician's wand can immobilise him under my eyes. He is one of us'" (330-331). But that is precisely where Marlow is wrong. Marlow's values are fixed, static, rigid, and Jim's are dynamic. Marlow's code produces men who don't grow; Jim, like Faust, is constantly striving. Total satisfaction for Jim would be contrary to his values, but, Marlow says, "' . . . he could say he was satisfied . . . nearly'" (325). Even though Marlow can acknowledge Jim's success and achievements in the fairy-tale world of Patusan, he cannot transfer his last impression of Jim back to the world of "us." His mistake is that he continues to try. Although Marlow recognizes that "'[Jim] was romantic, but none the less true'" (334), he cannot quite accept that truth, because he is too bound within his code. Jim has confronted the darkness and accepted it in a way that Marlow's code does not permit. In a sense, Jim's confrontation makes his "dream" more real because he is aware of and acknowledges the underlying reality. The code of civilization brings man in closer contact with the darkness because it covers up reality. Because it does not acknowledge the darkness, the code leaves man vulnerable.

Jim is symbolic for Marlow. He has continually tried, and is trying during the actual process of narration, to find the meaning of that symbol. In truth, Marlow has not told Jim's story at all; he has told the story of his relationship with Jim, the story of his relationship with the light of illusion and the dark truth, both of which Jim represents. Marlow is concerned with Jim as a human being, yes, but he is also concerned with the effect of Jim on his conception of himself.

Although, for the most part, Marlow's audience does not respond to his narrative, we learn in Marlow's letter that one man among them does discuss Jim's story with Marlow some time after the narration. He not only shows interest in what Marlow has said, but he offers his own comments on the story. Much of his audience, then, remains unquestioning, but the one man who pursues the tale displays similarities to Marlow, for he too cannot ignore the questions that the story raises. Thus the remainder of Marlow's story is related in writing to this "privileged man." Marlow sends him a packet containing an introductory letter, Jim's last attempt at writing a message, the last letter of Jim's father to him, and Marlow's written narrative of the final events in Jim's life. This material presents the facts of Jim's last days, but more importantly it allows us, along with the privileged man, to trace with

Marlow the process of his learning those facts and his reactions to them. Marlow learns the story from a variety of people. Jewel, bitter and unhappy, tells him much of it. Another source is Jim's servant, Tamb' Itam, who is awed by the mystery of Jim. And finally Marlow learns part of the story from Brown, the instrument of disruption in Jim's world, who calls Jim "'a hollow sham'" (344).

Garnering this story from so many diverse sources as he does, Marlow gathers, along with the details of the story, the effect of Jim on the other people involved and their opinion of him. Marlow is and always has been more interested in Jim's nature than in the facts of his life, and these additional opinions provide him with other lenses through which to view Jim. We can turn now to Marlow's letter that accompanies his telling of the story of Jim's death and to the commentary within the story itself, written, of course, with an awareness of the outcome--Jim's death. The question to be answered in relation to Marlow is whether his knowledge of Jim's end affects his understanding of Jim, makes Jim clearer to him, or allays his doubts.

Of course, the very fact that Marlow writes to his friend about Jim's story is indicative of its continuing importance to him and reveals his need for exploring the story with others. Marlow opens his letter

by recalling the interest the recipient took in Jim's story. He recalls in detail the privileged man's reaction to Jim but adds, "'The point, however, is that of all mankind Jim had no dealings but with himself, and the question is whether at the last he had not confessed to a faith mightier than the laws of order and progress'" (339). The ultimate question Marlow has, then, is of the values and standards that civilization imposes on man. Must Jim be judged by these? Or can he be judged by the values he set up for himself? We know that he can, but Marlow is hesitant to admit it.

We soon learn that Marlow has no answer even now. Early in his letter to the privileged man he says, "'I affirm nothing'" (339). And after completing his narration of Jim's final days, he adds:

"And that's the end. He passes away under a cloud, inscrutable at heart, forgotten, unforgiven, and excessively romantic . . . Is he satisfied--quite, now, I wonder? We ought to know. He is one of us--and have I not stood up once, like an evoked ghost, to answer for his eternal constancy? Was I so very wrong after all? Now he is no more, there are days when the reality of his existence comes to me with an immense, with an overwhelming force; and yet upon my honour there are moments, too, when he passes from my eyes like a disembodied spirit astray amongst the passions of this earth, ready to surrender himself faithfully to the claim of his own world of shades. Who knows? He is gone, inscrutable at heart . . ." (416)

An aura of mystery pervades the ending. Marlow twice uses the word "inscrutable" of Jim as well as the expression "under a cloud." And he employs the question

four times in his summing up. Marlow implies that perhaps because Jim is "one of us," "we ought to know," but he certainly does not conclude that we actually do--or can. Thus no matter how much he tries, Marlow never really understands Jim because he always makes the assumption that Jim is "one of us." Marlow has the key but does not use it: "'One wonders whether this was perhaps that supreme opportunity, that last and satisfying test for which I had always suspected him to be waiting, before he could frame a message to the impeccable world'" (339). If one understands Jim's values and his dynamic pursuit of his dream, one does not wonder--he knows--that this was Jim's supreme test. By keeping his word and giving his life for the lost life of Dain Waris, Jim has fulfilled his dream. Judged strictly by Marlow's code, Jim's death is meaningless, especially because it is not a public act. But Jim is separate from the world of his origins, "'a quiet corner of the world as free of danger or strife as a tomb, and breathing equably the air of undisturbed rectitude'" (342). Jim has created a life outside that realm and cannot be judged by its standards; he is larger than it.

Marlow can see that Jim's end "'is romantic beyond the wildest dreams of his boyhood, and yet there is . . . a terrifying logic in it, as if it were our

imagination alone that could set loose upon us the might of an overwhelming destiny'" (342). He is correct in seeing the logic of Jim's end, but he cannot quite accept the possibility that such a risk was worth taking; such an acceptance would undermine his code. When he comments, "' . . . who toys with the sword shall perish by the sword'" (342), he might have said, "who toys with the dream shall perish by the dream," but he sees that outcome as defeat; Jim sees it as fulfillment. Having toyed with his romantic dreams of heroism, Jim has perished by them. His death is absolutely in keeping with his dreams and with his character; he has striven, in Stein's words, "usque ad finem." His life has integrity; he has died as he has lived--romantic, striving, reaching. Marlow can see the unity of Jim's life, but he cannot judge its value; it seems irrelevant to his world: "'This astounding adventure, of which the most astounding part is that it is true, comes on as an unavoidable consequence. Something of the sort had to happen. You repeat this to yourself while you marvel that such a thing could happen in the year of grace before last. But it has happened--and there is no disputing its logic'" (342-343). Marlow perceives the internal logic of Jim's story, but does not face the challenge that story holds for his own system.

We have seen that there is greater risk in

following Jim's way than in following Marlow's. The risk, as Marlow sees it, is not only the individual's. Society can be endangered by the individual's self-reliance and creating of his own value system. This danger is personified in Brown, of whom Marlow says, "' . . . certain forms of evil are akin to madness, derived from intense egoism, inflamed by resistance, tearing the soul to pieces, and giving factitious vigor to the body'" (344). Marlow thus sees Brown as a foil to Jim, whose egoism, committed to positive heroism, is complementary to Brown's commitment to evil; both are outside of and in opposition to the ordinary "rules of the game." Brown's confrontation with the darkness has led him to commit himself to it; Marlow sees him as "'a blind accomplice of the Dark Powers'" (354). Civilization appears as absurd to Brown as to Jim, but Brown's response is different: "'There was in the violent, broken speech of that man unveiling before me his thoughts with the very hand of Death upon his throat, an undisguised ruthlessness of purpose, a strange vengeful attitude toward his own part, and a blind belief in the righteousness of his will against all mankind, something of that feeling which could induce the leader of a horde of wandering cut-throats to call himself proudly the Scourge of God'" (370). Marlow sees Brown and Jim as "'standing on the opposite poles of

that conception of life which includes all mankind'" (381), that is, the view of life that acknowledges both the dark and the light in man. Brown embodies the uncontrolled darkness and repudiates the light, while Jim embodies the light and repudiates the darkness. Allowing Jim to be judged by standards other than those of civilization, then, weakens the foundation of that safe, respectable society. Thus Marlow is unwilling to accept any standards other than the safe ideals of civilization.

But, after all, Marlow realizes, all mankind is ultimately like Jim--"'driven by a dream'" (349). The values of civilization are as much a dream, an illusion, as Jim's value system: "'And yet is not mankind itself, pushing on its blind way, driven by a dream of its greatness and its power upon the dark paths of excessive cruelty and of excessive devotion? And what is the pursuit of truth after all?'" (349-350). Again Marlow sees Jim as symbolic of all men as they strive blindly to attain something, as they pursue their dreams. Mankind is essentially egoistic; in this too Jim is symbolic. All men, whether as individuals or as members of society, dream of the greatness and power that may be theirs and search for it, and some do so to excess--for evil like Brown--"upon the dark paths of excessive cruelty"--or for good like Jim--"upon the dark paths . . .

of excessive devotion." But, in keeping with Marlow's reluctance to state anything categorically he offers this comment in the form of a question. And both paths that Marlow mentions are "dark," a suggestion of the innate darkness of all men. Thus, after the conversation between Brown and Jim, Marlow describes the movement of events: "'Henceforth events move fast without a check, flowing from the very hearts of men like a stream from a dark source . . .'" (389). Darkness is the reality underlying the actions of all men.

Whether or not he can accept Jim's standards, Marlow recognizes that Jim has remained true to himself, and he understands Jim's reaction to Brown and his decision to let him go: "'In this simple form of assent to his will lies the whole gist of the situation; their creed, his truth; and the testimony to that faithfulness which made him in his own eyes the equal of the impeccable men who never fall out of the ranks'" (393). But Marlow sees that Jim's self-satisfaction has a high price--isolation:

"Stein's words, 'Romantic!--Romantic!' seem to ring over those distances that will never give him up now to a world indifferent to his failings and his virtues, and to that ardent and clinging affection that refuses him the dole of tears in the bewilderment of a great grief and of eternal separation. From the moment the sheer truthfulness of his last three years of life carries the day against the ignorance, the fear, and the anger of men, he appears no longer to me as I saw him last--a white speck catching all the dim light left upon a sombre coast

and the darkened sea--but greater and more pitiful in the loneliness of his soul, that remains even for her who loved him best a cruel and unsolvable mystery." (393)

Marlow's assessment, though it recognizes Jim's greatness within his own world, has two weaknesses. Marlow is imposing his own judgment, that Jim is lonely and pitiful, on the situation, and he is not taking into account that the fact that he is relating the story breaks through Jim's isolation. The facts of Jim's death live on, then, in the memory of Marlow's friend.

That death, as we have seen, is in keeping with his life. Because he has remained true to himself, Jim can say to Jewel, ""Nothing can touch me"" (413). But the cost of untouchability is death. An image that Marlow uses to express Jim's achievement suggests this interpretation. Jim is true to himself, but his truth is not of this world. He may die with a "proud and unflinching glance," (416) but, like the form of Stein's butterflies, his ideal is permanent only in death. Jim's truth leaves Marlow puzzled, and he adds no comment to Jim's story. He can see no meaning for his own world in it, but it has touched him. Marlow comes away from his relationship with Jim doubtful, yes, but more aware. If he continues to accept and adhere to his code, he cannot do so unthinkingly. He must be aware of the compromise it involves and of the possibility

that another approach to the darkness might be more fulfilling for the individual.

But there is more to Lord Jim than Marlow's reaction to Jim. Someone has made a coherent whole out of Marlow's oral and written narratives, recording each as exactly as possible and adding only a brief introduction and a transitional chapter. There is someone who sees "more of the game" than does Marlow.

Although, as has been pointed out earlier, most critics refer to the first four chapters of Lord Jim as being told by an "omniscient narrator" who is often identified with Conrad, and although at first glance the information contained in these chapters would seem obtainable only by such a narrator, the end of Chapter Four provides a clue to another interpretation of the point of view of the novel. The last item of information we are given about Jim in these so-called omniscient chapters is his contact with Marlow during the inquiry into the Patna affair. We are told of Jim's feelings as he met the eyes of Marlow during the questioning. The focus then shifts from Jim to Marlow: "And later on, many times, in distant parts of the world, Marlow showed himself willing to remember Jim, to remember him at length, in detail and audibly" (33). This statement describes a typical action of Marlow, not necessarily a specific telling at a specific time. But again

the focus shifts, this time from the general to the specific. Both during the narration itself and in Chapter Thirty-Six it is clear that the novel records a specific instance of Marlow's narration. It seems plausible that the record is being set down by someone who was a member of Marlow's audience at this telling, someone who knows Marlow and knows that he needs to narrate the story repeatedly.

From the general setting of "distant parts of the world," the narrator moves to describe a particular setting that could conceivably be that in which he participated:

Perhaps it would be after dinner, on a verandah draped in motionless foliage and crowned with flowers, in the deep dusk speckled by fiery cigar-ends. The elongated bulk of each cane-chair harboured a silent listener. Now and then a small red glow would move abruptly, and expanding light up the fingers of a languid hand, part of a face in profound repose, or flash a crimson gleam into a pair of pensive eyes overshadowed by a fragment of an unruffled forehead; and with the very first word uttered Marlow's body, extended at rest in the seat would become very still, as though his spirit had winged its way back into the lapse of time and were speaking through his lips from the past. (33)

This scene certainly seems to be described by someone who was there. And that this man is recalling a specific evening, one that he knows, however, is typical in Marlow's life, becomes clear at the end of Marlow's long narrative: "With these words Marlow had ended his narrative, and his audience had broken up forthwith,

under his abstract, pensive gaze. Men drifted off the verandah in pairs or alone without loss of time, without offering a remark, as if the image of that incomplete story, its incompleteness itself, and the very tone of the speaker, had made discussion vain and comment impossible" (337). Conrad's use of verbs--"would be" (33) as opposed to "has ended" (337)--reinforces the impression that the narrator moves from a general statement about Marlow to a recollection of a specific evening. Again the opening statements of Chapter Thirty-Six can be made only by someone who was present. And it seems that the only person in a position to relate all the information contained in the novel is "the privileged man" (337), the ". . . one man of all these listeners who was ever to hear the last word of the story" which "came to him at home, more than two years later, . . . came contained in a thick packet addressed in Marlow's upright and angular handwriting" (337).

This "privileged man," then, is the overall third-person narrator of the novel, not specifically identified with Conrad but rather a persona created by him. This man knows Marlow well. He has pieced together the first four chapters from conversations with Marlow about Jim, and through them he presents Jim's life in miniature. The tense of these chapters foreshadows Jim's death and suggests that they are narrated by one

who knows the final outcome. The opening chapters are a prelude to the recording of the two parts of the novel narrated by Marlow, the oral and written narratives. The narrator records in detail the conversation in which he learned the bulk of Jim's story and follows this with a description, in the third person, of himself receiving Marlow's packet. Finally he carefully records the contents of the packet. There is simply no need to postulate an omniscient narrator. There is nothing in the first four chapters that the privileged man could not have learned from Marlow and nothing that Marlow could not have learned from Jim. We know from the text that Jim told Marlow more than Marlow actually repeats, and we know that Marlow and the privileged man had a conversation not recorded in the novel, for Marlow says in his letter: "' . . . I don't suppose you've forgotten . . . You alone have showed an interest in him that survived the telling of his story, though I remember well you would not admit he had mastered his fate'" (338). Obviously the privileged man is the only one who can tell us of the scene in which he received the packet from Marlow. The fact that he refers to himself in the third person and calls himself "privileged" is revealing. The use of person universalizes him. He is not "I" but is depicted in more general terms. That he uses third person may indicate an ability--or maybe a

need--to see himself objectively, to objectify his relationship to Jim's story (a need parallel to Marlow's, as evidenced in Marlow's habitual retelling of Jim's story and of his connections to it). He may also be distancing himself from the meaning of the story, as does Marlow. At any rate the objectification enables the reader to identify more readily with this man, for an integral part of Conrad's theme is the reverberations of Jim's leap from the Patna, which reach in ever-widening circles each time the story is told--or read.

Why is this man "privileged?" The word usually applies to someone who has received a benefit to which he is not entitled, something he could not expect. If he is referring to himself in this way, he is obviously expressing his attitude toward being allowed to share in the knowledge of Jim's story and that of Marlow's relationship with Jim. Perhaps he has benefited in some way from knowing them. And, of course, the reader's identification with him should enable the reader to recognize the privilege of sharing Jim's life and death and Marlow's response to it.

The novel ends, of course, with Marlow's last statement about Jim's story. The privileged man does not reenter to comment. But his bringing together all the materials of the story into a coherent written form is his comment. He is offering the story in this form

as his way of seeing it. If indeed the privileged man is the narrator of the entire novel, then we must scrutinize the scenes in which we learn anything about him and must explore the implications of his narrating. We must determine why he is characterized as having put the story together in the form he did.

We first hear directly of the privileged man when he receives Marlow's packet. He recognizes Marlow's handwriting, a fact that indicates his friendship with Marlow and makes plausible his having heard more details about Jim than are included in Marlow's oral narrative. His first actions with the packet are significant: "The privileged man opened the packet, looked in, then laying it down, went to the window" (337). He seems to be reflective; apparently the reminder of Jim and Marlow brings back memories. Their story has remained with him. And a few lines later, we read, ". . . but the opened packet under the lamp brought back the sounds, the visions, the very savour of the past--a multitude of fading faces, a tumult of low voices, dying away upon the shores of distant seas under a passionate and unconsoling sunshine" (338). He is apparently in no hurry to read Marlow's packet, though clearly not because of lack of interest. He appears to wish to hang on to Jim's story as it was successfully concluded by Marlow's oral narrative. Finally, however, with a sigh,

he sits down to read.

We can infer much of the state of mind of the privileged man as he looks out the window by tracing the details that he focuses on and the hints of his thoughts:

His rooms were in the highest flat of a lofty building, and his glance could travel afar beyond the clear panes of glass, as though he were looking out of the lantern of a lighthouse. The slopes of the roofs glistened, the dark, broken ridges succeeded each other without end like sombre, uncrested waves, and from the depths of the town under his feet ascended a confused and unceasing mutter. The spires of churches, numerous, scattered haphazard, uprose like beacons on a maze of shoals without a channel; the driving rain mingled with the falling dusk of a winter's evening; and the booming of a big clock on a tower, striking the hour, rolled past in voluminous, austere bursts of sound, with a shrill, vibrating cry at the core. He drew the heavy curtains. (337-338)

The privileged man seems to be looking down from a position associated with light at the life around him, which looks like dark, broken, sombre, waves without crests and sounds like constant confused mutter. Something we would ordinarily associate with hope--"the spires of churches"--is briefly linked with another symbol of hope--"beacons"--but these signs of hope are contradicted by means of typical Conradian irony, for these beacons rise from "a maze of shoals without a channel"; these represent false hope. In all, the picture is a gloomy one. The privileged man closes it out of his "lighthouse." The sense of his isolation

from what he has seen below is increased by the opening lines of the next paragraph: "The light of his shaded reading-lamp slept like a sheltered pool, his footfalls made no sound on the carpet, his wandering days were over" (338). He appears to have withdrawn from active participation in life; the description of him in his surroundings is reminiscent of that of Stein. There is a hint that he has withdrawn because of disillusionment, for the passage continues: "No more horizons as boundless as hope, no more twilights within the forests as solemn as temples, in the hot quest of the Ever-undiscovered Country over the hill, across the stream, beyond the wave. The hour was striking! No more! No more!" (338). As Malbone suggests, his memories tell us several things about the privileged man.³⁸ He has apparently been a sailor (a fact that, of course, helps to foster his bond with Marlow and Jim). He too was once in quest of an ideal--"the Ever-undiscovered Country"; again he is parallel to Marlow and Jim. And the imagery in which he recalls his past--"twilights in forests as solemn as temples," "shores of distant seas," and "passionate and unconsoling sunshine" suggests certain parallels in his, Jim's, and Marlow's itineraries. Marlow later confirms this impression when he says in his letter, "'You who have knocked about the Western Pacific must have heard of [Brown]'" (352). But he has

retreated and withdrawn from this quest. However, he now continues to experience another quest vicariously, a quest that began with Marlow's oral narrative. His journey now takes him through Marlow's packet. How he explores it is noteworthy: "He . . . turned to Marlow's message, ran swiftly over the opening lines, and, checking himself, thereafter read on deliberately, like one approaching with slow feet and alert eyes the glimpse of an undiscovered country" (338). He is at first eager to learn the outcome, but, out of fear of what he may learn, he is cautious in approaching "the undiscovered country." And does perhaps the repetition of this phrase suggest that he still believes, though less firmly, in an ideal? The parallel with Hamlet's soliloquy suggests, too, an association of that ideal with death.

We now learn more about the privileged man from Marlow's letter to him:

"I don't suppose you've forgotten . . . You alone have shown an interest in him that survived the telling of his story, though I remember well you would not admit he had mastered his fate. You prophesied for him the disaster of weariness and of disgust with acquired honour, with the self-appointed task, with the love sprung from pity and youth. You had said you knew so well 'that kind of thing,' its illusory satisfaction, its unavoidable deception. You said also--I call to mind--that 'giving your life up to them' (them meaning all of mankind with skins brown, yellow, or black in colour) 'was like selling your soul to a brute.' You contended that 'that kind of thing' was only endurable and enduring when based on a firm conviction in the truth of ideas racially our own, in whose name are established the order, the morality of an ethical progress.

'We want its strength at our backs,' you had said. 'We want a belief in its necessity and its justice, to make a worthy and conscious sacrifice of our lives. Without it the sacrifice is only a forgetfulness, the way of suffering is no better than the way to perdition.' In other words, you maintained that we must fight in the ranks or our lives can't count. Possibly! You ought to know--be it said without malice--you who have rushed into one or two places single-handed and come out cleverly, without singeing your wings. The point, however, is that of all mankind Jim had no dealings but with himself, and the question is whether at the last he had not confessed to a faith mightier than the laws of order and progress." (338-339)

Marlow's comment contains, then, the convictions that the privileged man held after the close of Marlow's oral narrative. Again the privileged man's disillusionment is apparent, but now we can more clearly see that it springs from a disappointment in his past that has many parallels with Jim's life. Marlow has at times expressed some reservations about the meaning of Jim's success in relation to the civilized world, and the privileged man apparently held this view even more strongly. But Marlow challenges the privileged man to answer a question that he himself cannot--whether Jim achieved a glory that cannot be judged by the values of civilization. From his eagerness to learn more of Jim's story, it would seem that despite the privileged man's cynicism, he would like to be able to rediscover his dream and to retain the illusion until the end, as Jim did.

The seemingly firm convictions that the privileged

man expressed to Marlow are brought into question for him by reading the rest of Jim's story. As Marlow quotes him, he sounds very sure of himself, sure that he can diagnose Jim's situation. But Marlow also writes to him: "'I affirm nothing. Perhaps you may pronounce--after you've read'" (339). After hearing Jim's story through the time of Marlow's visit to Patusan, the privileged man had "pronounced." But we have noted that he ends his assembling of Jim's story with Marlow's words, which emphasize the ambiguity of the story; he does not reenter, he does not pronounce. But he implies that it is important--important enough to be shared. He implies, perhaps, that he cannot make a pronouncement--now that he has the whole story. This fact may mean that he has moved, because of Jim's story, from an attitude of total disillusionment about life which caused him to withdraw from it, to uncertainty, a doubt, a recognition of the enigma of life for which Jim is an objective correlative. Through his lack of comment, he is saying, as Marlow did: "' . . . there shall be no message, unless such as each of us can interpret for himself from the language of facts, that are so often more enigmatic than the craftiest arrangement of words'" (340).

But the privileged man's act of constructing the entire story gives permanence, the permanence of a

work of art, to Jim's story. In spite of all Marlow's references to the isolation of Jim's success in Patusan and its irrelevance to the world outside, Marlow has enabled the story to reach another man, and that man has created a whole out of Jim's story that captures that story itself, the narrative of the relationship of Marlow and Jim, and the story of his own relationship to Marlow's narrative. Jim may have been physically isolated, but his actions reverberate to challenge the ideas and the self-conception of every person who hears his story and is willing to see the challenge he offers. Thus Jim does live--in art. Jim's attainment is captured for all who read what the privileged man has recorded, and anyone may emulate him. The beauty and completeness of Jim's dream are rendered the permanence of art like the figures on Keats' Grecian urn.

The privileged man is thus seen as the composer of the first four chapters of the novel, chapters that provide us with a strong first impression of Jim. McCullough outlines briefly the function of these opening chapters: "The first four chapters of the novel perform the double function of providing an outline of Jim's career and of leading quickly to the crucial scene on board the Patna. They also introduce Marlow, a spectator at the trial, who becomes the narrator at the beginning of the fifth chapter."³⁹ By studying the tone

and commentary of these chapters, we can make some inference about this narrator and his attitude toward life. We should be able to determine his position after he has heard the whole of Jim's story.

The third-person narrator can be characterized primarily by how he expresses himself. In the first few paragraphs of the novel he brings together several different ways of viewing Jim. Marlow reminds him in Chapter Thirty-Six that he once made a definite pronouncement on Jim; now the privileged man tries to see all viewpoints simultaneously. Neither the opening chapters nor his presentation of the novel in its entirety constitutes a final pronouncement. The very fact that he has composed the novel indicates that the privileged man is rethinking his pronouncement.

In the course of presenting Jim and his background, the narrator reveals certain facts about himself and his attitudes. It is clear that he is acquainted with the sea and with that part of the world in which most of Lord Jim takes place. He can tell us with the insight of an insider the nature of the occupation of water-clerk. He speaks familiarly of the "'training ship for officers of the mercantile marine'" (5). He has clearly shared Jim's early experiences at sea, for he writes with understanding of both the monotony and the special terror of the sea.

The narrator can share Jim's feelings during the terrible gale in which Jim was bedridden, and his comments on it reveal the nature of his philosophy:

Only once in all that time he had again the glimpse of the earnestness in the anger of the sea. That truth is not so often made apparent as people might think. There are many shades in the danger of adventures and gales, and it is only now and then that there appears on the face of facts a sinister violence of intention--that indefinable something which forces it upon the mind and the heart of a man, that this complication of accidents or these elemental furies are coming at him with a purpose of malice, with a strength beyond control, with an unbridled cruelty that means to tear out of him his hope and his fear, the pain of his fatigue and his longing for rest: which means to smash, to destroy, to annihilate all he has seen, known, loved, enjoyed, or hated; all that is priceless and necessary--the sunshine, the memories, the future,--which means to sweep the whole precious world utterly away from his sight by the simple and appalling act of taking his life. (10-11)

Like Marlow, the narrator sees the ultimate truth as darkness, nothingness. And like Marlow, too, he senses this truth most vividly when under severe strain. He is aware of the fragility of what man constructs to oppose the darkness, whether that be a ship or the illusions according to which men live. Another parallel to Marlow's thinking is the narrator's realization that the majority of men are not tested to this extent, that sometimes the illusions prevent men from ever facing this truth. Such an attitude is clear when he speaks of Jim's father: "Jim's father possessed such certain knowledge of the Unknowable as made for the righteousness

of people in cottages without disturbing the ease of mind of those whom an unerring Providence enables to live in mansions" (5).

The narrator also reveals something of his beliefs when he describes the cargo of eight hundred pilgrims on the Patna:

Eight hundred men and women with faith and hopes, with affections and memories, they had collected there, coming from north and south and from the outskirts of the East, after treading the jungle paths, descending the rivers, coasting in praus along the shallows, crossing in small canoes from island to island, passing through suffering, meeting strange sights, beset by strange fears, upheld by one desire. They came from solitary huts in the wilderness, from populous campongs, from villages by the sea. At the call of an idea they had left their forests, their clearings, the protection of their rulers, their prosperity, their poverty, the surroundings of their youth and the graves of their fathers. They came covered with dust, with sweat, with grime, with rags--the strong men at the head of family parties, the lean old men pressing forward without hope of return; young boys with fearless eyes glancing curiously, shy little girls with tumbled long hair; the timid women muffled up and clasping to their breasts, wrapped in loose ends of soiled head-cloths, their sleeping babies, the unconscious pilgrims of an exacting belief. (14-15)

It would seem from this comment that the narrator recognizes more fully the humanity of these people than he did when he referred to them as "them" in his conversation with Marlow. He sees the pilgrims in much the same terms in which he sees Jim and all men, called by an idea that is unattainable. Several times the narrator juxtaposes a scene evoking the immensity of nature with a comment about these pilgrims, a technique that

emphasizes once more the fragility of human constructs. He writes, for example: "Every morning the sun, as if keeping pace in his revolutions with the progress of the pilgrimage, emerged with a silent burst of light exactly at the same distance astern of the ship, caught up with her at noon, pouring the concentrated fire of his rays on the pious purposes of the men, glided past on his descent, and sank mysteriously into the sea evening after evening, preserving the same distance ahead of her advancing bows" (16). We see here not only the pilgrims but all men toiling for whatever purpose in an alien world.

The narrator shows comprehension not only of the outward circumstances of Jim's life but of Jim's state of mind as well. He is clearly aware of the dreams and hopes for adventure a young man like Jim would have: he, like Marlow, undoubtedly had such dreams himself. He displays considerable empathy for Jim's reactions to the accident near the training ship, the gale at sea, and the languor of the East. But he looks at this stage of Jim's life with the eye of one who has matured away from these dreams, one who recognizes that they cannot be realized. And he reports the serenity Jim felt on the decks of the Patna with the knowledge of the impending disaster. He emphasizes that such serenity is illusory and temporary: "Jim paced athwart, and his

footsteps in the vast silence were loud to his own ears, as if echoed by the watchful stars: his eyes, roaming about the line of the horizon, seemed to gaze hungrily into the unattainable, and did not see the shadow of the coming event" (19). And the narrator slowly builds his narrative to the jolt of that event which is a confirmation of his belief in the unexpected that can interfere so effectively with men's dreams. As a result of his contact with Jim, the narrator, like Marlow, is less assured about his attitudes. Both he and Marlow have learned to live with disillusionment; both have accepted possible failure as a condition of existence, whereas Jim retains his dreams until the end. But the very fact that he now explores the story, recalling Marlow's narrative in minute detail, reconstructing his own relationship to the story, indicates his uncertainty as to its meaning. For the narrator, too, Jim becomes symbolic of a possibility, but he is not sure whether that possibility was fulfilled through Jim's death. Thus the narrator has been reawakened to man's potential by the story of Jim and is no longer able to provide a simple formula for living--"we must fight in the ranks or our lives don't count" (339). Perhaps Jim's dreams were fragile, but so too was his own formula. Realizing the fragility of the dreams of all men, the narrator presents to us the story of Jim as a symbol of

the eternal mystery of life. Through his art, the portrait of Jim attains the balance and the proportion of Stein's butterfly.

As a result of the complex point of view which Conrad uses in Lord Jim then, the novel is more about the process of dealing with and attempting to understand Jim than it is about Jim himself. In fact, Guerard, in Conrad the Novelist, suggests that the theme of Lord Jim can be more accurately described as a process, not a fixed idea: ". . . Lord Jim is perhaps the first major novel solidly built on a true intuitive understanding of sympathetic identification as a psychic process, and as a process which may operate both consciously and less than consciously."⁴⁰ And, of course, Conrad conveys this process dramatically through his technique. Thus when Marlow makes statements such as "' . . . what I could never make up my mind about was whether his line of conduct amounted to shirking his ghost or to facing him out'" (197) or "'Who knows? He is gone, inscrutable at heart . . .'" (416), what is important is not so much what he says but the fact that he says such things.

We have looked at Lord Jim, then, from the angle of the characters through whose eyes we see Jim and the events he is involved in. We have examined Marlow as the confidant and friend of Jim and described his character

in that role. We have seen his retelling the story of his relationship to Jim and examined his searching, questing mind as it probes the meaning of Jim's story and its implications for his own outlook on life. And we have reconstructed Marlow's learning of Jim's death and again examined his reactions. Finally we have viewed the effect of Marlow's two narratives, oral and written, on another man and have seen him as the narrator who communicates the entire novel to us. It is now necessary to examine the question of why Conrad chose this means of presenting his material. Certainly the technique transforms the story of Jim from an adventure story into something of relevance for all men.⁴¹

Given the kinds of issues Lord Jim raises, complex moral issues, Conrad needed a device for prodding the reader into thinking about them, and if, indeed, "the onlookers see more of the game," the reader should be in a better position to understand the meaning of Jim's story than any character in the novel. The recording of the objective facts of Jim's case would have risked the possibility of the reader's dismissing it too easily. A third-person-omniscient point of view would have led to our too readily identifying with Jim as the central character and again avoiding the complexity of his case. But Marlow encourages us to explore

the situation from several viewpoints. The second narrator provides still another angle, so that any serious reader is at least troubled by Jim and not satisfied with simple explanations. Because Marlow doubts, and because the second narrator apparently rethinks his position, so do we. Harvey writes that "the novel virtually manoeuvres [sic] us into the task, not merely of exploring the characters in greater depth, but also of exploring ourselves."⁴² Many of our own values, certainly our often unthinking acceptance of society's rules, are called into question.

It has been established that it is difficult--for Marlow, for the privileged man, and for us--to draw any final conclusions about Jim. Beach relates the narrative technique to this doubt, which is the center of the novel, and to Conrad's "sense of the elusiveness of human nature which leads him not merely to view his subject from so many angles and strain it through so many media, but also to keep moving his camera backward and forward in time so as constantly to get the subject into some new illuminating perspective."⁴³

Guerard deals extensively with the form of Lord Jim as it involves the reader. He calls the novel "the first novel in a new form: a form bent on involving and implicating the reader in a psycho-moral drama which has no easy solution, and bent on engaging his

sensibilities more strenuously and even more completely than ever before."⁴⁴ This novel's form is a means "to force upon the reader an active, exploratory, organizing role; compel him, almost, to collaborate in the writing of the novel."⁴⁵ He calls the effect achieved by the use of Marlow impressionistic and says, ". . . the impressionist aim is to achieve a fuller truth than realism can, if necessary by 'cheating'; and to create in the reader an intricate play of emotion and a rich conflict of sympathy and judgement, a provisional bafflement in the face of experience which turns out to be more complicated than we ever would have dreamed."⁴⁶

Conrad's technique, then, forces us to experience, does not allow us merely to read. We cannot dismiss the problems presented in the novel with simple answers. The analysis of such a technique enables us to see one of the values of art, for Conrad, by involving us in the process of understanding Jim, offers us an experience we seldom have in daily life. Guerard, too, supports this idea: "Art induces greater sympathies (but also sterner judgments) than most of us are capable of in the daily conduct of our lives; it compels us to live less indifferently, and frees us from the irrelevant."⁴⁷ Thus Guerard characterizes Lord Jim as a "novel of intellectual and moral suspense, and the mystery to be solved, or conclusion to be reached, lies not in Jim

but in ourselves. Can we, faced by the ambiguities and deceptions of life itself (and more!), apprehend the whole experience humanly? Can we come to recognize the full complexity of any simple case, and respond both sympathetically and morally to Jim and his version of 'how to be'? The reader, in a sense, . . . turns out to be the hero of the novel, either succeeding or failing in his human task of achieving a balanced view."⁴⁸ Lord Jim does not offer a clear answer to the question of "how to be." For Conrad, life is mysterious; only occasionally does one glimpse reality. The reality is darkness, and to continue living man must for the most part pretend that such a reality is not there. We might say that for Conrad life is a series of unanswered questions, not satisfactorily answered through an affirmative philosophy. Man struggles--as do Marlow and the privileged man--to find a means of living with the questions.

But the epigraph to the novel suggests another dimension to the theme. Conrad quotes from Novalis: "It is certain my conviction gains infinitely, the moment another soul will believe in it." The quotation refers to the human tendency to seek confirmation of one's beliefs or ideas by sharing them with other people and seeking empathy. It is such a search that we witness in Lord Jim as we witness Jim's attempts to convince

Marlow, Marlow's attempts to reach his audience, and, finally, the privileged man's sharing with us. If we cannot be certain about Jim or about Marlow or about the privileged man, we can be uncertain with them.

Lord Jim, then, presents us with problems to respond to. There is first the character of Jim, whom we are called upon to see from several points of view. There is Marlow who shares his response to Jim with us and who offers no answers, but an increasingly complex question. And there is the privileged man, who presents the entire story as evidence of his own doubtful response to Jim. It is perhaps difficult to accept the fact that there are no final clear answers to the problem of existence presented in Lord Jim. But it should not be considered a shirking of responsibility on the part of Conrad. As Palmer suggests, "The ultimate issues for Conrad are those conflicts recognized and resolved only in the depths of self-understanding; even to recognize them constitutes a spiritual growth."⁴⁹ A reader of Lord Jim who allows himself to see the meaning of Jim's life for himself has taken that first step toward greater self-awareness. Seldom does a novel make such exacting demands on its reader.

CHAPTER III

THE POLITICAL GAME: UNDER WESTERN EYES

The darkness is the underlying reality in Under Western Eyes just as it is in Lord Jim, but in this novel Conrad emphasizes the political aspect of the game of civilization. Using the conflict between Russian autocrats and revolutionists during the first decade of the twentieth century as his background, Conrad reveals the irrationality of both positions. And through the narrator Conrad extends the theme to remind us of the irrationality of all political systems that, like Marlow's social code, are merely man's arbitrary imposition of order on the chaos of the darkness. Moreover, political and national labels are seen as barriers to understanding among men, and, when these are stripped away, we become conscious of the sameness of all men in the face of the darkness.

The story of Under Western Eyes is concerned primarily with a Russian, Razumov, who must come to terms with his identity as it is influenced and shaped by his country. But, as the title indicates, we see Razumov's story from the point of view of "western eyes"

and thus gain insight into not only the effects of the battle of autocracy and revolution on the individual in Russia, but also the effects of democracy on the individual in the West. Julian B. Kaye, in "Conrad's Under Western Eyes and Mann's Dr. Faustus," sees "the role of the narrator as symbol of Western values . . .," and he claims that though Conrad may see the way of life in the West as the preferable, if not entirely satisfactory, alternative, he does not imply "that the West is without faults or that its opponents are completely wrong."¹

The Russia of Under Western Eyes is closer to the darkness than is the West; that is, it is closer to the source of life and of destruction as well as to the emotional level of existence. Thus, even though existence in Russia seems more dangerous and even terrifying, it is also more alive and more dynamic. Existence in the West is portrayed as dead, dull, and superficial. Roussel points out that "The people of the West have withdrawn to live, passionless and decorous on the surface of life."² Geneva, the setting of much of the novel, is associated with Rousseau, a major influence on the development of modern democracy, but, according to Roussel, "Even the surrounding landscape reflects the superficiality of this world. While the immensity of Russia embodies undisguised the character of the

darkness, the landscape of Geneva appears to Razumov like 'a pretty, dull garden, where dull people sat . . . under the trees. . . .'"³

According to Kaye, the narrator reveals the limitations imposed on the individual by Western civilization--"lack of intensity, lack of imagination, satisfaction with mediocrity."⁴ Kaye, like Roussel, sees the Swiss setting, with which the narrator is associated, as a comment on the West: "Switzerland is humanistic, democratic, rational, orderly, benevolent--in a word, decent; but it is without the heroic virtues as well as the diabolical vices. It is small, both in physical size and in aims, impersonal and impassive, self-satisfied and rather dull."⁵ As we have seen, Marlow is forced by his confrontation with Jim to question his own code and to acknowledge its meaning in the face of the darkness. Similarly, the narrator of Under Western Eyes is forced by his confrontation with Razumov to question the values of the West. As Bruce Johnson suggests in his analysis of Under Western Eyes in Conrad's Models of Mind, ". . . the best political novels . . . end by transcending politics in a region where root emotions create all our enthusiasms and allegiances--political, erotic, religious, or otherwise."⁶ In other words, the best political novels probe beneath the surface political game to the realities of the human experience, the

necessity of dealing with the darkness.⁷

We are introduced to the narrator, a professor of languages through whose "Western Eyes" we see the events of the novel, in the opening lines: "To begin with, I wish to disclaim the possession of those high gifts of imagination and expression which would have enabled my pen to create for the reader the personality of the man who called himself, after the Russian custom, Cyril son of Isador--Kirylo Sidorovitch--Razumov" (3). Because he does determine the viewpoint from which we see these events and because he has an active role in them, an understanding of the narrator's character is necessary to interpret Under Western Eyes. In this chapter I will study this key character, then, and analyze his effect on our interpretation of the novel. As an onlooker at the dangerous political game played by Razumov and the other Russians, the professor is able to point out its implications. The reader, in turn, can analyze the safe game of the professor and thus sees more in the events of the novel than any of the participants.

As we saw in the Introduction, Razumov underscores the role of the professor as spectator when he thinks, "All this was a sort of sport for him--the sport of revolution--a game to look at from the height of his superiority" (199). There is justice in the

thought, for the professor is detached, like a spectator, from the events he sees. He repeatedly emphasizes his own lack of involvement with, even his inability to understand, the behavior of Razumov and the other Russians in the novel, but he is able to discover the irrationality of the conflict between autocracy and revolution and its effect on the people involved in this political game. He shares Razumov's awareness of this irrationality, but we, as onlookers at the professor's own game, can see his unwillingness to apply what he learns to himself and to his own civilization, though he becomes more aware as a result of his relationship with Razumov.

Before we can begin to analyze the narrator's role, it is necessary to outline the events he reports. The core narrative of Under Western Eyes is the story of Razumov, a student in St. Petersburg in the early 1900's, who is unwillingly involved in an espionage plot. Actually the illegitimate son of Prince K___, Razumov has been reared as an orphan. He hopes to attain prominence by distinguishing himself as a scholar, and he devotes all his time to achieving that goal. But his plans are interrupted when Mr. de P___, President of the Repressive Commission in Russia, is assassinated in an early morning bombing, and one of the assassins, Victor Haldin, comes to his rooms and asks

Razumov for help in escaping. Razumov is upset by and resentful of the request but hopes that if Haldin escapes successfully, he will not be associated with the revolutionist. However, when he goes to arrange Haldin's transportation with the driver Ziemianitch, he finds the peasant in a drunken stupor. Enraged, Razumov beats him and walks the streets in despair. Razumov is convinced that his plans are ruined but decides that there is a chance of safety if he reports Haldin. He rationalizes his contradictory behavior by telling himself that betraying Haldin is his duty.

Razumov first goes to Prince K___, and together they go to report Haldin to General T___, a fanatical believer in autocracy. Razumov soon discovers that he resents General T___ as much as he does Haldin and thus finds himself unable to identify with either Russia's autocratic government or the rebellion against it. Returning to his room, Razumov nervously waits with Haldin until the revolutionist leaves and the betrayal is accomplished. Two days later Razumov returns from classes to find that his rooms have been searched. He is soon summoned to the police and interviewed by Councillor Mikulin. After several interviews, Razumov, encouraged by Prince K___, agrees to take advantage of the trust the revolutionaries have in him, penetrate their midst, and inform the government about their

activities.

Razumov then travels among the revolutionaries, eventually arriving in Geneva, where plans are being made under the leadership of the decrepit, but rich, Madame de S___ and the self-styled feminist, Peter Ivanovitch. It is there that the narrator comes in contact with him, for the professor has tutored Haldin's sister, Nathalie, and has become a family friend. Hoping to discover more information about her brother than newspapers have provided, Nathalie becomes acquainted with Razumov, who she believes was his friend. In time a relationship develops between Nathalie and Razumov, and they meet often. After several weeks Razumov finds that his pose among the revolutionists is absolutely secure. They have learned that Ziemianitch hanged himself and blame the peasant for Haldin's betrayal. But on the very day that his safety is assured, Razumov, unable to accept a life of falsehood, confesses to Nathalie, whom he has grown to love, and later to the revolutionists. One of the more brutal conspirators, Nikita, smashes Razumov's ear-drums, and he is crippled later by a tram-car that he doesn't hear. He lives out his days in Russia, cared for by the compassionate revolutionist Tekla and visited by other participants in the conspiracy. Nathalie works for the poor in Russia, and the narrator continues to live in Geneva.⁸

But according to the premise of the novel, we possess this story of Razumov because of the narrator. Thus it is necessary to establish his relationship to Razumov's story. The narrator tells us that he is a language teacher whose knowledge includes Russian and that he has lived for a long time--over twenty years--in Geneva, where he numbers among his friends several Russians who live in La Petite Russie. Although English, he was "born from parents settled in St. Petersburg" (187) and lived there until the age of nine. He lives alone in three rooms rented from a Mrs. Ziegler, "the widow of a distinguished professor who was an intimate friend" (320). The professor tells us nothing else about himself, but we can infer from his frequent comments on age that he is of late middle age. These few facts, however, suggest a basic aspect of his character--his detachment and isolation, qualities that enable him to be an "onlooker," and at the same time prevent him from involvement.

As we have seen, the professor becomes acquainted with Razumov through his friend and pupil Nathalie Haldin. He first hears of Razumov in a conversation between Nathalie and Peter Ivanovitch, and Nathalie tells him that Razumov is the only friend her brother ever mentioned. Soon he meets Razumov himself, and over a period of weeks he observes with some pleasure the

growing relationship between Razumov and Nathalie. He also witnesses Razumov's confession to Nathalie. Although the professor never sees Razumov again, he learns considerably more about him, for later Nathalie gives him the journal Razumov has sent to her. Two years later, during which time he presumably reads the journal, he meets one of the revolutionists, Sophia Antonovna. She tells the professor of Razumov's situation in Russia and describes his confession to the revolutionists. Some time after learning this information, the professor reconstructs Razumov's life from the time Haldin entered his rooms to his dying days in Russia. By compiling all the information from various sources he has about the young Russian, the narrator seems to be trying to understand the meaning of his story and to communicate his understanding.

Although the professor narrates the entire novel and is a participant in many major scenes, critics have not always taken his character and function into consideration or, if they have, have acknowledged only a minor role for him. For example, Richard Curle does not subject him to analysis in Joseph Conrad and His Characters, but mentions him only in passing.⁹ In A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad, Frederick R. Karl dismisses him as ". . . a Marlow-like character who remains more or less static during the course of the

novel, but is useful as a chorus, as a confidant to Miss Haldin, and, most of all, for providing the practical mechanics of the narrative."¹⁰ Some of Karl's points are borne out by analysis, but he makes no attempt to develop them, and his assumption that the narrator remains static is false. To be sure, some critics do discuss the narrator and some provide useful and insightful discussions that I shall cite in the course of this chapter, but none has made him the focus of a study. Critics tend to overlook the fact that the professor is, according to the text of the novel, responsible for its form. His character colors the entire work, for he has chosen and arranged the materials by which we analyze Razumov.

The nature of these materials is relevant to our understanding of Under Western Eyes. He gleans some of his information from personal experience, but his most significant source is a document: "The document, of course, is something in the nature of a journal, a diary, yet not exactly that in its actual form" (3). Razumov has written in this journal irregularly from the time of his meetings with Mikulin until the night of his confession when he sends it to Nathalie. Conversations are another major source of material for the narrator. He includes both conversations that he was involved in and those he learns about from others.

Other sources include newspaper articles from which the narrator supplements his knowledge of Russian politics and of some of the people in the story. For example, he cites newspapers in connection with the assassination of Mr. de P____, the arrest of Victor Haldin, and the career of Mikulin. In one section of the novel he supplies Peter Ivanovitch's background from his autobiography. As Marlow does, the professor brings as much evidence as possible to his presentation.

Because, then, the narrator integrates information obtained from various sources in varying ways, Under Western Eyes is much more than the story of Razumov. It is the history of the narrator's relationship with and interpretation of Razumov. Thus those interpretations of the novel that focus on only Razumov miss an important dimension of its theme.¹¹

Keeping in mind that the narrator is totally responsible for the view we have of Razumov and that this view is part of the characterization of the narrator, we must record our impressions of Razumov before we can determine why the narrator presents him as he does. As we examine the narrator's presentation we see that he emphasizes Razumov's motivation. He seems to want his readers to understand as fully as possible why Razumov made particular choices; thus he precludes the harsh judgment that superficial knowledge of facts

might promote.

This strategy begins with the narrator's description of Razumov in St. Petersburg. He seems in many ways to be a typical student, but the professor emphasizes a quality that is very important in determining Razumov's subsequent behavior--his loneliness: "He was as lonely in the world as a man swimming in the deep sea" (10). As the narrator points out, Razumov, knowing his parentage and at the same time knowing he cannot ever acknowledge it, feels his aloneness more intensely than the orphan who knows nothing of his background. To reinforce this point, the narrator records Razumov's feelings when he sees Prince K___'s family, the family that might have been his: "'His' daughters. They resembled 'Him.'" The young man felt a glow of warm friendliness towards these girls who would never know of his existence" (13). We also learn that although his fellow students like Razumov, their relationship is superficial. Razumov has never known any kind of love.

Razumov's situation leads him to choose a life through which he hopes to gain recognition. He tries to avoid involvement with anything that might jeopardize his future, but in a country rampant with political strife, Razumov's lack of commitment isolates him further and eventually proves impossible. As the professor--

narrator describes him, "Razumov was one of those men who, being in a period of mental and political unrest, keep an instinctive hold on normal, practical everyday life. He was aware of the emotional tension of his time; he even responded to it in an indefinite way. But his main concern was with his work, his studies, and with his own future" (10). He hopes to write a prize essay and at least make his father aware of him when he reads the names of the winners in the newspaper. The essay, then, is very important to Razumov. It will enable Razumov to establish an identity, for he believes that "A man's real life is that accorded to him in the thoughts of other men by reason of respect or natural love" (14). Because there seems to be no possibility of natural love in his life, Razumov is concentrating on winning respect. He does not realize that he is denying a part of himself, suppressing his emotional needs in order to develop his intellect. Because of the narrator's presentation, we must, with John Hagan, recognize that Razumov's alternatives have been limited. In "Conrad's Under Western Eyes: The Question of Razumov's 'Guilt' and 'Remorse'," Hagan writes, "This concern for his personal future is not to be regarded as mere vanity, selfishness, or cold egotism. . . . To keep out of the fray--to avoid the extremism of either reaction or revolution--is the only course by which he can see his way clear to a future of

any distinction, not to mention mere survival."¹² But, as Roussel points out, Razumov is mistaken, of course, in his assumption "that he has the power and freedom to define his own life."¹³

Ironically, the lifestyle which Razumov adopts is self-defeating and leads to his involvement with political affairs. His surface world is destroyed, and he is forced to confront what lies beneath it. Roussel describes this process: "Haldin's abrupt entrance into Razumov's life destroys Razumov's belief in his ability to choose his identity and brings to him the dark and unhappy knowledge of the irrationality which lies at the center of the world of Under Western Eyes."¹⁴ Razumov's manner, superficially amiable and cautiously reticent, leads Victor Haldin to trust him. Because the narrator has outlined Razumov's background, we can understand his reaction to Haldin's request for help--"'There goes my silver medal'" (16)--as not merely selfish. As Hagan writes, ". . . the props of a life are knocked out from under, the cocoon of solitude and safety is ruthlessly shattered."¹⁵ Razumov has striven to avoid discrediting associations, and Haldin's demand on him implies a depth of relationship totally outside Razumov's experience. It asks him to make a commitment to a person, not to an idea or goal. Thus Razumov, whose life has been arranged according to his own rules, discovers that he is a pawn

in someone else's game which he is forced to play, or, as Roussel says: "What is at the basis of Razumov's lost freedom is his discovery that his identity has been defined for him. It is not that he has been denied a role in society, but that he has been given one over which he has no control."¹⁶

The professor's emphasis also enables us to understand Razumov's reaction when Haldin says, "'It occurred to me that you--you have no one belonging to you--no ties, no one to suffer for it if this came out by some means'" (19). Razumov is horrified because, as we have seen, it is precisely his lack of family that has made his work so important to him, and all is in jeopardy because of Haldin. He thinks, "'Because I haven't that, must everything else be taken away from me'" (26). As Curle expresses it, Razumov's motive for going to arrange the escape with the driver Ziemianitch is simply "an urgent desire to be rid of [Haldin] immediately and for ever."¹⁷ He would like to resume life as if this contact with Haldin had never occurred.

Awareness of Razumov's state of mind helps us to understand the beating of Ziemianitch. On the surface the beating is deplorable, but the narrator has so arranged his materials that we realize what motivates the violent reaction. Ziemianitch was the only means of removing Haldin, a threat to his every hope and plan,

but he is hopelessly drunk. Razumov has worked very hard to organize a life out of nothing, but sees his plans disintegrating into chaos. He vents his frustrations over his ruined life by mercilessly beating the peasant.

The professor, relying heavily, of course, on Razumov's journal, also scrutinizes very carefully his motives for deciding to betray Haldin. He emphasizes, for example, that Razumov actually hallucinates and believes as he walks the streets that he sees Haldin lying in the snow, and we understand the extent of the pressure Razumov feels. Razumov's complete frustration at the destruction of his plans causes him to identify that destruction with the revolutionary movement, in particular with the man who brought that movement into his life. Because he so resents what Haldin has done to him, he views Haldin as "a pestilential disease that would not perhaps take your life, but would take from you all that made life worth living--a subtle pest that would convert earth into hell" (32). His resentment coupled with his total aloneness leads him to a decision that on the surface appears to be a political commitment. A reader would probably find the betrayal of a helpless man, like the beating of a drunken one, abhorrent, but the narrator encourages us to understand, though not condone, the action: "Other men had somewhere a corner of the earth--some little house in the provinces where

they had a right to take their troubles. A material refuge. He had nothing. He had not even a moral refuge--the refuge of confidence. To whom could he go with this tale--in all this great land?" (32). Razumov identifies with Russia as his only parent and thinks of it as "the passive land with its lives of countless people like Ziemianitch and its handful of agitators like this Haldin--murdering foolishly" (33). The only stability Razumov has ever had comes from his country, and now when his security is threatened, he interprets his feeling as a strong political commitment to autocratic Russia. He thinks Haldin and Ziemianitch have shown him the need for a firm ruler and concludes, "'No! If I must suffer let me at least suffer for my convictions, not for a crime my reason--my cool superior reason--rejects'" (35). The narrator has made it clear to the reader that Razumov's convictions have not emanated from cool reason at all, but out of almost uncontrollable emotions. The force of Razumov's emotions is so strong that he really believes he is acting according to his conscience:

"Betray. A great word. What is betrayal? They talk of a man betraying his country, his friends, his sweetheart. There must be a moral bond first. All a man can betray is his conscience. And how is my conscience engaged here; by what bond of common faith, of common conviction, am I obliged to let that fanatical idiot drag me down with him? On the contrary--every obligation of true courage is the other way." (37-38)

As the professor has emphasized, such a moral bond is

not a part of Razumov's experience. We can see that he is rationalizing, but the information we have from the narrator once again prevents our judging him harshly.

In presenting Razumov's decision to go to Prince K___, the narrator again emphasizes the young man's loneliness and need for support now that his hopes are thwarted:

Razumov longed desperately for a word of advice, for moral support. 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. (39)

Razumov is somewhat rewarded for his decision when Prince K___ acknowledges his good sense, but he dislikes General T___ instantly, and his commitment to autocracy wavers. It is soon evident that his reaction has its basis in emotion and not in conviction. As Avrom Fleischman in Conrad's Politics: Community and Anarchy in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad suggests, his "conversion" is not a lasting one: "He has been seduced by the inviting possibility of surrendering his individuality, his reason, in the collective whole, and of renouncing the difficult life of struggle and change in history for the supported stability and peace of a nation in stasis."¹⁸ Razumov soon discovers that the choices he has made have not brought him peace and satisfaction. He cannot be certain

that his life will return to normal.

A far more important threat to Razumov is his realization, which comes very soon, that he detests falsehood and has put himself in a position that demands lying. Until this day, he has never had to hide anything; his life has been open. To the end of the book, he tries as much as possible to speak the truth, even when he knows that others understand him in a false manner. He discovers, of course, that such one-sided truthfulness is not sufficient for a conscience that rejects duplicity. His remarks to Haldin upon returning exemplify this tendency, as do his conversations at school and later in Geneva. He opens with the ambiguous "It's done" (55) and in the course of their conversation says:

"There are secrets of birth, for instance. One carries them on to the grave. There is something comical . . . but never mind. And there are secret motives of conduct. A man's most open actions have a secret side to them. That is interesting and so unfathomable! For instance, a man goes out of a room for a walk. Nothing more trivial in appearance. And yet it may be momentous. He comes back--he has seen perhaps a drunken brute, taken particular notice of the snow on the ground--and behold he is no longer the same man. The most unlikely things have a power over one's thoughts--the grey whiskers of a particular person [Prince K____]--the goggle eyes of another [General T____]" (59)

Razumov seems to want to explain to Haldin why he has betrayed him, and he mentions the very factors that we have seen influencing him. This desire to be as truthful

as he can affects his subsequent behavior, and the narrator emphasizes it.

Razumov's reaction to Haldin's visit, then, is consistent with his character and betrays his deepest needs. Previously averse to a strong political commitment, Razumov makes one in accordance with his needs for family relationships, and that decision leads to the betrayal of a man who has sought a real and meaningful relationship with him, not necessarily a political relationship. If Razumov had only realized how much he was reacting to personalities and not to principles, he might have had an altogether different fortune. But he has had absolutely no experience upon which to base such a realization. And it is the narrator who emphasizes that fact.

The events of the next few days--particularly the search of his rooms, indicating the government's suspicions of him, and the conversation with the student "Madcap Kostia," who assumes Razumov to be a revolutionary--indicate to Razumov that his identity is out of his hands. In accordance with his belief that one's existence has meaning in the way that others see it, Razumov sees himself as crushed between two forces, the government and the revolutionaries, each trying to define him:

The true Razumov had his being in the willed, in the determined future--in that future menaced by the lawlessness of autocracy--for autocracy knows no law--

and the lawlessness of revolution. The feeling that his moral personality was at the mercy of these lawless forces was so strong that he asked himself seriously if it were worth while to go on accomplishing the mental functions of that existence which seemed no longer his own. (77-78)

And his summons to see Mikulin only reinforces this feeling of being a pawn in a game to which he is not committed. At this point in his narrative, the professor wants us to comprehend Razumov's total isolation. Unable to feel commitment to either autocracy or revolution, he experiences the chaos of the darkness. Razumov's awareness here is not unlike Jim's realization of the absurdity of society's judgment of his jump.

The professor's strategy in presenting the first part of Razumov's story is to trace the events of his life up to the interview with Mikulin at the point where Razumov threatens to leave and Mikulin asks "Where to?" His portrait of Razumov is essentially sympathetic; he uses Razumov's journal to present the mental anguish that Haldin's appearance has caused. He does not present the character of Razumov as he himself came to know it until he has laid the groundwork for our understanding the motivation of his behavior in Geneva. Because of the detailed and careful description of the state of Razumov's mind and the factors that have produced it, we can appreciate well the effect of Mikulin's question on Razumov. He certainly can have no easy answer.

With the foundation established, the professor now details the process through which he came to know Razumov. His approach enables us to see Razumov as the professor did, but at the same time to have an understanding of him that the professor at the time did not. He misunderstood Razumov for a long period of time and does not want to allow his readers to do the same.

As we have seen, the professor comes to know Razumov through Nathalie Haldin. Even before he meets Razumov, the professor's feelings about Nathalie affect his attitude toward him. Clearly the professor is attracted to Nathalie. The first time he mentions her name he adds "caressingly Nataalka" (100), and his description of her confirms this suggestion of romantic interest: "Her voice was deep, almost harsh, and yet caressing [my italics] in its harshness. She had a dark complexion, with red lips and a full figure. She gave the impression of strong vitality" (102). The professor finds Nathalie attractive intellectually as well as physically and says that she would appeal to a man "capable of appreciating in a woman something else than the mere grace of femininity" (102). But, for reasons we shall see later, the narrator, frequently commenting on his age, precludes more than a friendship between Nathalie and himself.

The professor's relationship with Nathalie and

her mother is strengthened by the fact that he shares a very difficult period with them. It is he who tells them that de P___ has been assassinated, news that increases their concern for Victor. He shares Nathalie's distress over the letter informing her of her brother's disappearance in St. Petersburg and his description of that letter as "the cruel Petersburg letter" (110) suggests the depth of his sympathy for her. By coincidence it happens that the professor is also the person to tell the Haldins that Victor has been executed as the assassin of de P___. The fact appears in an English newspaper, and, although it pains the professor to tell Nathalie, he feels it would be a "sort of treason," (110) to let her find out accidentally. The task of bringing such news naturally brings the professor even closer than before to Nathalie as he shares the first moments of her shock and grief.

Throughout his description of their growing relationship, however, the narrator constantly emphasizes that there is a point at which he did not understand Nathalie, and he attributes this gap to their differences in nationality. From the time of de P___'s assassination he is conscious of a difference in their understanding of the Russian situation. And he tells us that in spite of his sympathy for Nathalie at the death of her brother, he does not really understand the Russian experience:

I confess that my very real sympathy had no standpoint. The Western readers for whom this story is written will understand what I mean. It was, if I may say so, the want of experience. Death is a remorseless spoliator. The anguish of irreparable loss is familiar to us all. There is no life so lonely as to be safe against that experience. But the grief I had brought to these two ladies had gruesome associations. It had the associations of bombs and gallows--a lurid, Russian colouring which made the complexion of my sympathy uncertain. (112)

As we shall see in detail later, the professor uses his age and nationality to avoid involvement, but he is very fond of Nathalie and would like to see her free from worry. It is not surprising, then, that when an apparent source of relief for Nathalie appears, the professor is anxious that she should benefit from it. And that relief is Razumov. Thus the professor is favorably disposed toward Razumov and toward Nathalie's acceptance of him.

The professor first hears of Razumov in a conversation between Nathalie and Peter Ivanovitch, who is trying to involve Nathalie in the revolutionary movement under Madame de S___ and himself. Although the professor does not like these people and wishes to protect Nathalie from them, he becomes interested in Razumov when he learns that he is the only friend Haldin mentioned to his sister, a man of "'unstained, lofty, and solitary existence'" (135). He understands Nathalie's desire to learn all she can about the circumstances of her brother's arrest and death.

Nathalie visits the Château Borel and meets Razumov there. When she tells the professor of her visit, he is delighted to learn that she did not meet Madame de S____, and we can see that he hopes that Razumov will provide the comfort she needs:

. . . in my fear of seeing the girl surrender to the influence of the Château Borel revolutionary feminism, I was more than willing to put my trust in that friend of the late Victor Haldin. He was nothing but a name you will say. Exactly! A name! And what's more, the only name; the only name to be found in the correspondence between brother and sister. The young man had turned up; they had come face to face, and, fortunately, without the direct interference of Madame de S____. (164-165)

The professor is so hopeful that Razumov will be helpful to Nathalie and her mother that he dismisses indications that his judgment may be incorrect. Although he wonders why Razumov has not sought out the Haldins since his arrival in Geneva, he does not dwell on the question. When Nathalie seems unsure of her own reaction, the professor seems eager for a favorable judgment. He cites Victor's letter to help her decide and seems to succeed: "'Ah!' She interrupted me ardently, 'And if you had only known the heart from which that judgment has come!'" (169). Somewhat regretful of the fact that Nathalie has found Razumov attractive, the professor is nonetheless glad that she may have found a source of comfort. Even when Nathalie reports that Razumov "did not take her proffered hand" and "even recoiled a pace" (171), the professor

tries to interpret his behavior as favorably as possible.

Clearly both the professor and Nathalie are favorably disposed to Razumov and interpret his emotional reaction to Haldin's name accordingly. And naturally their positive assumptions are confirmed by Razumov's seemingly warm response to Nathalie which she describes:

"All I know is, that he put out both his hands then to me, I may say flung them out at me, with the greatest readiness and warmth, and that I seized and pressed them, feeling that I was finding again a little of what I thought was lost to me forever, with the loss of my brother--some of that hope, inspiration, and support which I used to get from my dear dead . . ." (172-173)

The professor attributes to Razumov the ability to understand Nathalie, because Razumov is young and Russian; he assumes that Razumov does not have the barriers to understanding that he himself has. Even Razumov's reserve appeals to the professor; it contrasts favorably with Peter Ivanovitch's aggressiveness.

To his surprise and annoyance, the professor discovers that Razumov has made no further effort to see Nathalie, but before he and Nathalie part Razumov arrives, and the professor meets him:

A young man was walking up the alley, without haste. His clothes were some dull shade of brown, and he carried a stick. When my eyes first fell on him, his head was hanging on his breast as if in deep thought. While I was looking at him he raised it sharply, and at once stopped, I am certain he did, but that pause was nothing more perceptible than a faltering check in his gait, instantaneously overcome. Then he continued his approach, looking at us steadily. Miss Haldin

signed me to remain, and advanced a step or two to meet him. (178)

Motivated by his intense concern for Nathalie, the professor detects every detail of Razumov's expression: that he does not look directly at Nathalie, that his smile seems forced, that he frowns. He finds an excuse for Razumov's attitude in his own presence and is thus able to maintain his positive assessment: "Upon the whole I was not disappointed. Studious--robust--shy . . ." (179). Even when he notices several unpleasant details as Razumov and Nathalie say goodbye, he avoids any negative conclusion and emphasizes in his mind that Razumov holds Nathalie's hand and that he had been, after all, highly praised by her brother. His desire to see Razumov as a comfort and a source of hope for Nathalie leads the professor to minimize any negative impressions and to emphasize his positive qualities.

Nathalie must return to her mother and leaves Razumov and the professor with the words, "'Mr. Razumov does not quite understand my difficulty, but you know what it is'" (182). Razumov again behaves boorishly, but at this time of his "absolute ignorance" (183) the professor is remarkably perceptive. However, we must recall the strong predisposition in Razumov's favor:

I looked at him rather hard. Was there a hidden and inexplicable sneer in his retort? No. It was not that. It might have been resentment. Yes. But what had he to resent? He looked as though he had not

slept very well of late. I could almost feel on me the weight of his unrefreshed, motionless stare, the stare of a man who lies unwinking in the dark, angrily passive in the toils of disastrous thoughts. (183)

In spite of Razumov's rudeness, the professor remains with him both because he finds "the rustling of his speech too painful to give real offense" (184) and because he feels "the sense of having been entrusted with a mission" (184).

Determined to further Nathalie's interests, the professor tells Razumov of his concern for her situation. Because we know Razumov's story, we are aware of the cruel irony in his remarks to Razumov: "'The peculiar situation I have alluded to has arisen in the first grief and distress of Victor Haldin's execution. There was something peculiar in the circumstances of his arrest. You no doubt know the whole truth . . .'" (186). Razumov's almost violent reaction is startling. We, of course understand why, for the professor has given us the necessary information, but he certainly does not understand at the time. He senses that Razumov is troubled and tries to calm him. Again, then, because of his preconceptions about Razumov and because of his feeling for Nathalie, the professor's reaction is mild, even indulgent, when it might be indignant. When Razumov sits down and simply stares at him, the professor's comment is startlingly true: "It occurred to me that his cleanshaven,

almost swarthy face was really of the very mobile sort, and that the absolute stillness of it was the acquired habit of a revolutionist, of a conspirator everlastingly on his guard against self-betrayal in a world of secret spies" (187).

The professor now begins to explain Mrs. Haldin's condition to Razumov and asks him to help Nathalie if he can. As he talks, he feels more and more sympathy for the young man. Concern for Nathalie and this growing sympathy for Razumov prevent the professor from correctly interpreting Razumov's behavior. For example, when he refers to the possibility of Haldin's betrayal, Razumov is clearly shocked. The professor assumes that perhaps the memory of Haldin is painful to him. He keeps an open mind: "I nourished no resentment of the moody brusqueness with which he had treated me. The sentiment I was carrying away from that conversation was that of hopelessness" (193). Eventually Razumov seems to respond to the professor's patience and sympathy and he confides that he has a mission in Geneva. Thus the relationship between the professor and Razumov deepens somewhat because of the understanding the professor shows. Again we understand Razumov's response because of the information the professor has provided from the journal.

But when the professor suggests that Razumov see the Haldins fairly often, Razumov's expression frightens

him:

He stared at me so queerly that I hardly knew how to define his aspect. I could not understand it in this connexion at all. What ailed him? I asked myself. What strange thought had come into his head? What vision of all the horrors that can be seen in this hopeless country had come suddenly to haunt his brain? If it were anything connected with the fate of Victor Haldin, then I hoped earnestly he would keep it to himself for ever. I was, to speak plainly, so shocked that I tried to conceal my impression by--Heaven forgive me--a smile and the assumption of a light manner. (196)

His detailed recollection of this conversation enables us to reconstruct how the professor views Razumov at this point in their relationship. He does not want to see that expression on Razumov's face again. But he does sense that there is something disturbing the young Russian: "The way he had behaved to me could not be put down to mere boorishness. There was something else under his scorn and impatience. Perhaps, I thought, with sudden approach to hidden truth, it was the same thing which had kept him over a week, nearly ten days indeed, from coming near Miss Haldin. But what it was I could not tell" (197). By his arrangement of his materials, however, the professor enables us to understand Razumov readily. And his strategy has two important results. We do not judge Razumov harshly but rather sense his turmoil. At the same time, we can understand the professor's motivations and do not judge him harshly for his role in Nathalie's suffering.

Before detailing any further his own acquaintance with Razumov, the professor goes again to the journal and allows us to see the effect that Nathalie--and himself--have had on Razumov. We have seen Razumov from the professor's point of view in Part II, and in the opening of Part III, we see Razumov's viewpoint. Razumov is very bitter over the total disruption of his life, but this bitterness is mixed with another feeling. Something about Nathalie disturbs him--she arouses an unfamiliar feeling--and he tries not to think about her. Of course, he is also disturbed by the closeness of her conjecture to the actual truth. In general, the conversations with Nathalie and the professor have re-awakened Razumov's emotions and emphasized the falsity of his position. It is significant that the narrator seems to make a point of recording Razumov's reactions to himself--"that meddlesome old Englishman" (198), presumptuous in a way "that only an Englishman could be capable of" (199). Evidently the professor wishes to emphasize Razumov's conception of him. This attitude necessarily affects the way the professor sees Razumov and contributes to his misunderstanding. But by reverting to the journal and reminding us of Razumov's situation, the professor prevents us from forming mistaken judgments similar to his own.

For several weeks the professor sees Nathalie

and Razumov only from a distance, but he knows they see each other. When he has an opportunity, the professor asks Nathalie what she has learned, and he notes that her interest has shifted from her brother to Razumov:

I understood well enough that all their conversations must have been referred mentally to that dead man who had brought them together. That was unavoidable. But it was in the living man that she was interested. That was unavoidable too, I suppose. And as I pushed my inquiries I discovered that he had disclosed himself to her as a by no means conventional revolutionist, contemptuous of catch-words, of theories of men too. (201)

The professor still does not understand Razumov, finds that Nathalie does not either, and concludes "that he had fascinated her by an assumption of mysterious reserve" (202). He continues to seem pleased that Nathalie has Razumov; yet he continues to recognize that there is something mysterious about the "incomprehensible youth" (202).

The very day of this conversation with Nathalie the professor sees Razumov boarding a tram-car to the Château Borel. And again he turns to the journal as the source of the conversations that took place that day at the Château. The knowledge of these conversations is essential to an understanding of Razumov's behavior later that day, and again the professor's strategy enables us to have insight that he did not have. We watch Razumov's tension build with dreadful inevitability to the point of the confession--at the moment of his greatest safety.

The professor portrays, for example, the emotions Razumov feels upon passing the spot where he met Nathalie: "'It is here!' he thought, with a sort of awe. 'It is here-- on this very spot . . .'" He was tempted to flight at the mere recollection of his first meeting with Nathalie Haldin. He confessed it to himself; but he did not move, and that not because he wished to resist an unworthy weakness, but because he knew that he had no place to fly to" (204).

Razumov first talks with Peter Ivanovitch. Although he learns that his reputation is safe with the revolutionaries, he feels that he has no control over his life. The excerpts the professor selects from the journal emphasize Razumov's concern for his identity and his dangerous desire to speak as much truth as possible. Although the outcome of this conversation is that Razumov is a step closer to fulfilling his mission as an informer, he is not pleased, but feels "angry curiosity and mental disgust" (214) as he goes with Peter to meet Madame de S____.

The professor's strategy points out that the more successful Razumov is in his duplicity, the more bitter and resentful he becomes. When Madame de S____ hints at a possible career in the diplomatic service for him, he is conscious of his success but painfully aware of the irony of this promise: "The fantastic absurdity

of it revolted him because it seemed to outrage his ruined hopes with the vision of a mock-career" (220). For the most part Razumov is able to maintain a calm surface, but, as happens so often, he comes close to giving himself away in conversation as he almost willfully speaks as much of the truth as possible. Peter Ivanovitch takes his agitation for fervor, however, and confides in him further, because the revolutionist understands the meaning of Razumov's words according to his own preconceptions. Razumov feels almost like two different people: "He felt . . . as though another self, an independent sharer of his mind, had been able to view his whole person very distinctly indeed" (230). His double role is disintegrating Razumov's personality.

The professor records Razumov's reactions to yet another conversation as he leads up to the confession. On the grounds of the Château Razumov meets Sophia Antonovna and notes with disgust that he must continue to maintain his role. As often happens, his attempt to speak as much truth as possible often takes precedence over his mission. He is aware of his preoccupation with his pose: "All day long he had been saying the wrong things. It was folly, worse than folly. It was weakness; it was this disease of perversity overcoming his will" (253). And several statements Sophia Antonovna makes make Razumov's task very difficult. When she asks

him if he actually attended classes on the day of the assassination, he is shocked: "An appreciable fraction of a second elapsed before the real import of the question reached him, like a bullet which strikes some time after the flash of the fired shot" (254). Although Razumov manages to recover, it is clear to the reader that he will not be able to go on in this manner indefinitely. And throughout their conversation about the morning of the assassination, Razumov speaks as much of the truth as possible, even to saying he was almost envious of Haldin's being apprehended. The total effect of the conversation for Razumov is that it is a "wrestling match" (264).

Two other revolutionists, Nikita and Yakovlitch, arrive at this point, and Nikita expresses some reservations about Razumov. The professor emphasizes the effect of this suspicion on Razumov and shows considerable understanding of his position:

"Enough of this," he began in a clear, incisive voice though he could hardly control the trembling of his legs. "I will have no more of it. I shall not permit anyone. . . . I can see very well what you are at with those allusions. . . . Inquire, investigate! I defy you but I will not be played with." He had spoken such words before. He had been driven to cry them out in the face of other suspicions. It was an infernal cycle bringing round that protest like a fatal necessity of his existence. But it was no use. He would be always played with. Luckily life does not last forever. (267-268)

The choice of words "played with" suggests again

the unreality that Razumov is experiencing. He has not found an identity in this dual role, but finds himself controlled by others. Both the police and the revolutionists see him according to their preconceptions. Sophia Antonovna, sensing he is upset, sends the others away. But Razumov is reacting less to Nikita's comment than to the falsehood of his life: "He made a gesture of despair. It was not his courage that failed him. The choking fumes of falsehood had taken him by the throat --the thought of being condemned to struggle on and on in that tainted atmosphere without the hope of ever renewing his strength by a breath of fresh air" (269).

At this point Sophia Antonovna produces the information that almost absolutely assures Razumov of security--the story that Ziemianitch, who has hanged himself, was obviously the betrayer of Haldin. But Razumov's concern is not safety, and his first reaction to the news is "a profound trouble" (274), for it only makes the net of falsehood tighter. And he still sees the possibility of his visit to Ziemianitch being ferreted out. However, his interest in safety arises not from fear of discovery but from an abhorrence of falsehood: "Razumov listened without hearing, gnawed by the newborn desire of safety with its independence from that degrading method of direct lying which at times he found it almost impossible to practice" (279-280). Finally,

Sophia alludes to his beating of Ziemianitch but does not connect it with him, and Razumov has attained perfect safety: "Such were the last words of the woman revolutionist in this conversation, keeping so close to the truth, departing from it so far in the verisimilitude of thoughts and conclusions as to give one the notion of the invincible nature of human error, a glimpse into the utmost depths of self-deception" (282). Razumov can now look forward to a more open life once again--he will not have to constantly lie. Later in his journal he reports his feelings about the story: "'It was as if Ziemianitch had hanged himself to help me to further crime'" (360).

The conversation with Sophia Antonovna temporarily reassures Razumov, but the professor points out how short-lived his calm is. As Razumov leaves the grounds of the Château, he meets Julius Laspara, a writer for the revolutionists. His injunction to Razumov to write reminds the young man that his life is a lie. Yes he must write, but not what Julius expects. Already he shrinks from his role as informer: "'Is it that I am shrinking? It can't be! It's impossible. To shrink now would be worse than moral suicide; it would be nothing less than moral damnation,' he thought. 'Is it possible that I have a conventional conscience?'" (288). He cannot even write in his rooms but retreats to a small islet to

compose a letter to Mikulin. We see uneasiness and know that, in spite of his security, Razumov is not through with the consequences of his act.

As he walks around the island, Razumov realizes that he is now totally safe. The professor records his thoughts as he listens to the current and becomes aware of the full implications of his situation:

"Extraordinary occupation I am giving myself up to," he murmured. And it occurred to him that this was about the only sound he could listen to innocently, and for his own pleasure, as it were. Yes, the sound of water, the voice of the wind--completely foreign to human passions. All the other sounds of this earth brought contamination to the solitude of a soul.

This was Mr. Razumov's feeling, the soul, of course, being his own, and the word being used not in the theological sense, but standing . . . for that part of Mr. Razumov which was not his body, and more specially in danger from the fires of this earth. And it must be admitted that in Mr. Razumov's case the bitterness of solitude from which he suffered was not an altogether morbid phenomenon." (291-292)

From this passage the professor wants us to see that Razumov, though perfectly safe from external threats, is not secure from himself. He realizes that his life is now inextricably tied up in guilt, that the only time he is able to be honest, and thus the only time his identity is real, is when he is alone. He is perhaps coming to realize that identity is not determined, after all, by one's reputation with others. Actually, as Roussel says, Razumov has successfully played the game that Haldin drew him into. But he adds, "It is,

however, a hollow victory because this role is, by definition, false. The strategy of role-playing fails because it does not allow him to establish a positive identity."¹⁹

By his arrangement of his materials the professor makes Razumov's state of mind perfectly clear to us. He realizes that his position is safer but is more and more conscious of its falseness. If, as he once thought, one's identity is determined by his reputation, then indeed Razumov now has an identity. But he seems to be aware of the shallowness of this identity. He has discovered a part of himself, a "soul," which is denied acknowledgment by this false identity. Even though the reader has by now guessed that Razumov is working for the government and spying on revolutionaries, the professor's manner of relating the story prevents the reader from condemning Razumov. The professor's emphasis is not on what harm Razumov is doing to others, including Nathalie, but on how his duplicity is ravaging himself. Thus the professor can now relate to us Razumov's actual decision to spy and, more horrendous, his plan to use Nathalie, and trust that we will understand the motivation of these abhorrent actions.

Before actually telling us the details of Razumov's plans, the professor emphasizes that he has "a desire for punctilious fairness." He once again reminds

us of Razumov's background and his complete isolation:

That I should, at the beginning of this retrospect, mention again that Mr. Razumov's youth had no one in the world, as literally no one as it can be honestly affirmed of any human being, is but a statement of fact from a man who believes in the psychological value of facts. There is also, perhaps, a desire of punctilious fairness. Unidentified with anyone in this narrative where the aspects of honor and shame are remote from the ideas of the Western world, and taking my stand on the ground of common humanity, it is for that very reason that I feel a strange reluctance to state boldly here what every reader has most likely already discovered himself. Such reluctance may appear absurd if it were not for the thought that because of the imperfection of language there is always something ungracious (and even disgraceful) in the exhibition of naked truth. But the time has come when Councillor of State Mikulin can no longer be ignored. His simple question "Where to?" on which we left Mr. Razumov in St. Petersburg throws a light on the general meaning of this individual case. (293)

Confident that his readers will remember Razumov's total aloneness, the professor records the conversation with Mikulin. We learn that Mikulin threatened Razumov for his lack of commitment: "'Because you see, Kirylo Sidorovitch, abstention, reserve, in certain situations, come very near to a political crime'" (294). We learn, too, that Mikulin, with apparent insight, suggested he communicate through Prince K___: "'You have no better friend than Prince K___ . . .'" (297). The professor has carefully constructed the narrative so that we appreciate the effect of this appeal. And he emphasizes the state of Razumov's feelings by reminding us that he began the journal on the night of this interview.

The function of the journal for Razumov is clear. He cannot easily dismiss his betrayal of Haldin. His identity is in question, for he cannot identify either with the revolutionaries or with the government. Although he tried to convince himself that he believed in autocracy when he decided to betray Haldin, he now has to admit that he does not accept General T___'s position. He feels betrayed by Prince K___ who represents the only emotion, however slight, he knows. And he cannot forget Haldin whom he has betrayed to no real purpose. So Mikulin's question "'Where to?'" has far-reaching reverberations for Razumov. He must re-examine the very foundations of his existence. And it is in answer to that question that Razumov begins to write.

The days following this interview are difficult. The professor emphasizes Razumov's pain at the realization of the emptiness of his life, misjudged by both government and revolutionists: "It was no use struggling on. Rest, work, solitude, and the frankness of intercourse with his kind were alike forbidden to him. Everything was gone. His existence was a great cold blank, something like the enormous plain of the whole of Russia levelled with snow and fading gradually on all sides into shadows and mists" (303). From our understanding of Conrad's philosophy, we can see that his experience with Haldin has brought Razumov into contact with the

darkness and revealed the superficiality of men's attempts to hide it. The rest of his story is the history of Razumov's coming to terms with this knowledge.

His first step is to agree to work for Mikulin, now director of the Russian police throughout Europe. The decision is not easy but comes only after several meetings and a certain amount of "encouragement" from Mikulin. Recording the process of Razumov's decision, the professor emphasizes those elements of Mikulin's pressure that touch Razumov's deepest needs:

The obscure, unrelated young student Razumov, in the moment of great moral loneliness, was allowed to feel that he was an object of interest to a small group of people of high position. Prince K _____ was persuaded to intervene personally, and on a certain occasion gave way to a manly emotion which, all unexpected as it was, quite upset Mr. Razumov. The sudden embrace of that man, agitated by his loyalty to a throne and by suppressed paternal affection, was a revelation to Mr. Razumov of something within his own breast. (307-308)

Thus the professor enlists our sympathy for Razumov. And only after he has established a sympathetic attitude in his reader does he reveal exactly what Razumov was writing on the island--"the first-fruit of his 'mission'" (316). Knowing his background, we can appreciate the feelings Razumov must have experienced as his commitment became concrete, for there is a significant difference between living among the revolutionaries and actually informing.

Only after recording the process of Razumov's

decision to spy does the professor recount his next contact with the young man. He happens to sight Razumov mailing what he now knows was a letter to Mikulin, and he is startled by his expression:

He was crossing the Rue Mont Blanc with every appearance of an aimless stroller. He did not recognize me, but I made him out at some distance. He was very good-looking, I thought, this remarkable friend of Miss Haldin's brother. I watched him go up to the letter box and then retrace his steps. Again he passed me very close, but I am certain that he did not see me that time, either. He carried his head well up, but he had the expression of a somnambulist struggling with the very dream which drives him forth to wander in dangerous places. (317)

The professor is so disturbed that he goes that evening to visit the Haldins. Nathalie is just leaving to find Razumov to ask if he can provide any information about her brother's death that will alleviate her mother's suffering. The professor and she go to Peter Ivanovitch's hotel to obtain Razumov's address, and there Sophia Antonovna tells Nathalie that Haldin was betrayed by "a man of the people" (331). Nathalie and the professor are thus totally unprepared for Razumov's confession.

However, when they return to the Haldins' home after failing to find Razumov in his rooms, he is with Mrs. Haldin. The professor notices a change in him:

The fatigue of that day and the struggle with himself had changed him so much that I would have hesitated to recognize that face which, only a few hours before, when he brushed against me in front of the post office, had been startling enough but quite different. It had not been so vivid then, and its eyes not so sombre. They certainly looked

more sane now, but there was upon them the shadow of something consciously evil. (337)

In spite of this somewhat negative impression, however, the professor seems to feel sympathy when he looks at his face, "pale, full of unexpressed suffering" (342). Because the professor records every detail of this crucial scene, we are able to sense the building tension. And our awareness of Razumov's state of mind, as the professor has revealed it from the journal, allows us to see that the falsity of his position is becoming unbearable.

Before actually detailing the confession, the professor returns once more to the journal to ensure that the reader is aware of Razumov's motivation. Although we share the professor's horror at the effect of the confession on Nathalie, we are able to sympathize with Razumov's position. From the journal we learn that Razumov decided that evening that, for the sake of appearance, he himself should tell the Haldins that Victor was apparently betrayed by a peasant. But his interview with Mrs Haldin is "like the revenge of the unknown" (340), for a mother's love is not part of his experience: "And this was the phantom's mother consumed with grief and white as a ghost. He had felt a pitying surprise. But that, of course, was of no importance. Mothers did not matter. He could not shake off the poignant impression

of that silent, quiet, white-haired woman, but a sort of sternness crept into his thoughts" (340). Her reaction affects Razumov profoundly. He becomes angry with Haldin and even envies his mother's enduring affection. Finally he realizes his terrible mistake: "'It's myself whom I have given up to destruction,' thought Razumov. 'He has induced me to do it. I can't shake him off'" (341). He flees from Mrs. Haldin, only to confront Nathalie. Even at this point it does not seem that Razumov can keep up his false role, and the shock of meeting Nathalie further disarms him. He realizes that Nathalie "had been haunting him . . . ever since she had suddenly appeared before him in the garden of the Villa Borel . . ." (342). The professor detects his growing awareness: "It was as though he were coming to himself in the awakened consciousness of that marvellous harmony of feature, of lines, of glances, of voice, which made the girl before him a being so rare, outside, and, as it were, above the common notion of beauty. He looked at her so long she coloured slightly" (342-343).

Still under the misconception that Razumov will help Nathalie, the professor sees only that he and Nathalie are on the verge of declaring their love: "To me, the silent spectator, they looked like two people becoming conscious of a spell which had been lying on them ever since they first set eyes on each other" (344-345).

Thus, in spite of all the warning signals that something is disturbing Razumov very much, he explains Razumov's late night visit accordingly: ". . . he had discovered that he needed her--and she was moved by the same feeling" (347). But our knowledge of the journal enables us to detect the meaning of Razumov's words:

"Men are poor creatures, Natalia Victorovna. They have no intuition of sentiment. In order to speak fittingly to a mother of her lost son one must have had some experience of the filial relation. It is not the case with me--if you must know the whole truth. Your hopes have to deal here with 'a breast unwarmed by any affection,' as the poet says. . . . That does not mean it is insensible," . . . (344)

But he adds that Nathalie has come "too late" into his life.

Now Razumov begins to lose control. He begins to tell Nathalie that Victor desired to escape, and recalls their last conversation:

"Of you he said that you had trustful eyes. And why I have not been able to forget that phrase I don't know. 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 . . . Ha! what a devilish suggestion!" (349)

The professor finally sees that Razumov has more on his mind than love and is aware that he is breaking down:

"The convulsive, uncontrolled tone of the last words disclosed the precarious hold he had over himself. He was like a man defying his own dizziness in high places

and tottering suddenly on the very edge of the precipice" (349). Razumov's condition arouses in the professor pity for him and concern for Nathalie. While Razumov tells the story of Haldin's betrayal in the third person, the professor guesses the truth and sees that Nathalie is avoiding it: "Utterly misled by her own enthusiastic interpretation of two lines in the letter of a visionary, under the spell of her own dread of lonely days, in their overshadowed world of angry strife, she was unable to see the truth struggling on his lips" (354). And when she realizes the truth, the professor helps her to a chair, notes the look on Razumov's face of "an appalling expressionless tranquility" (354), and for the first time loses all patience with him: "Incredulity, struggling with astonishment, anger, and disgust, deprived me for a time of the power of speech. Then I turned on him, whispering from very rage--'This is monstrous. What are you staying for? Don't let her catch sight of you again. Go away! . . .'" He did not budge. 'Don't you understand that your presence is intolerable--even to me? If there's any sense of shame in you . . .'" (354-355).

Although the professor, realizing what it must have cost to tell the truth, retains some sympathy for Razumov, his primary concern at the time of the confession is certainly for Nathalie. He has seen her betrayed

by the man she loves. This suffering is more painful to see than her reaction to her brother's death, for that grew somewhat logically from Victor's beliefs, and Nathalie could find meaning in it. And the professor must feel betrayed himself; he trusted Razumov and encouraged Nathalie's relationship with him. Now she says, "'It is impossible to be more unhappy . . .'" (356).

Yet there is no bitterness or even dislike for Razumov in the professor's tone as he relates the scene. In fact, as we have seen, he carefully integrates his journal material with his personal experience so that we are even more sensitive to Razumov's suffering than to Nathalie's. And, of course, because the professor has so carefully provided us with insight into Razumov's motives, we are relieved that he has confessed and even admire him for it.

Only now does the professor reveal the full extent of Razumov's duplicity. This part of the confession appears in a section of the journal addressed to Nathalie. Awed by this new emotion, Razumov confesses to Nathalie her power over him: "'What could I have known of what was tearing me to pieces and dragging the secret forever from my lips? You were appointed to undo the evil by making me betray myself back into truth and peace'" (358). Razumov had planned to revenge himself on Haldin by marrying Nathalie and living a lie with her. Everything

seemed in his favor. The professor encouraged him to court her, and, after learning that the revolutionists believed Ziemianitch to be the betrayer, he "'embraced the might of falsehood . . .'" (360). His interview with Mrs. Haldin revealed that he had nothing to fear from her. But at the assurance of success Razumov faces the truth: "'I felt that I must tell you that I had ended by loving you. And to tell you that I must first confess. Confess, go out--and perish'" (361).

If the professor does record the horror of the scene of Razumov's confession and the truth of his diabolical plan, he also records in full his redemption, his achievement of self-recognition, his acknowledgment of the truth of his emotional life. Razumov says Nathalie has freed him "'from the blindness of anger and hate'" (361). The bonds of falsehood are broken and he can breathe again. He implies that he will confess to the revolutionists and return to a life of isolation. He now chooses his path with an awareness of the consequences:

"In giving Victor Haldin up, it was myself, after all, whom I have betrayed most basely. You must believe what I say now, you can't refuse to believe this. Most basely. It is through you that I came to feel this so deeply. After all, it is they and not I who have the right on their side!--theirs is the strength of invisible powers. So be it. Only don't be deceived, Natalia Victorovna, I am not converted. Have I then the soul of a slave? No! I am independent--and therefore perdition is my lot." (361-362)

Even though he did not know about Razumov's con-

fession to the revolutionists until much later, the professor records it now, in keeping with his strategy of maintaining our sympathy for Razumov. We have already witnessed his mental anguish, and we now learn of his brutal deafening by Nikita which causes him to be hit by a tram-car. Only after the professor describes Razumov's suffering does he allow us to learn the fate of the Haldins. Once more he is careful to be fair and understanding.

Some time after Mrs. Haldin's death, the professor visits Nathalie. Both are interested in Razumov's fate and apparently recognize that, in spite of the pain Nathalie has borne, Razumov acted rightly. The professor has kept informed on his condition through Tekla who has attended Razumov since his accident. We can see that at this time the professor's concern is primarily with Nathalie. But at the end of their visit she gives him Razumov's journal and reminds him that she was at Razumov's mercy: "'And while you read it, please remember that I was defenceless. . . . You'll find the very word written there. . . . Well, it's true! I was defenceless--but perhaps you were able to see that for yourself. . . . In justice to the man, I want you to remember that I was'" (376). Undoubtedly her words help the professor to be open-minded as he reads the journal.

Two years later, during which time he reads the

journal, the professor meets Sophia Antonovna who tells him of Nathalie's work in Russia. The conversation soon turns to Razumov, and the professor tells Sophia about the journal. Sophia asks to read it and, after perusing it, tells the professor of Razumov's confession to the revolutionists: "Presently I heard for the first time of Razumov's public confession in Laspara's house. Sophia Antonovna gave me a detailed relation of what had occurred there. Razumov himself had told her all about it, most minutely" (319). And Sophia Antonovna's admiration of Razumov for choosing the truth at the time when his lie was most safe affects the professor: "I accepted her conclusion in silence. Who would care to question the grounds of forgiveness or compassion?" (380). The professor also learns of Nikita's brutality and realizes "that there was some compunction, too, in the charity extended by the revolutionary world to Razumov the betrayer" (380).

Clearly, before hearing this part of the story the professor assumes Razumov is still committed to autocracy, that he has told only Nathalie of his double role. Thus he still sees the story only from the point of view of its effect on Nathalie. When he learns of Razumov's public confession, he begins to see the story from Razumov's perspective. So much does his viewpoint change that he emphasizes Razumov in his presentation.

The information the professor gains from Sophia Antonovna affects him considerably, and he attempts to retell Razumov's whole story and to examine the events he witnessed in light of the journal and the information from Sophia Antonovna. And that is the essence of the novel as a whole: the professor's reconstruction of Razumov's life from the time Haldin entered his rooms to his dying days in Russia. What Sophia Antonovna has told him has raised the issue in the professor's mind once again and caused him to see Razumov's story as Razumov's, not merely as an aspect of Nathalie's. The professor is almost forced to see the story in wider perspective and to see Razumov as a person in his own right, not merely as someone who is a part of Nathalie's life. And so, some time after his conversation with Sophia Antonovna, he reconstructs Razumov's story. Surely Conrad meant us to see the story in terms of what it means to the professor. It is the story of the professor's misjudgment of a man and his subsequent reassessment of him.

Thus, as F. R. Leavis points out in The Great Tradition, because the professor reconstructs Razumov's story from his own experience, supplemented by the journal and by information from Sophia Antonovna, we can view Razumov simultaneously from the inside and the outside.²⁰ From this dual viewpoint, the professor attempts to understand Razumov, and by interweaving the material of his

various sources, he attempts to share with his readers the understanding that he attains. In fact, according to the assumptions upon which the novel is based, the professor's arrangement of the material of Razumov's story encourages us to examine the motivation for his behavior. Before telling us about Razumov's encounter with Haldin, the professor tells us enough about Razumov's background that we are able to appreciate the devastating effect that Haldin's demand has on him. As we have seen, he emphasizes Razumov's aloneness. And because we know the circumstances surrounding the betrayal, we understand Razumov's behavior in Geneva. The professor, of course, did not understand him then and often comments to remind us that he is looking back at those days in Geneva from a new perspective, which he wants us to share:

I looked at him rather hard. Was there a hidden and inexplicable sneer in this retort? No. It was not that. It might have been resentment. Yes. But what had he to resent? He looked as though he had not slept very well of late. I could almost feel on me the weight of his unrefreshed, motionless stare, the stare of a man who lies unwinking in the dark, angrily passive in the toils of disastrous thoughts. Now, when I know how true it was, I can honestly affirm that this was the effect produced on me. It was painful in a curiously indefinite way--for, of course, the definition comes to me now while I sit writing in the fullness of my knowledge. But this is what the effect was at that time of absolute ignorance. This new sort of uneasiness which he seemed to be forcing upon me I attempted to put down by assuming a conversational, easy familiarity. (183)

The journal has explained unusual reactions such as these to the professor. He is able to transcend his very deep feelings for Nathalie and to judge Razumov fairly even to the extent of sympathizing with him. He consistently reminds his readers of Razumov's circumstances before reporting behavior that might arouse negative reactions.

Even in his arrangement of his material the professor reveals his attitude toward Razumov. Discussing chronology, Guerard gives credit in Conrad the Novelist to Conrad for an effect that the author has put in the hands of the professor-narrator. Guerard points out that the reader does not definitely know Razumov's business in Geneva until well into the third part of the novel and adds: "By delaying as long as he does the formal revelation that Razumov is Mikulin's agent, Conrad preserves a sympathy that would (with a more abrupt procedure) have been lost. We must see Razumov suffer before we see, nakedly, this second of his crimes."²¹ Guerard is certainly correct in his analysis of the effect of this withholding of information, but he ignores the words of the professor that indicate his responsibility for maintaining our sympathy. As we saw earlier, when he is about to tell us the exact nature of Razumov's mission, he emphasizes his desire to be fair and reminds us of Razumov's background. We see in detail the

ravaging effects on Razumov of his decision to spy before we see the decision itself.

Similarly, in reporting the process of Razumov's decision to betray Haldin, the professor tries to account for the young man's rationalization by looking at his deepest needs. As Razumov approaches nearer and nearer to a conviction that he must support the Russian autocracy, the professor points out: "Razumov stood on the point of conversion. He was fascinated by its approach, by its overpowering logic. For a train of thought is never false. The falsehood lies deep in the necessities of existence, in secret fears and half-formed ambitions, in the secret confidence combined with a secret distrust of ourselves, in the love of hope and the dread of uncertain days" (33-34). John A. Palmer contends that this statement is an example of the narrator's "emotional withdrawal," and in a sense he is correct.²² Certainly we would not call it an impassioned plea for Razumov. But, given the character of the professor as we have seen it so far, and given his relationship with Nathalie, the statement is a successful attempt to be as fair as possible in reporting those things that Razumov did which led to Nathalie's being very much hurt. This fairness is a real attainment for the professor. It is a tribute to his concern for arriving at the truth of the story.

The professor's concern for the truth is reminiscent of a similar quality in Razumov, and this parallel leads us to a recognition that there are many parallels between the two characters. A study of these similarities heightens our appreciation of the professor's character.

In spite of his protestation that he is "unidentified with any one in this narrative" (293), the professor's numerous similarities to Razumov indicate that perhaps his interest in that young man ultimately stems from the fact that he identifies with him, that he sees in Razumov what he himself might have become given a different set of circumstances. Like Razumov, the professor is very much alone and finds his solace in the intellectual life. Razumov, at the beginning of the novel, is certainly detached in his attitude toward the world around him, and the professor remains as detached as possible throughout his acquaintance with Nathalie, Razumov, and the Russians in general. The professor's attainments are precisely of the kind that Razumov hoped for before Haldin entered into his life. While neither man forms close and intimate ties easily, both command the respect and confidence of their acquaintances. Both find this trust disquieting, and each in his own way constructs barriers to further intimacy.

Certainly Razumov and the professor react

similarly to Nathalie, though their circumstances produce differing manifestations of their love. It is obvious that the professor cares deeply for Nathalie, and his feeling is couched too often in romantic terms for us to view it as fatherly. Roussel supports this view: "It is clear from the English Teacher's occasional comments that his interest in her is more than that of a chance acquaintance."²³ But at the same time the professor continually creates barriers between them. He emphasizes his age and nationality, although Nathalie never behaves as if either is a barrier. His nine years in St. Petersburg, his knowledge of Russian, and his acceptance by the Russians in Geneva minimize the difference of nationality. The point is not that the professor might have married Nathalie, but that he deliberately avoids involvement; he prefers the role of onlooker. Roussel characterizes the professor's attitude as "less the discreet reticence of an old man than a deliberate attempt to use the mask of an aging language teacher to protect himself from becoming involved in any way that would leave the narrator 'too much aware' of his heart."²⁴

Almost as a justification for not becoming involved, the professor frequently points out his inadequacies, often imaginary. In connection with Nathalie, he implies that neither his person nor his ideas could be attractive. He frequently suggests that his feelings

for Nathalie would provoke laughter in his reader. And he assumes, without saying why, that Nathalie would not be interested in his advice, in spite of the fact that she seeks him out frequently as a confidant. Such an emphasis on his shortcomings helps the professor keep his distance, a tendency he manifests in other situations.

Razumov's past precludes an honest lifelong relationship with Nathalie. But significantly the barrier between them, his betrayal of her brother, arises from a tendency to avoid involvement similar to the professor's. Razumov's reaction to Haldin and his decision to betray him are a result of his desire to remain solitary and as uncommitted as possible. But unlike those of the professor, Razumov's circumstances do not allow neutrality.

Thus neither man is in a position to develop a permanent relationship with Nathalie, but their reactions to her are different in an important way. Razumov eventually allows her influence to work on him, and thus he grows from a man who lives superficially to one who acknowledges his deepest feelings. The professor consistently maintains his detachment.

That the professor is anxious to see a relationship develop between Nathalie and Razumov is partly a result of his perceiving Razumov's similarity to him.

At first, of course, he knows only that Razumov, as a Russian and as a friend of her brother, may be able to comfort Nathalie. Soon, however, the professor is impressed with Razumov's reserve and refinement and finds him, perhaps subconsciously, a fitting substitute for himself. On one occasion the professor makes explicit a parallel between himself and Razumov. A bit impatient with Razumov's delay in furthering his relationship with Nathalie, the professor remarks: "Those lofty and solitary existences . . . make a young man shy and an old man savage--often" (172).

The professor and Razumov are parallel, too, in that each betrays someone. Of course, nothing in the professor's life as recorded in the text of the novel compares with Razumov's betrayal of Haldin. But he must feel some responsibility for Nathalie's fate, for he has encouraged her to rely on Razumov and has thus played a part in her unhappiness. Perhaps his guilt over this betrayal, coupled with the many similarities in their nature, helps the professor understand Razumov's decisions. If the professor represents what Razumov might have become, then in a less obvious way, Razumov represents what the professor might have been. And if we recall Razumov's realization that "'In giving Victor Haldin up, it was myself, after all, whom I have betrayed most basely'" (361), we can see that ultimately the

wrongness of Razumov's decision lay in his choice of isolation rather than solidarity. The professor's betraying of Nathalie has stemmed from the same motive. He too has erred by choosing isolation. Although he reveals potential for great sympathy and understanding of others, he is not able or not willing to establish deep relationships. In another way, too, Razumov represents what the professor might have been. For Razumov goes a step beyond his betrayal to a confession of it, and that confession is a commitment to love and an acknowledgment of his whole being.

But the very fact that he retells Razumov's story and reassesses his own perceptions of the young Russian reveals the professor's need of relationships. As Razumov did, the professor uses writing as a means of coming to terms with his experience. Yet, in spite of his need for communication, the professor continually constructs barriers between him and his readers. His very opening words are an attempt to detach himself from the story, and throughout the novel he frequently insists that his ability to relate the story is inadequate. However, Roussel makes an important point about this role that the professor adopts: "Despite the fact that the narrator does strive to avoid intimate contact with others, the very fact that he does undertake the task of 'editing' Razumov's diary suggests that he is concerned with putting

himself in some kind of limited relationship with the emotional, irrational, but life-giving world of Razumov and Natalia."²⁵ But it is consistent with his habit of remaining withdrawn and remote that the professor thus attempts to avoid criticism by anticipating it.

In general, then, the professor can be characterized as alone, isolated, and uninvolved. We do not have a full record of his life as we do of Razumov's, and therefore can never know the reasons for his choice of a way of life, but we can see the loneliness that his choice has led to. He prevents himself from gaining self-insight from the story of Razumov, although the very fact that he relates the story suggests that it disturbs him. But he insists that, in spite of his similarities to Razumov, this is a story of Russia, that he cannot imagine an Englishman undergoing the same experience, and that he does not really understand the story. Thus, although he is able to perceive the essential human needs that are so important in the motivation of Razumov and although he effectively presents a fair picture of Razumov, he does not allow himself to transfer these perceptions to his own life. He, unlike Razumov, ends as he began--alone.

The professor, then, is a distinct and interesting character in his own right, not a mere technical device. And he is more than the "disinterested

spectator" that Morton Dauwen Zabel describes in his introduction to the novel.²⁶ Our understanding of him enriches our understanding of the theme and of Conrad's vision of the human condition. He is a complex character, and by acknowledging his complexity we approach one of Conrad's major themes. The professor's experience with Razumov clearly dramatizes some basic facts about men's ability to know one another. The professor bases some perfectly logical, but completely mistaken, judgments about Razumov on his personal contact with that man and on the testimony of other people whose judgments also seem logical. Thus Conrad dramatizes the importance of making only tentative judgments about others, if we must make judgments at all. Given what we know about the professor, then, we can only assume that perhaps his choices in life and his resulting isolation and insecurity are motivated by as deep needs as Razumov's. We can see the consequences of his being less perceptive about himself than about Razumov, but we cannot judge his motives. We do not have a journal in which he has revealed himself.

Under Western Eyes, then, illustrates that we can infer some limited conclusions about a person from his behavior, but we must always be conscious that the motives of behavior are not visible and recognize that appearances are often obstacles to understanding, for

people often conceal aspects of themselves.

Conrad's use of the professor-narrator also dramatizes our frequent misunderstanding of others because we form preconceptions about them that interfere with really coming to know them. Several times in the novel, the professor explains Razumov's behavior in a way that satisfies his own conception of Razumov. For example, he dismisses too readily his puzzlement about Razumov's staying away from the Haldins.

The somewhat mystifying and inconclusive ending of the novel further dramatizes the difficulty of knowing another person, for it calls into question assumptions that the reader shares with the professor throughout the novel. The professor does not care for Peter Ivanovitch and fears Nathalie's contact with him. And there is little in the novel that refutes the negative impression of Peter. Yet at the end Sophia Antonovna says, "'Peter Ivanovitch is an inspired man'" (322). If the experience of the professor with Razumov is meaningful, is it not also necessary to withhold judgments about Peter and to allow for the possibility of a change in his character? The professor's silence indicates that he has no certain means of refuting Sophia's comment, and it is significant, of course, that he records it. Thus the novel ends with the suggestion of another mystery, a reminder of our inability to know and understand one another. The

professor has had too strong prejudices against Peter Ivanovitch to be able to say that yes, perhaps he is inspired, but he has learned enough to leave the possibility open--in the last sentence of his story, where its suggestions echo in the reader's mind.

The novel also dramatizes the idea that labels--particularly those of politics and nationality--contribute to our misconceptions of others. Assuming that a person is an autocrat or a revolutionist creates particular expectations for his behavior, and, as we have seen, emphasis on the distinctness of a nationality hinders human understanding. Conrad himself suggests this theme in the Author's Note to Under Western Eyes.²⁷ He points out the basic sameness of both the oppressors and the oppressed in Russia, and we see in the novel the sameness of autocrats and revolutionaries and of Westerners and Russians. Razumov's decision to betray Haldin is based on a reaction to Haldin as the embodiment of an idea rather than as a human being. The professor makes a similar error when he consistently categorizes people in terms of their nationality and allows superficial differences to obscure more basic sameness. In fact, largely because of his emphasis upon the story as "Russian," he prevents himself from attaining greater knowledge of himself through it. Claire Rosenfield points out this trait:

That the old Englishman persists to the end . . . in stressing his role as a "mute witness of things Russian, unrolling their Eastern logic under my Western eyes" simply reiterates his ultimate inability to see that Razumov's journal is his mirror too, and that a timeless document makes Western eyes project their visions into the immensity of space until they subsume the visions of all eyes.²⁸

Roussel sees the professor as affected by Razumov's story but holding himself back, in keeping with his association with the West, from too deep involvement with the emotional. Thus his comments that maintain detachment offset to an extent his presentation of Razumov's story with such depth of understanding: ". . . they reflect the narrator's fluctuation between involvement and detachment." Roussel explains this "Western" quality as an attempt to avoid the risk that acknowledgment of the emotions involves:

This alteration suggests that the English Teacher has made use of Razumov's diary to "penetrate" his intention and to enter his world, but that he does so with his feet on the ground. He never abandons the detachment which is his ultimate protection. Consequently he is never drawn into Razumov's world in the destructive way Marlow is into Kurtz's [Heart of Darkness], just as with Natalia he is never brought to the point of Razumov's equally destructive surrender to love. By exploiting this ambivalence, the narrator makes an attempt to live in both worlds while avoiding the dangers of either.²⁹

His aloneness at the end, however, indicates the weakness in this way of life.

But if the professor does not attain the degree of understanding that he might have, there is nonetheless the suggestion in the very fact of his creating the

book and communicating to the extent he is able his experience with Razumov that the potential for greater understanding still exists for him. The inconclusiveness of the ending hints of an ongoing process in his mind. Razumov comes to terms with Haldin--the challenge to his isolation; the professor has not yet fully come to terms with Razumov and the story that surrounds him. His isolation is at least partially affected by his telling of that story. As Rosenfield points out: "But if he fails to admit the intimacy between his own and Razumov's situation, he yet performs a most significant communal service: he judiciously tells the final tale, making a unity of Razumov's 'document,' his spectator's experience, and the information derived from Nathalie and Sophia Antonovna."³⁰

How much more meaningful and realistic is Under Western Eyes because we see its people through the eyes of a limited man who conveys to us the needs and motives not only of his characters but those of himself as well. Although we have an opportunity in the novel to penetrate Razumov's deepest feelings, our insight is constantly balanced by our lack of such insight into the motives of the other characters, including the narrator. Thus Conrad is able to express to us at one and the same time the complexity of human behavior (through an unusually deep portrait of Razumov) and the common inability

to penetrate this complexity (through the professor's perceptions of the characters other than Razumov and through our perceptions of the professor himself).

The professor expresses this theme when he is describing Mikulin's attempts to win Razumov to the position of informer:

To the morality of a Western reader an account of these meetings would wear perhaps the sinister character of old legendary tales where the Enemy of Mankind is represented holding subtly mendacious dialogues with some tempted soul. It is not my part to protest. Let me but remark that the Evil One, with his single passion of satanic pride for the only motive, is yet, on a larger, modern view, allowed to be not quite so black as he used to be painted. With what greater latitude, then, should we appraise the exact shade of mere mortal man, with his many passions and his miserable ingenuity in error, always dazzled by the base glitter of mixed motives, everlastingly betrayed by a short-sighted wisdom. (304-305)

Such an observation, suggesting man's complexity and the importance of avoiding facile judgment, can be applied to the novel as a whole. It does not suggest that we should cease to try to understand one another, but that we should recognize our limitations and refrain from judgments that prevent developing relationships and our own growth.

Under Western Eyes helps us to see beyond the labels, particularly national and political, that constitute barriers to real understanding. The basic reality for all men is the darkness, and politics and chauvinism do not adequately deal with it. The best

man can do is to recognize his situation and acknowledge the fact that he shares it with all men. Individual human relationships are more enduring than politics. Viewing the West as having a way of life that is remote from and ignores the darkness underlying all civilization, Conrad creates a character in Under Western Eyes who perceives, from the Western point of view, events involving Russian people, a people closer to the reality of the darkness. His involvement, though cautious, makes him somewhat aware of the emotional life. He watches Razumov, a man very similar to himself, grow from an isolated intellectual, to a victim of society's imposition of an identity, to finally a man who is in touch with all aspects of his humanity, and he sees the price Razumov pays. Razumov's story suggests to the professor possibilities about himself and questions about the validity of the Western world's remoteness from the darkness, a way that limits development of the individual. The fact that the professor narrates the story in the form that he does reflects that he is still in the process of answering those questions. The reader, as onlooker at the professor's, as well as the Russians' game, is able to transcend the national and political labels and to see the underlying darkness. Such perception leads to the realization of the obstacles that labels and prejudices put in the way of human relationships

which at best are limited attempts to deal with the darkness.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOCIAL GAME: CHANCE

Chance is concerned primarily with the ways in which men in society deal with the darkness that is the reality underlying all civilization. Once again Conrad uses Marlow, now a retired seaman, as his major narrator. Marlow narrates to a friend the story of Flora de Barral, which he has learned from several people involved in it. His friend, who remains anonymous, becomes the first-person narrator of the entire novel. In Chance Conrad explores the values, standards, and conventions of society and reveals how they are limiting both to the men and women who are the principal participants in the story and to those who narrate it. Society is merely an elaborate game with set rules that people follow to preserve order; it is based on a conglomerate of illusions. When people become too concerned with the game for its own sake, they lose sight of the humanity of the individual. But Flora's story shows that personal relationships can be established that transcend ordinary social intercourse and provide a more satisfying means of confronting the darkness than social

conventions. Marlow, who is by temperament and profession somewhat detached from society's game, is "an onlooker" at Flora's story, and her difficulties reveal to him the inadequacy of society. Because of his role as onlooker he is able to "see more of the game," and to communicate what he sees to his friend who in turn communicates to the reader.

Like Lord Jim and Under Western Eyes, Chance has a core story that constitutes Marlow's narrative. Flora de Barral is the daughter of a prominent financier, who, when Flora is not yet sixteen, loses his entire fortune. He is tried as a swindler and jailed for seven years. As a child Flora had spent her early years in a mansion with her unhappy mother. When her mother died, de Barral hired a governess to care for the child and visited her only on occasional weekends. Flora was still very lonely, but had some acquaintance with a Mrs. Fyne, the wife of a Civil Servant. The scheming and mercenary governess had apparently been plotting to encourage a relationship between Flora and her "nephew," Charlie, who was more likely her lover.

When de Barral's fortunes totally collapse, the governess and Charlie flee. Flora at first seeks refuge with the Fynes, but they turn her over to de Barral's cousin who obviously hopes that de Barral may have hidden some money away. Flora is miserable with his family

and runs away to the Fynes several times. Eventually they try to help her find a position, first as a companion to an elderly lady, then as a tutor to some German children, but neither position works out. Flora visits the Fynes' home again and there meets Mrs. Fyne's brother, Captain Roderick Anthony. Anthony, too, bears the scars of an unhappy childhood. His poet father, Carleon Anthony, was a tyrant, and he ran away to sea as a boy. When he meets Flora he has had very little experience with women.

When Flora meets Anthony, she is actually contemplating suicide as her only recourse in a world in which an indigent woman has no place. The only tie she has with life is her jailed father, whose memory she clings to. When Captain Anthony offers not only to marry her but to take both her and her father onto his ship when the father is released, Flora accepts his generous offer, and she runs away from the Fynes' home to meet Anthony in London. Unfortunately, Mrs. Fyne, though she could tolerate the daughter of a convict as an object of charity, cannot tolerate her as a potential sister-in-law. She sends her husband to London to stop the marriage. Mrs. Fyne is theoretically a feminist but is outraged when Flora sends a letter implying that she is practicing feminism in her relationship with Anthony. The letter convinces Mr. Fyne that he should interfere.

Fyne confronts Anthony with the idea that he will be merely using Flora, for there is no question of love on her part. As a result, Anthony, who is extremely idealistic, decides to foreswear his conjugal rights even though he will still marry Flora to provide the material help she needs. When Flora goes to meet her father upon his release from prison and tells him she is married, he is furious. But he has no alternative to joining the couple on the Ferndale. In spite of these almost impossible conditions, the first voyage is short and uneventful.

At the last minute before the next voyage, Charles Powell, who has recently received his officer's certificate, joins the crew as second officer. He soon becomes aware of the tension on board the Ferndale. The first mate, Franklin, deeply resents the captain's wife, and Powell soon realizes that de Barral fiercely resents the Captain. The relationship between Anthony and his wife also seems to be very distant and strained. A series of accidents leads Powell to see de Barral pour poison into Anthony's drink one night, and he prevents Anthony from drinking it. But clearly the inhuman situation is at a breaking point. Anthony realizes he cannot maintain this facade any longer and offers Flora her freedom. But she can no longer hide her feelings; she embraces him and declares her love. When he realizes

Flora has chosen Anthony over him, de Barral drinks the poison and dies. Flora and Anthony have six very happy years until a collision brings about Anthony's death. Some time later, Powell, who has been a close friend of the couple, asks Flora to marry him and she accepts.

Marlow's relationship with Flora begins through the Fynes, near whom he spends his vacations. Flora is staying with them, and he meets her one day near the quarry. Flora is actually considering suicide, but at the time Marlow does not realize her desperation. Shortly after this incident she goes to meet Anthony in London, and the Fynes consult Marlow. Assuming that nothing the Fynes can do will change the course of the affair, Marlow suggests to Fyne that he visit Anthony, simply to please Mrs. Fyne. He accompanies Fyne to London. As a result of Fyne's visit Anthony decides to renounce his conjugal rights; thus Marlow unwittingly has a role in Flora's suffering. However, while waiting for Fyne he meets Flora, learns the circumstances of the courtship, and precipitously concludes that the marriage is a positive step for her.

Many years later Marlow and his friend (the anonymous narrator) meet Powell. Powell mentions Captain Anthony, and Marlow recognizes the name of Mrs. Fyne's brother. Powell later tells Marlow the story of his first voyage on the Ferndale. When Marlow discovers

that Powell is seeing Flora, he too visits her and learns the rest of her story. Recognizing Flora's and Powell's love for each other, he encourages them to marry.

These events are not reported chronologically in the novel, however. Chance is divided into two parts. Part One, entitled "The Damsel," opens with the meeting of Marlow and Powell reported by the anonymous narrator. In the first chapter Powell relates the story of his obtaining a berth on the Ferndale. The rest of Part One is Marlow's narration to the anonymous narrator of what he knows of Flora's story. In Part Two, "The Knight," Marlow tells the anonymous narrator the rest of Flora's story, which he has learned from Powell and Flora herself. At some later time the anonymous narrator puts together all his conversations with Marlow as well as the story of their meeting with Powell to form a coherent whole, the novel itself. He reports the story, then, in the order in which he learned it, not as it happened.

Obviously the layers of narration should have an effect on the meaning of the story, but critics have not explored this possibility in any depth. Some critics focus their study only on the relationship between Anthony and Flora. Diana S. Neill's A Short History of the English Novel typifies the most simple reading of the novel: "Chance . . . is a story of two kindred souls who fail to recognize each other and who are caught up

in an intricate web of misunderstanding."¹ Andreas offers another example of such a reading:

In Chance (1911) a marriage occurs between two persons in each of whom an outcast mentality had been induced by traumatic childhood experiences. The novel is a study of the effect which these two persons' low self-esteem has upon their marriage to each other. Both had felt unloved and rejected in early life and both have accepted in self-judgment the adverse verdict which they fancy society has pronounced against them. The similarity of their emotional predicaments draws them together into marriage but it also provides the pitfalls in which their marriage nearly perishes.²

Neither of these critics mentions the narrative technique of the novel. Critics who do deal with the narrator-device find the main interest of Chance is not the story of Anthony and Flora. James Guetti in The Limits of Metaphor writes that "The story . . . is all Marlow's. . . ."³ Gillon suggests that "The end of Conrad's dramatic novel . . . is not in the plot but in the author's quest for truth. . . ."⁴ Surprisingly a very early commentary on Chance, that of Wilson Follett, contains one of the strongest arguments that the subject matter is not the love story:

But what precisely is the subject of Chance? Isn't it partly an unknowable or, say, speculative essence, depending on opinions about opinions? . . . Above all, isn't it a larger affair altogether than even the tenderness of two people who fairly demand so large a share of our sympathy? The method is not an embroidery upon the phase of life, but its boundary. All the derived secondary displays of sympathy in the chain of observers are part of the adventure reported on; and the story is mainly, though not exclusively, of Marlow's exploration of the facts and characters.⁵

Thus, to account for all aspects of Chance we must move away from the core story and attempt to explain the effect of the narrator-device on it. Marlow, the primary narrator, reports that story with emphasis on its sociological implications and interprets it according to his own understanding of society in the context of his awareness of the darkness.

However, as we have seen, before Marlow's narration, Powell tells the story of how he joined the Ferndale and in the course of his narration depicts society as he sees it. He has never been involved in shore life. He is an orphan and has no personal ties to shore, and he went straight to sea from private school before he was fifteen. He has spent most of his life at sea enjoying what he calls "'the peace of the sea'" (31). Thus Powell views society from an objective and completely impersonal viewpoint. His perceptions are simple and frank and offer the reader an overview of the social background of the novel.

Powell introduces the social theme on the first page of Chance when he compares the efficiency of shore people with that of sailors: "'If we at sea . . . went about our work as people ashore high and low go about theirs we should never make a living. No one would employ us. And moreover no ship navigated and sailed in the happy-go-lucky manner people conduct their

business on shore would ever arrive into port'" (3-4). Since his retirement, Powell says, he has found no one, educated or not, who takes the kind of care with his work that seamen do. He reflects that "the shore gang" are irresponsible because they have a sense of security: "'They see . . . that no matter what they do this tight little island won't turn turtle with them or spring a leak and go to the bottom with their wives and children'" (4).

When Powell describes the setting of his Marine Board examinations, he includes several details which reflect the values and institutions of the society created by that inefficient "shore gang": the anonymous narrator reports:

At that time the Marine Board examinations took place at the St. Katherine's Dock House on Tower Hill and he informed us that he had a special affection for the view of that historic locality, with the Gardens to the left, the front of the Mint to the right, the miserable tumbledown little houses farther away, a cabstand, boot-blacks squatting on the edge of the pavement and a pair of big policemen gazing with an air of superiority at the doors of the Black Horse public-house across the road. (5)

Powell does not realize the implication of these details but they introduce ideas that Marlow explores in depth later. Tower-Hill reminds us of prisons, and we find that prisons, literal and figurative, play a very important role in Chance; everyone in it is imprisoned to an extent by the limitations imposed by society. The

Gardens, which occupy only a small place in this picture, suggest society's attempt to order and beautify, perhaps even to hide what it has wrought; they even remind us of Eden and unspoiled nature. Money is suggested by the Mint; in Chance, society attaches considerable importance to wealth. That theme and the concomitant one of class are extended by the image of "the miserable tumble-down little houses farther away, a cabstand, boot-blacks squatting on the edge of the pavement and a pair of big policemen gazing with an air of superiority at the doors of the Black Horse public-house across the road." And the policemen suggest the preservation of order, the maintaining of the world set up by society, as they carefully watch for violations of the "rules of the game."

Powell recognizes the inefficiency of these rules. He recalls that the Shipping Master, likewise named Powell, from whom he sought a position, pointed out that it was illegal to procure a berth for a sailor. Powell recalls: "'It had never struck me it [the law] would apply to everybody alike no matter what the motive, because I believed then that people on shore did their work with care and foresight'" (14). Thus one of the inherent weaknesses of society, that it makes laws which are necessary for some but limiting to others (often, as in this case, innocent), is pointed out. Powell

adds, "'I was confounded at the idea, but Mr. Powell made me soon see that an Act of Parliament hasn't any sense of its own. It has only the sense that's put into it; and that's precious little sometimes'" (14).

The materialistic values of society are also pointed out in Powell's narrative. The Shipping Master suggested that if he violated the law, a subordinate might turn him in for the sake of money and power, an insight that shocked young Powell. Later, after he obtained the berth with Captain Anthony, he reported to the ship late at night. Two fellows offered to help him carry his gear, and when he arrived at the dock, the attending policeman stressed his good fortune in escaping robbery. The constable himself left Powell only after receiving "'the tip he was looking for'" (29).

Powell, then, gives us a general picture of society, and Marlow seems to share his view. But the anonymous narrator points out a difference in the temperament of the two retired sailors that makes Marlow more appropriate for exploring the effects of society on the individuals who constitute it: ". . . they were exactly dissimilar--one individuality projecting itself in length and the other in breadth . . ." (32). Powell sees the general picture and Marlow observes every detail in that picture and examines at length the assumptions on which society is based.

The anonymous narrator emphasizes Marlow's suitability as a commentator on society. He points out that Marlow has a philosophical mind:

He was patient and reflective. He had been at sea many years, and I verily believe he liked sea life because upon the whole it is favorable to reflection. I am speaking of the now nearly vanished sea-life under sail. To those who may be surprised at the statement I will point out that this life secured for the mind of him who embraced it the inestimable advantages of solitude and silence. Marlow had the habit of pursuing general ideas in a peculiar manner, between jest and earnest. (23)

Marlow's relationship to society, too, enables him to analyze it with objectivity. Like Powell, he has not been closely involved with shore life and is a detached observer: "From year to year he dwelt on land as a bird rests on the branch of a tree, so tense with the power of brusque flight into its true element that it is incomprehensible why it should sit still minute after minute" (33-34). We see most of the events of the novel through Marlow's eyes, and he consistently sees those events and the people involved in them in the context of society.

As he did in Lord Jim, Marlow permeates his narrative with his ideas about the nature of the universe and man's place in it. Marlow is aware of the ever-threatening darkness underlying all of society and civilization which are illusions necessary to impose some order on the darkness. Marlow is also conscious of the

position of the individual in the universe and sees man as essentially isolated in spite of the existence of society.

Several of Marlow's comments underscore his understanding of the universe and of man's position in it. Perhaps the most frequently cited of these comments occurs when Marlow describes the night on which he and Fyne looked in the quarry for the missing Flora: "'It was one of those dewy, clear, starry nights, oppressing our spirit, crushing our pride, by 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. I hate such skies. daylight is friendly to man toiling under a sun which warms his heart; and cloudy soft nights are more kindly to our littleness'" (50). Marlow sees man as small and insignificant in a universe indifferent to him. He dislikes the clear starry night because he cannot ignore man's littleness on such a night; the sight of the tiny cold stars forces him to realize the immensity of the universe. The day to day life and toiling of men seems miniscule and futile in this context. Society and its rules seem ineffective feeble attempts to control the darkness.

A similar insight occurs in Marlow's description of Powell's feelings at sea after a conversation with

de Barral. The sea, like the starry night, makes man aware of his aloneness:

"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 indistinguishable, the mere support for the soles of his two feet before that unexpected old man [de Barral] becoming suddenly so articulate in a darkening universe." (292-293)

Marlow points out that Powell, far from the comforting illusions of civilization, realizes his isolation and his insignificance and feels the immensity of the darkness. His ship is just a tiny fragile barrier between him and nothingness.

Marlow also comments on man's potential in this world. Most men most of the time follow the rules of society and do not directly confront the darkness. These rules cannot really control the darkness and chance may at any time interfere with human intentions. Thus man is not always able to control the outcome of his actions: "'It's certainly unwise to admit any sort of responsibility for our actions, whose consequences we are never able to foresee'" (23). Because consequences are unpredictable, mediocrity is the best we can hope to

achieve: "' . . . the incapacity to achieve anything distinctly good or evil is inherent in our earthly condition. Mediocrity is our mark. And perhaps it's just as well, since, for the most part, we cannot be certain of the effect of our actions'" (23). The best intentions do not assure us that our actions will have a positive result. "'Good intentions stand in their own way so much. Whereas if you want to do harm to any one you needn't hesitate. You have only to go on. No one will reproach you with your mistakes or call you a confounded, clumsy meddler'" (123). Flora's story illustrates the inefficacy of good intentions, as Marlow points out:

"She had meant well, and I had certainly meant well too. Captain Anthony--as far as I could gather from little Fyne--had meant well. As far as such lofty words may be applied to the obscure personages of this story, we were all filled with the noblest sentiments and intentions. The sea was there to give them the shelter of its solitude free from earth's petty suggestions. I could well marvel in myself, as to what had happened." (309-310)

When men take themselves and their actions too seriously, they appear almost ridiculous to Marlow. Because they are not ultimately in control, they are taking the risk of appearing foolish. Marlow describes how he viewed the Fynes and himself when they were discussing Flora's disappearance: "' . . . by a sudden and alarming aberration . . . I became mentally aware of three trained dogs dancing on their hind legs. I don't know

why. Perhaps because of the pervading solemnity. There's nothing more solemn on earth than a dance of trained dogs'" (57-58). He sees the Fynes and himself responding as society has trained them to, going through motions so to speak, and as a result not fully coming to grips with the real situation. Marlow uses another comic image when he recalls Fyne's concern about the consequences of involvement with Flora:

"But as he was making this artless confession I said to myself that, whatever consequences and complications he might have imagined, the complication from which he was suffering now could never, never have presented itself to his mind. Slow but sure (for I conceive that the Book of Destiny has been written up from the beginning to the last page) it had been coming for something like six years--and now it had come. The complication was there! I looked at his unshaken solemnity with the amused pity we give the victim of a funny if somewhat ill-natured paractical joke." (128)

The element of chance is always there to surprise man, and Marlow sees especial irony in the fact that life is destined to be that way. All the time man toils and tries, the outcome of his effort is already determined, but he can never predict it.

Although Marlow often sees a humorous element in the human situation, he nonetheless views the attempts of humans to make something of their lives with considerable compassion and sympathy. In fact, human relationships are valuable to Marlow as a source of strength in the face of the darkness. When the anonymous narrator

suggests that Marlow is interested in Flora's story merely for amusement, Marlow explains his reasons for gossiping: "' . . . surely life must be amused somehow. It would be still a very respectable provision if it were only for that end. But 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'" (117-118). Although we can never fully understand another human, although ultimately each man is isolated, the attempt to understand others creates some degree of solidarity, for we discover the common elements in human experience.

Roussel, in his chapter on Chance, points out the combination of "sympathetic identification and detachment"⁶ in Marlow's approach to understanding others: "On the one hand, Marlow often makes a conscious attempt to 'enter into the feelings' (II, 87) of characters like Flora and Anthony and to recreate through his 'imaginative sympathy' (II, 143) the psychological mood of an action of a moment."⁷ But on the other hand, says Roussel, ". . . Marlow frequently adopts a detachment . . . and at such times views the affairs of men as a comedy to be laughed at from a distance."⁸ And Roussel traces this aspect of Marlow's attitude to two sources. First, Marlow's detachment is a natural result of the years he

has spent at sea, "the perspective which this life has given him on the affairs of the land."⁹ But the more important source of his attitude is, according to Roussel, his understanding of reality: "The real source of Marlow's view of life as a game is rooted in a knowledge of the darkness which sets Marlow apart from the innocence of the world of the sea . . . This secret knowledge destroys Marlow's innocence and gives his scepticism a sharper edge."¹⁰ It is this ambivalent attitude, combining analytical detachment with the capability for deep sympathy, which colors Marlow's narrative. As he probes the social background of his story and as he explores the motivations of the characters his attitude helps us, too, to gain a sense of solidarity.

The most dominant force in society as Marlow views it is money. As he explains de Barral's role in his narrative, Marlow emphasizes the materialism of society, and he analyzes with sympathy the effect of that materialism on de Barral. Without the voracious greed of society as a whole, de Barral could never have made a profit: "'He caught in the street the word of the time and harnessed it to his preposterous chariot'" (78). According to Marlow, de Barral was as much a victim as his depositors: "' . . . 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. Wrapping himself up in deep and imbecile secrecy he had gone in for the most fantastic schemes . . .'" (81). Marlow sympathizes with de Barral's ironic fate that he never enjoyed the enormous sums he handled: "'It was perfectly true. He had 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'" (84). The success of his fraudulent schemes did not even bring de Barral a temporary material reward with which he could console himself. He was merely a tool of society.

De Barral's story also illustrates the tendency of society to hide its greed under the cover of moralistic-sounding words:

"Just about that time the word Thrift was to the fore. You know the power of words! . . . the financier de Barral was helping the great moral evolution of our character towards the newly discovered virtue of Thrift. He was helping it by all these great establishments of his, which made the moral merits of Thrift manifest to the most callous hearts, simply by promising to pay ten per cent. interest on all deposits. And you didn't want necessarily to belong to the well-to-do classes in order to participate in the advantages of virtue. If you had but a spare sixpence in the world and went and gave it to de Barral it was Thrift! It's quite likely that he himself believed it." (74)

Marlow emphasizes here that, although the word "thrift" has a virtuous connotation, people really wanted to make money for nothing. And he notes that materialism was not confined to the well-to-do; it permeated all levels of society. If society did not value money so highly, de Barral could never have amassed his fortune. Some of the responsibility for the harm he did belongs to society. De Barral himself, at the time of his trial, recognized the degree to which he was a victim, and Marlow senses what that realization must have cost him: "'And he had permitted himself his very first and last gesture in all these days, raising a hard-clenched fist above his head!'" (87). Marlow speculates about de Barral's state of mind as he first realized that he had been the tool of society and was about to be discarded as useless: "'I seemed to understand that, with the shock of the agonies and 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 at the very moment he is about to enter the tomb . . .'" (87). Marlow also points out that as de Barral achieved material fortune, he lost the ability to relate to those people close to him--first his wife, then his daughter--and when his fortunes failed,

he had nothing to turn to. For the sake of a thing-- money--de Barral lost what for Marlow is the most valuable possession--human relationships.

Although society would say that de Barral deserved jail, Marlow discusses the futility of that institution in dealing with human beings. De Barral was already cut off from people, and prison only reinforced his isolation. Marlow comments: "'It is one of the advantages of that magnificent invention, the prison, that you may forget people who are put there as though they were dead. One needn't worry about them. Nothing can happen to them that you can help. They can do nothing which might possibly matter to anybody. They come out of it, though, but that seems hardly an advantage to themselves or any one else'" (243). As Marlow points out, the punishment de Barral received had no positive effect on his fitness for society.

Society, then, has developed an institution for people who do not follow its rules, but prison serves the rules not the people. The violator is removed from society for a time, but he is not helped to adjust. Marlow sees prison as crippling rather than salutary: "'One has a notion of a maiming, crippling process; of the individual coming back damaged in some subtle way'" (352). He can imagine the effect of isolation from other men on the emotions:

"'. . . there is something which is preserved by prison life even better than one's discarded clothing. It is the force, the vividness of one's sentiments. A monastery will do that too; but in the unholy clausturation of a jail you are thrown back wholly upon yourself--for God and Faith are not there. The people outside disperse their affections, you hoard yours, you nurse them into intensity'" (354). Marlow understands de Barral's reaction, then, to Flora's marriage. She was a possession from his past, and he hoped to begin again where he had left off. But Flora had changed and his plans were shattered: "'And this man in the seclusion of his prison had thought himself into such a sense of ownership of that single human being he had to think about, as well may be inconceivable to us who have not had to serve a long (and wickedly unjust) sentence of penal servitude. She was positively the only thing, the one point where his thought found a resting-place, for years'" (371). Certainly Marlow does not condone the action de Barral took to deal with his situation, the attempted murder of Anthony, but he so emphasizes the forces which have influenced de Barral's development that we are able to gain an understanding of his motives, and to perceive society's role in his downfall.

Marlow evidences a similar depth of understanding in his narration of the role of the governess in Flora's

story. Whereas understanding de Barral depends on realizing the force of money in society, understanding the governess depends on recognition of the position of women, and Marlow emphasizes that fact. Even though the governess seems evil to us because of our natural sympathy for Flora, Marlow reminds us that the origin of her evil lies in society. Marlow enables us to gain an insight into the awful loneliness she must have felt when she realized the effects of de Barral's failure on her own personal life: "'And that the secret of her envenomed rage . . . against fate, accident and the whole course of human life, concentrating its venom on de Barral and including the innocent girl herself, was in the thought, in the fear crying within her, 'Now I have nothing to hold [Charley] with . . .'" (103). Marlow emphasizes the human being under that dignified anonymity of the title "governess": "'Do you look upon governesses as creatures above suspicion or necessarily of moral perfection? I suppose their hearts would not stand looking into much better than other people's. Why shouldn't a governess have passions, all the passions, even that of libertinage, and even ungovernable passions; yet suppressed by the very same means which keep the rest of us in order: early training--necessity--circumstances--fear of consequences . . .?'" (103). He recognizes that her existence must have been very difficult

for her: "'What an odious, ungratified existence it must have been for a woman as avid of all the sensuous emotions which life can give as most of her betters!'" (104).

Marlow is aware of the helpless position of a forty year old woman alone in his society. He understands her clinging to young Charley and her sense of desperation as she realized that the means she had to keep him-- money--was gone:

"She had seen her youth vanish, her freshness disappear, her hopes die, and now she felt her flaming middle-age slipping away from her. . . . She hoped to keep him straight with that enormous bribe. She was clearly a woman uncommon enough to live without illusions--which, of course, does not mean that she was reasonable. She had said to herself, perhaps with a fury of self-contempt, 'In a few years I shall be too old for anybody. Meantime I shall have him--and I shall hold him by throwing to him the money of that ordinary, silly little girl of no account.'" (104-105)

Marlow points out that the governess, too, is a victim of the materialistic forces of society--"' . . . this strange victim of the de Barral failure, whose name would never be known to the Official Receiver'" (106).

The governess' outpouring of her venom at Flora is horrible, and we recoil at the thought of its effects on the girl, but Marlow helps us to keep a perspective and to understand the action in terms of the governess' past. She was bursting out of the stifling atmosphere of her false existence, based on the expectations of the society around her. Marlow describes the outburst with

this understanding:

"She [Flora] stood, a frail and passive vessel into which the other went on pouring all the accumulated dislike for all her pupils, her scorn of all her employers (the ducal one included), the accumulated resentment, the infinite hatred of all these unrelieved years of--I won't say hypocrisy. The practice 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." (119-120)

Much of the evil of the governess, then, is traceable to her position in society, and it is also in part a result of the loneliness that society inflicts upon such women. Flora represented for her a means to obtain money, yes, but that money was intended to secure a relationship with young Charley. Marlow describes with sympathy her departure from Flora's life, and suggests her pathetic future: "'The woman, that woman of composed movements, of deliberate superior manner, took a little run to catch up with him, and directly she had caught up with him tried to introduce her hand under his arm. Mrs. Fyne saw the brusque half turn of the fellow's body as one avoids an importunate contact, defeating her attempt rudely. She did not try again, but kept pace with his stride, and Mrs. Fyne watched them, walking independently, turn the corner of the street

side by side, disappear for ever'" (124). It is certainly a comment on society, one which Marlow has pointed up, that in order to obtain love, or even a poor substitute for it, the governess must first obtain money.

The position of women in society is also a very important influence on Mrs. Fyne's character. Her feminist doctrines are clearly a reaction to her father, the poet Carleon Anthony, who treated her as a possession. But Mrs. Fyne's alternative is feminine dominance, not equality. Marlow summarizes her position:

"... it was something like this: that 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 anyone's feelings or convenience, since some women's existences were made impossible by the short-sighted baseness of men."
(59)

Marlow understands the difficulties of being a woman in his society and corroborates Mrs. Fyne's picture of the situation. When Mrs. Fyne relates to him how utterly dependent Flora was on her mercenary relative, she comments: "'I've never had such a crushing impression of the miserable dependence of girls--of women. This was an extreme case. But a young man--any man--could have gone to break stones on the roads or something of that kind--or enlisted--or--'" (172). Marlow agrees:

"'Women can't go forth on the high roads and by-ways to pick up a living even when dignity, independence or existence itself are at stake'" (172).

Although Marlow can sympathize to an extent with Mrs. Fyne's position, he realizes that the practice of her theories would lead to an equally unsatisfactory situation. However, he finds that she is more conventional in her behavior than in her theories. She reminds Marlow "'of a very trustworthy, very capable and excellent governess . . .'" (41). She may have violated convention by eloping, but her husband is a pillar of society, a Civil Servant. Curle points out the paradox of her character--"truly compassionate as long as her conventionality is not shocked, but . . . hard and unforgiving outside those limits."¹¹ Her reaction to Flora's plans to marry Anthony confirms this reading of her character. Throughout Flora's trials she is sympathetic, if somewhat lacking in warmth, but her sympathy does not extend to accepting Flora as a sister-in-law. When Marlow points out the parallel of her own marriage to Flora's, she responds, "'But it isn't at all the same thing!'" (161). And Marlow recognizes how very conventional she is: "'The daughter of a poet and the daughter of a convict are not comparable in the consequences of their conduct if their necessity may wear at times a similar aspect'" (161). Mrs. Fyne is

limited in her capacity to respond to Flora by her reaction to Flora's social position.

Marlow's response to Mrs. Fyne reflects the balance of sympathy and detachment that we have seen as characteristic of him. Although the Fynes' compassion for Flora has its limitations, Marlow cannot ignore it: "'If the Fynes had been an average sociable couple one knows only because leisure must be got through somehow, I would have made short work of that special invitation. But they were not that. Their undeniable humanity had to be acknowledged'" (135). When Mrs. Fyne says, "'But what else could we do?'" (138), Marlow realizes that they might have done less: "'That little cry of distress quite genuine in its inexpressiveness, altered my feeling towards Mrs. Fyne. It would have been so easy to have done nothing and to have thought no more about it'" (138). Even though Marlow disagrees with Mrs. Fyne's attitudes toward the marriage, he recognizes the help she has previously given Flora. As she laments the difficulty of Flora's life, she again adds, "'But what could one do after all!'"', and Marlow comments, "'And this stereotyped exclamation, expressing the difficulty of the problem and the readiness (at any rate) of good intentions, made me, as usual, feel more kindly towards her'" (166).

Because of her reaction to Flora's marriage to

Anthony, Marlow quickly recognizes that Mrs. Fyne's feminism is all theory. He explains to Mr. Fyne: "'I have some idea of Mrs. Fyne's mental attitude towards society with its injustices, with its atrocious or ridiculous conventions. As against them there is no audacity of action your wife's mind refuses to sanction. . . . But it is mere intellectual exercise'" (187). Marlow even suspects that her strategy may be to alienate her brother by interfering: "'She wanted to be done with it--maybe simply from the fatigue of continuous effort in good or evil which, in the bulk of common mortals, accounts for so many surprising inconsistencies of conduct'" (194). Throughout his narrative Marlow emphasizes, then, that Mrs. Fyne is very conventional and very much influenced by the values of her society, despite her unconventional theories.

According to Marlow's analysis, Mr. Fyne is even more conventional than his wife. He may assent to his wife's unusual view about women and he may tolerate her girl-friends, but this acquiescence grows out of his conventional belief in the importance of the marriage bond and domestic harmony. When Mrs. Fyne explains her feminist doctrines, Marlow sees the irony of Fyne's "'endorsing it all as became a good, convinced husband'" (̄9). With his usual sense of humor, Marlow points out their conventionality: "'They amused me beyond the

wildest imaginings of which I was capable. After the first shock, you understand, I recovered very quickly. The order of the world was safe enough. He was a civil servant and she his good and faithful wife'" (59).

Marlow's attitude toward Fyne is evident from his puns on his occupation and on his avocation. Fyne is a Civil Servant for his government and a "civil servant" for his wife; he is "an enthusiastic pedestrian" (37) because he likes to walk and also because his opinions are commonplace.

Marlow's analysis of the Fynes shows his understanding of the limiting effects of society and of the attempts of men to live fully in spite of convention:

"The domestic-slave daughter of Carleon Anthony and the little Fyne of the Civil Service (that flower of civilization) were not intelligent people. They were commonplace, earnest, without smiles and without guile. But he had his solemnities and she had her reveries, her lurid, violent, crude reveries. And I thought with some sadness that all these revolts and indignations, all these protests, revulsions of feeling, pangs of suffering and of rage, expressed but the uneasiness of sensual beings trying for their share in the joys of form, colour, sensations--the only riches of our world of senses." (61-62)

In practice, Marlow points out, the Fynes' marriage, except for its clandestine beginning, is a model of convention--"'perfectly successful and even happy, in an earnest, unplayful fashion, being blessed besides by three healthy, active, self-reliant children, all girls'" (39). The marriage is clearly more a product of Mr.

Fyne's "'very solemn views as to the destiny of women on this earth, the nature of our sublunary love, the obligations of this transient life, and so on'" (37) than of Mrs. Fyne's feminism. Marlow calls Fyne "'the emissary of the order of things which stops at the edge of the sea'" (250), and thus identifies him with the shore and the society that the shore symbolizes in the novel.

Fyne's conventionality is very evident when the unexpected problem of Flora's marrying his important brother-in-law arises. At first Fyne sees no point in interfering, but his mind is in a turmoil because he disagrees with his wife, who wants him to see Anthony. He finally does become convinced of his wife's viewpoint, however, when she reveals to him that in her letter Flora has suggested that she is deliberately flaunting conventions in her marriage with Anthony. And Marlow soon learns that the idea of being even remotely attached to de Barral is displeasing to Fyne. Fyne is indignant that Flora has accepted the offer of Anthony for the sake of her father and not simply for love--as society would have it--and, worse yet, that she says so. He is not at all tolerant of the idea of a convict in the family either: "'Just think of Roderick Anthony, the son of a gentleman, after all . . .'" (247). As Marlow points out, Fyne will no longer be able to boast about

his brother-in-law, all because of "'a confounded convict'" (150). Thus, because of the limitations on his thinking fostered by society, Fyne interferes with Anthony and Flora, with disastrous results.

In "The Structure of Sympathy: Conrad and the Chance that Wasn't," Gary Geddes points out that the Fynes are limited in their capacity for "imaginative sympathy" for Flora.¹² Even their "good intentions" are a product of their conventionality, not of human sympathy. Geddes comments, "Ironically the 'good intentions' of the Fynes prove to be even more disastrous than the obvious ill-will of her relatives."¹³ But Marlow has "imaginative sympathy" and can see not only Flora's difficulty but the influences which have made the Fynes as they are.

De Barral, the governess, and the Fynes are static characters, but the three principal characters in Marlow's narrative--Powell, Anthony, and Flora are more complex. Marlow's assessment changes as he acquires more knowledge about them. Marlow analyzes these characters, too, in the context of society. We see Powell, Flora, and Anthony in the process of development, and we are able to determine the forces that influence them.

As we saw earlier, Powell is relatively detached from society. When Marlow meets him, he is clearly uninvolved with the life of the shore. During his

narrative Marlow traces the development of Powell's attitudes. He points out that Powell's first voyage on the Ferndale brought about his awareness of the darkness. At the outset of the journey he felt very secure and self-assured:

"Just then young Powell felt as if anybody ought to be glad enough to be quit of the shore. We know he was an orphan from a very early age, without brothers or sisters--no near relations of any kind, I believe, except that aunt who had quarrelled with his father. No affections stood in the way of the quiet satisfaction with which he thought that now all the worries were over, that there was nothing before him but duties, that he knew what he would have to do as the dawn broke and for a long succession of days. A most soothing certitude." (273)

Powell's sense of security is reminiscent of young Jim's prior to the Patna collision, and of Razumov's prior to finding Haldin in his rooms. Like them, he is unaware of the darkness and certainly has no thought of how to deal with it.

In his narration Marlow tells his friend that the process of Powell's development began with his realization that something was awry in the secure world of the Ferndale: "'There was enough of the unusual there to be recognized even by Powell's inexperience. The officers kept out of the cabin against the custom of the service, and then this sort of accent in the mate's talk'" (278). Because of Powell's isolation on the ship he could not help noticing the tense atmosphere. Whereas unusual circumstances on land might be obscured by

the hustle and bustle of society, at sea they are placed in sharp relief.

Powell's growing concern was intensified by his conversation with de Barral. The old man dwelt on death and remarked that his life had been stolen from him. Although Powell knew de Barral as Smith and had no preconceived ideas about him, he could not ignore this disturbing conversation. Again Marlow emphasizes the effect of Powell's experience on his state of mind: "'But this thing, familiar and mysterious at the same time, occupied his imagination. The solitude of the sea intensifies the thoughts and the facts of one's experience which seems to lie at the very centre of the world, as the ship which carries one always remains the centre figure of the round horizon'" (300). In spite of his favorable attitude toward Anthony, Flora, and even "Smith," Powell finally recognized that something was wrong among them: "' . . . he admitted to me that deep down within him an inexplicable and uneasy suspicion that all was not well in that cabin, so unusually cut off from the rest of the ship, came into being and grew against his will . . .'" (324).

Marlow stresses several points in regard to Powell. He emphasizes Powell's youthful naïveté and his lack of stereotyped conceptions of others. He points out Powell's growing suspicions as he is affected by the

tense atmosphere on the isolated ship. And he prepares us for Powell's spying by emphasizing the element of chance that led to it. Like the professor in Under Western Eyes, Marlow wants us to understand the motives for what would ordinarily be unacceptable behavior. Although spying would under normal circumstances be abhorrent to him, Powell was tempted when he stooped to pick up a coil of rope and accidentally saw through the skylight of Anthony's quarters. This unconventional behavior certainly had desirable effects, for Powell was able to prevent de Barral's poisoning of Anthony. And, equally important, Powell's action led to a resolution of the conflict between Anthony and Flora (as we shall see later). Marlow carefully points out the effect on Powell himself, for at this point the young man confronted the darkness. When he rushed to the cabin to prevent Anthony from drinking the poison, he intended simply to grab the glass and leave, but he hesitated in the cabin long enough for Anthony to find him there. Marlow explains his hesitation:

"What checked him at the crucial moment was the familiar harmless aspect of common things, the steady light, the open book on the table, the solitude, the peace, the home-like effect of the place. He held the glass in his hand; all he had to do was to vanish back beyond the curtains, flee with it noiselessly into the night on deck, fling it unseen overboard. A minute or less. And then all that would have happened would have been the wonder at the utter disappearance of a glass tumbler, a ridiculous riddle in pantry-affairs beyond the wit of any one

on board to solve. The grain of sand upon which Powell stumbled in his headlong career was a moment of incredulity as to the truth of his own conviction because it had failed to affect the safe aspect of familiar things." (419)

As Marlow describes this moment, it was the moment of confrontation with the actuality of the darkness for Powell. We have seen that up to now he had accepted appearances as reality, but his realization of de Barral's intention forced him to see that things are not what they appear to be.

When Powell tells Marlow about these events years later, he can still hardly believe that such evil could exist. Once it was expurgated from the microcosm of the Ferndale Powell remained in that world with the sense that harmony had been restored to it. Unlike Marlow, he has little interest in exploring the depths of his story. When Marlow suggests to him a theory explaining de Barral's possession of poison, Powell accepts it because it is somewhat favorable to Flora's father and says with a wave of his hand: "'Don't let us think of it'" (437). Whether consciously or not, Powell's attitude toward shore life reflects the fact that it was the influence of society which created de Barral's evil. After his confrontation with the darkness, Powell chose detachment and clung to the small world of the Ferndale, committing himself only to the two people to whom he was attached, Flora and Anthony. But we

learn that Powell had to confront another reality, the element of chance in the form of the accident which killed Captain Anthony. Marlow relates Powell's reaction: ""Yes. Good men go out as if there was no use for them in the world. It seems as if there were things that, as the Turks say, are written. Or else fate has a try and sometimes misses its mark"" (438). Aware of the darkness and its potential for disrupting men's lives, Powell remains detached, and we can see that his resolution to the problem of the darkness is to maintain his commitment to Flora. Marlow sees this fact too, and he encourages that commitment. Marlow sees that Powell has a different approach to the darkness than he. As we shall see, he recognizes the validity of this approach because the story Powell tells him reveals the weaknesses in his own. Thus in tracing Powell's story Marlow focuses on his evolution of a philosophy of life. Powell is for Marlow an example of a man who is uninvolved with society and who seeks his own personal means of facing the darkness. That means is detachment from society in general and commitment to the individual.

The center of Marlow's interest is, of course, the relationship between Flora and Anthony. The relationship between the sexes is an important aspect of society's game, and Flora and Anthony represent for Marlow an

opportunity for exploring the conventions of love and marriage. Of course, the relationship between the sexes in any society is largely affected by the place of women in that society. Before we can understand Marlow's assessment of Flora and of her marriage to Anthony, we must examine his understanding of women's role in his particular society. We have already seen something of his attitude in the way he presents Mrs. Fyne and the governess; he is certainly aware of the limitations society imposes on women. But more important than this realization is Marlow's interpretation of women's nature and of the perspective woman is able to bring to society. Marlow seems to view women as closer to the darkness than men and implies that they are therefore more in touch with reality. Society is essentially a male construct, but women, by helping men maintain the illusions upon which it is based, support the institutions and conventions of society. However, because they are more conscious than men of the underlying truth, because they are more in touch with the emotional side of human nature, they bring to a male-female relationship a depth of understanding that men do not ordinarily have.

Marlow comments on the nature of women throughout his narrative. He claims to understand women because he shares the feminine attitude--"that small portion of 'femininity,' that drop of superior essence of which

I am myself aware; which I gratefully acknowledge, has saved me from one or two misadventures in my life either ridiculous or lamentable, I am not very certain which'" (146). Marlow is like women because he is more of an onlooker, a passive supporter, than an active participant in society. He values his feminine perspective, without which men like Fyne take the game too seriously and get into misadventures. Because he understands women's perspective Marlow, in contrast with the anonymous narrator, does not view woman as mysterious. He sees through the conventional attitudes to the reality: "'You see, you are such a chivalrous masculine beggar. But there is enough of the woman in my nature to free my judgment of women from glamorous reticency. And then, why should I upset myself? A woman is not necessarily either a doll or an angel to me. She is a human being, very much like myself!'" (53).

Frequently Marlow associates women with the "Irrelevant," but this association is not meant as demeaning: "'For if we men try to put the spaciousness of all experiences into our reasoning and would fain put the Infinite itself into our love, it isn't, as some writer has remarked, 'It isn't women's doing.' Oh, no. They don't care for these things. That sort of aspiration is not much in their way; and it shall be a funny world, the world of their arranging, where the Irrelevant

would fantastically step in to take the place of the sober humdrum Imaginative . . .'" (93). Marlow believes that men schematize experience and fabricate a system of illusions to bring order to the chaos of the darkness. Thus men may ignore all or part of the reality underlying their illusions. Women are more closely allied with the darkness which men would have "irrelevant" to their world. Marlow points out that even in their view of women men do not come to grips with reality. He says to the anonymous narrator: "'To-day I have been simply trying to be spacious and I perceive I've managed to hurt your susceptibilities which are consecrated to women. When you sit alone and silent you are defending in your mind the poor women from attacks which cannot possibly touch them'" (94). But Marlow suggests that in society as it is women support men's illusions "'without which the average male creature cannot get on'" (94). There is some quality in women, which Marlow cannot easily define, that causes them to support the game men have arranged, even though as passive spectators, they see the flaws in that game. Women will even lie to give men the support they need: "'The women's rougher, simpler, more upright judgment, embraces the whole truth, which their tact, their mistrust of masculine idealism, ever prevents them from speaking in its entirety. . . . We could not bear it. It would cause infinite misery

and bring about most awful disturbances in 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. And they know it. They are merciful'" (144). Marlow sees women as closer to "the whole truth," and therefore to the darkness, than men. He implies that society, imperfect as it is, is masculine-oriented, and that women know that it would not stand the test of confrontation with the truth. Thus women support men's illusions, which they recognize as such, because they are in no position to offer a substitute:

" . . . what prevents women . . . from 'coming on deck and playing hell with the ship' generally, is that something in them precise and mysterious, acting both as restraint and as inspiration; their femininity, in short, which they think they can get rid of by trying hard, but can't, and never will. Therefore we may conclude that, for all their enterprises, the world is and remains safe enough." (63)

Women, then, can reconcile reality and the illusions of civilization. Although Marlow recognizes the severely limited position of women in his society, he sees their function as tempering and balancing man's intellectual ordering of reality with their emotional understanding. Such a balanced union of the sexes is obviously created in marriage.

Although women have an important point of view to bring to society, they are limited in their ability to contribute; they are more acted upon than acting:

"'And this is the pathos of being a woman. A man can

struggle to get a place for himself or perish. But a woman's part is passive. . . . They are not made for attack. Wait they must'" (281). Passivity, says Marlow, is as much of the essence of women as death is of humanity:

"As to women, they know that the clamour for opportunities for them to become something which they cannot be is as reasonable as if mankind at large started asking for opportunities of winning immortality in this world, in which death is the very condition of life. You must understand that I am not talking here of material existence. That naturally is implied; but you won't maintain that a woman who, say, enlisted for instance, (there have been cases) has conquered her place in the world. She has only got her living in it--which is quite meritorious, but not quite the same thing!" (281-282)

Marlow has a sympathetic understanding of what it means to be a woman in his society, and because women's nature is to be passive, most accept this role. Even Mrs. Fyne, who seems to think women deserve more opportunity, in practice behaves as though she accepts her place.

We can now turn to an exploration of Marlow's relationship with Flora de Barral with an understanding of the philosophy and attitudes which Marlow brings to that relationship. Like the other characters in Chance, Flora is very much affected by the imprisoning values of society, and Marlow frequently points out that fact. Flora suffers from being a woman in a male-dominated society, from being poor in a mercenary society, from being the daughter of a convict in a status-conscious

society. Many critics have pointed out the extent to which she is acted upon by forces outside her control. In "The Barrier Between Youth and Maturity in the Works of Joseph Conrad," Thomas M. Lorch describes her as helpless, with "no positive course of action . . . open to her."¹⁴ Karl too finds her passive and sees her as unable to act because of circumstances: ". . . because of her sex, she lacks . . . mobility."¹⁵ Limited by the fact that she is a woman, Flora has no choice except to remain passive, but within those limitations, learns to use her femininity to her advantage and attains happiness with Anthony. Like Jim, she establishes a life outside the conventions of society. Society's evaluation of her becomes irrelevant.

We learn about Flora's relationship with Marlow from his own account to the anonymous narrator. When he relates that part of his story up until the elopement, he has no knowledge of the outcome of the marriage. He tells of his initial meeting with her at the quarry, and of the news of her elopement, and then supplies information which helps to explain her motivation for her behavior at the Fynes'. And finally he relates his conversation with her outside Anthony's hotel, at the end of which he sends her in to Anthony. As he relates the first part of Flora's story to his friend, Marlow tries to clarify her motivation by bringing to bear on her

behavior what he knows about her past. He interjects information about her past where it will illuminate the events he relates. Through this strategy Marlow hopes to emphasize the degree to which Flora's life lacked love and to explain her total lack of resources when her father's fortunes failed. Her life had had the security of those things society values--money and status, but she had nothing but herself to fall back on. She even lost her identity, for to be the daughter of the convict de Barral is far different from being the daughter of the financier de Barral. Understanding the devastating effect on Flora of her father's downfall, Marlow is able to understand his own first encounter with her at the quarry where she was considering suicide. Although Marlow did not really know what she had in mind at the time of this meeting, he was aware of something very unusual in her manner: "'I perceived then that her thick eyelashes were wet. This surprising discovery silenced me as you may guess. . . . The clouded brow, the pained mouth, the vague fixed glance! A victim!'" (45-46).

As Marlow has learned from the Fynes, when Flora was left without any support, she ran to them, the only people with whom she had any relationship at all. Marlow recognizes, however, that these people too failed to give Flora love. They cared for her immediate physical needs and tried to help her adjust to her changed status,

but their charity arose from a middle-class sense of duty. Her relatives were even less responsive to her needs. Marlow points out how much they treated her as a thing, a possession:

"At first she was made much of . . . they exhibited her with ignoble self satisfaction. She did not know how to defend herself from their importunities, insolence and exigencies. She lived amongst them, a passive victim, quivering in every nerve, as if she were flayed. After the trial her position became still worse. On the least occasion and even on no occasions at all she was scolded, or else taunted with her dependence." (164)

During this period of her life the only positive hope Flora had lay in her memory of her father. Her relationship to him, though obviously wanting, was the closest approximation to love she had.

Finally Flora returned to stay with the Fynes, and the hopelessness of her position led her to the brink of the quarry. Marlow emphasizes what her meeting with Anthony must have meant to her. Anthony offered real human contact not just dutiful charity: "'Now that he was by her side, she felt his nearness intimately, like a touch'" (220). What he offered her--"'rest and peace and security'" (221)--was what she needed most deeply. Marlow describes her reaction with his usual understanding: "'He had made himself felt. That girl was, one may say, washing about with slack limbs in the ugly surf of life with no opportunity to strike out for herself, when suddenly she had been made to feel that

there was somebody beside her in the bitter water. A most considerable moral event for her; whether she was aware of it or not'" (222).

At the time of the elopement Marlow's knowledge of Flora consisted of his unusual meeting with her at the quarry and a subsequent discovery of her background through the Fynes. Thus when he met her in London he had learned much of her unhappy background and therefore saw her from a different perspective than he had at the quarry.

When, during his conversation with Flora outside Anthony's hotel where Fyne was confronting Anthony, Marlow learned the story of her relationship with Anthony, he assumed that for a girl of her situation such a marriage could only be a positive step. This solution seemed the obvious and conventional one for a girl in her position. But here Marlow's understanding failed, for he did not know enough of the facts to make an accurate judgment. He himself reveals his ignorance of the situation:

"With that man in the hotel, whom I did not know, and this girl standing before me in the street I felt that it was an exceptional case. He had broken away from his surroundings; she stood outside the pale. One aspect of conventions which people who declaim against them lose sight of is that conventions make both joy and suffering easier to bear in a becoming manner. But those two were outside all conventions. They would be as untrammelled in a sense as the first man and the first woman. The trouble was I could not imagine anything about

Flora de Barral and the brother of Mrs. Fyne. Of, if you like, I could imagine anything which comes practically to the same thing. Darkness and chaos are first cousins." (210)

The ordinary illusions of society had failed Flora and what Marlow could see was that she had to find her own way of coming to terms with the darkness she was facing. Yet he was glad to discover something conventional in Flora's reaction to Anthony when she referred to him as generous: "' . . . I was pleased to hear something which proved that she was sensible and open to the sentiment of gratitude which in this case was significant. In the face of a man's desire a girl is excusable if she thinks herself priceless. I mean a girl of our civilization which has established a dithyrambic phraseology for the expression of love. A man in love will accept any convention exalting the object of his passion and in this indirect way his passion itself'" (233-234). Although he recognized that state of Flora's mind at this time, Marlow encouraged her to go into a situation about which he knew the barest minimum. He realized what she had suffered, even suspected that her past had rendered her incapable of being sure of her own motives: "'I had already the suspicion that she did not know her own feelings. All this work of the merest chance had been so unexpected, so sudden. And she had nothing to fall back upon, no experience but such as to shake her belief

in every human being. She was dreadfully and pitifully forlorn'" (237-238). Even Marlow felt depressed at her state, and he saw only one alternative for her: "'It was almost in order to comfort my own depression that I remarked cheerfully: '"Well, I know of somebody who must be growing extremely anxious to see you'"' (238). Marlow could have no way of knowing the danger of the situation Flora was entering, and, given the opportunity for a single young woman in his society, his encouragement was with the best of intentions: "'It's quite real. Never fear," I said encouragingly . . .'" (238).

Marlow's narration in Part One, then, is the record of his study of Flora de Barral. On the basis of his understanding of her background and her needs, he has encouraged her to pursue marriage with Anthony. But before his narration in Part One is complete, Marlow includes some additional information he learned from Fyne after the interview with Anthony. This information has clearly caused Marlow to have some doubts about the rightness of his action. Marlow imagined almost an idyllic existence for the couple on a ship at sea, but Fyne forced him once more to reassess his view of Flora's situation by reminding him that Flora's father was alive and that she loved him and believed him innocent. Marlow was admittedly shocked at the reminder of de Barral's existence and realized that prison would have done

nothing to help de Barral fit into society. Even more surprising to Marlow was the news that Flora's father was coming out of prison. He suddenly understood much more about Flora than he had previously: "' . . . she must have been thinking of it day and night. What to do with him? Where to go? How to keep body and soul together? He had never made any friends. The only relations were the atrocious East-End cousins. We know what they were. Nothing but wretchedness, whichever way she turned in an unjust and prejudiced world. And to look at him helplessly she felt would be too much for her'" (246). Marlow continued, however, to see Anthony as a refuge for this unhappy girl. As she lingered outside the hotel, he thought, "'But why didn't she go then to her generous man? Why stand there as if clinging to this solid earth which she surely hated as one must hate the place where one has been tormented, hopeless, unhappy'" (249). However, the imagery in which Marlow describes Flora suggests his ambiguous feelings about her future: "'She had vanished, her black figure had melted in the darkness of the open door'" (250). And at the end of his narrative he admits that he does not know all the facts and that he is not certain of the outcome: "'Were they looking at each other in silence and feeling they were alone in the world as lovers should at the moment of meeting? But that fine forgetfulness

was surely impossible to Anthony the seaman directly after the wrangling interview with Fyne the emissary of an order of things which stops at the edge of the sea. How much he was disturbed I couldn't tell because I did not know what that impetuous lover had had to listen to" (250). Thus Marlow ends this narrative with a hint of doubt in his words: "'How far Flora went I can't say. 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 . . .'" (253).

The fact that Marlow is not sure of a "happily ever after" ending to the marriage of Flora and Anthony is reflected in his interest in Powell, from whom he knows he may hear more of the story. The anonymous narrator tells us that after learning the story of Flora and Anthony, he did not see Marlow for a time, but "At last, one evening rather early, very soon after dinner, he turned up in my rooms" (257). In the intervening time Marlow has cultivated his acquaintance with Powell and has learned the remainder of Flora's and Anthony's story. He has also played a role in bringing Flora and Powell together. He tells the narrator of his pursuit of Powell, who mysteriously disappeared in his boat on occasion. And Marlow acknowledges that Flora was on his mind, an indication that he was unsure of her fate: "'I chased the mystery of the vanishing Powell dreamily,

looking about me at the ships, thinking of the girl Flora, of life's chances--and do you know, it was very simple'" (258). Marlow was admittedly lonely: "'I was rather lonely cruising about; but that, too, on the river has its charm sometimes'" (258). While he waited for Powell, he became even more lonely: "'I might have imagined myself arrived on a desert island. In fact, as I reclined smoking, a sense of absolute loneliness grew on me'" (260). Marlow has had an opportunity to understand Flora more deeply than is usual in human relationships. Seldom does one person know another to that extent, and for Marlow such knowledge is a means to solidarity, to escaping the lonely isolation to which man is subject. His interest in Powell is certainly for the purpose of learning more about Flora: "'I didn't want to talk at all except for the purpose of getting him going . . . I brought him to talk about that voyage, which, by the by, was not the first voyage of Flora de Barral'" (261). It is not Powell's voyage he is interested in, but Flora's.

As we have seen, Marlow does have an unusual understanding of Flora, and he reminds the narrator of that fact: "'I--we--have already the inner knowledge. We know the history of Flora de Barral. We know something of Captain Anthony. We have the secret of the situation'" (261). But Marlow does not really understand Anthony,

for he could not predict the effect on him of Fyne's visit. Part Two of Chance records Marlow's growing understanding of the man Flora married and his explanation of the events that took place on Powell's first voyage on the Ferndale. Of course, when Marlow tells this part of the story to the narrator, he knows the whole story, and his speculation reflects this knowledge. He says of Anthony that, although "'he had no training in the usual conventions'" and "'no experience whatever of women'" (262), he was influenced by his father; thus, "'He could only have an ideal conception of his position'" and was "'intoxicated with the pity and tenderness of his part'" (261). Now Marlow knows the devastating effect of Fyne's visit on a man of this temperament. Marlow speculates that even if Flora were perfectly frank with Anthony, his idealism would have prevented him from really hearing her. And Marlow knows Flora well enough to understand that when she found Anthony visibly upset after Fyne's visit, she would have assumed only that he did not really care for her. He believes her damaged by her governess' accusations: "'She could not help believing what she had been told; that she was in some mysterious way odious and unlovable'" (263). So completely does Marlow understand Flora that he is able to relate her experience to a similar one of his own. He recalls once being accused of being a "consummate

hypocrite'" (264). Although he knows the charge to be unfair, he remarks:

"Yet to this day there are moments when it comes into my mind, and involuntarily I ask myself, 'What if it were true?' It's absurd, but it has on one or two occasions nearly affected my conduct. And yet I was not an impressionable, ignorant young girl. I had taken the exact measure of the fellow's utter worthlessness long before. He had never been for me a person of prestige and power, like that awful governess to Flora de Barral. See the might of suggestion? We live at the mercy of a malevolent word. A sound, a mere disturbance of the air, sinks into our very soul sometimes." (264)

Marlow realizes that if he could be so influenced by a vicious verbal attack, a young girl like Flora could be much more affected.

Marlow's awareness of Flora's individuality and his understanding of the role of women as essentially passive enables him to comprehend her part in the events on the Ferndale. The next section of Marlow's narrative consists in his exploring the facts which Powell has told him about the journey and relating them to his own deeper understanding of Flora. When Powell reports the degree to which Flora was resented on the ship, Marlow, with his characteristic empathy, remarks: "'It was as if misfortune marked its victims on the forehead for the dislike of the crowd. I am not thinking here of numbers. Two men may behave like a crowd, three certainly will when their emotions are engaged. It was as if the forehead of Flora de Barral were marked. Was the girl born

to be a victim; to be always disliked and crushed as if she were too fine for this world? Or too luckless-- since that also is often counted as sin?" (309). As Marlow realizes the difficulties Flora had to face in her marriage, as he realizes the futility of the good intentions of everybody involved, including his own, he perceives the girl's fate in a larger context: "'The girl's life had presented itself to me as a tragicomical adventure, the saddest thing on earth, slipping between frank laughter and unabashed tears. Yes, the saddest facts and the most common, and, being common, perhaps the most worthy of our unreserved pity'" (310). Marlow sees that Flora's life simply exemplifies the common irony of unfulfilled human intentions. Moreover, he in part attributes Flora's position to her sex:

"... in the light of my memories I was certain that she at least must have been passive, for that is of necessity the part of women, this waiting on fate which some of them, and not the most intelligent, cover up by the vain appearances of agitation. Flora de Barral was not exceptionally intelligent but she was thoroughly feminine. She would be passive (and that does not mean inanimate) in the 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 women's visible, tangible power. Of that I was certain. Had she not endured already? Yet it is so true that the germ of destruction lies in wait for us mortals, even at the very source of our strength, that one may die of too much endurance as well as of too little of it." (310)

Marlow suggests that Flora's only response as a woman was passivity. But Anthony by his "magnanimous"

renunciation deprived her of fulfillment. Though woman by nature endures, too much endurance is deadening.

In order to understand better Flora's painful situation, Marlow tries to explain the facts that he learns about Anthony. Powell tells him that Anthony seemed very unhappy: "'A sailor indeed looks generally into the great distances, but in Captain Anthony's case there was--as Powell expressed it--something peculiar, something purposeful like the avoidance of pain or temptation'" (313). He seemed "'the prey of some incomprehensible grief, longing or regret'" (322).

After he recreates for the anonymous narrator the atmosphere which Powell described on the Ferndale, Marlow traces the origins of that situation to Fyne's visit to Anthony: "'Good little Fyne. You have no idea what infernal mischief he had worked during his call at the hotel. But then who could have suspected Anthony of being a heroic creature. There are several kinds of heroism and one of them at least is idiotic. It is the one which wears the aspect of sublime delicacy. It is apparently the one of which the son of the delicate poet was capable'" (327-328). Whereas Carleon Anthony turned his idealism into verse, Captain Anthony tried to turn his into reality: "'The inarticulate son 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'" (328). Marlow concludes, with considerable understanding and empathy, that Anthony had led a life of "'solitude and silence'" (328) and that Flora had entered his heart like a passion taking over every aspect of his being. He then examines the probable effect of Fyne on a man of this temperament and in this situation:

"To the man then of a silence made only more impressive by the inarticulate thunders and mutters of the great seas, an utter stranger to the clatter of tongues, there comes the muscular little Fyne, the most marked representative of that mankind whose voice is so strange to him, the husband of his sister, a personality standing out from the misty and remote multitude. He comes and throws at him more talk than he had ever heard boomed out in an hour, and certainly touching the deepest things Anthony had ever discovered in himself, and flings words like 'unfair' whose very sound is abhorrent to him. Unfair! Undue advantage! He! Unfair to that girl? Cruel to her!" (329)

Thus Marlow realizes that the suggestion that Anthony was only using a woman would have offended his delicacy and led to "'That renunciation at which one does not know whether to grin or shudder'" (331). After all, Flora had never told Anthony that she loved him. Marlow points out too that Anthony was victim of an illusion about women: "'Possessed by most men's touching illusion as to the frailness of women and their spiritual fragility, it seemed to Anthony that he would be destroying, breaking

something very precious inside that being. In fact nothing less than partly murdering her. This seems a very extreme effect to flow from Fyne's words. But Anthony, unaccustomed to the chatter of the firm earth, never stayed to ask himself what value these words could have in Fyne's mouth'" (332-333). Marlow sees, then, the tragic conflict between Flora's lack of self-confidence-- "'It was as that abominable governess had said. She was insignificant, contemptible. Nobody could love her'" (335)--and the "magnanimity" which caused Anthony to renounce his conjugal rights. As Marlow points out, Anthony planned an "'impossible existence'" (340) for himself and Flora: "'An existence, mind you, which, on shore, in the thick of mankind, of varied interests, of distractions, of infinite opportunities to preserve your distance from each other, is hardly conceivable; but on board ship, at sea, en tete-a-tete for days and weeks and months together, could mean nothing but mental torture, an exquisite absurdity of torment'" (340). Marlow sees that Anthony's feeling was not grounded in the realities of human nature:

"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." (347-348).

By acknowledging his relationship with Flora only on an intellectual and idealistic level Anthony ignored the human need for fulfillment through sexual intercourse, which can encompass the intellectual as well as the emotional and the physical.

At this point in his narrative, having carefully established the state of the minds of both Anthony and Flora and having pointed out the tragic conflict in their relationship, Marlow pauses to establish the nature of de Barral's mind as he came out of prison, learned of his daughter's marriage, and boarded the Ferndale. As we saw earlier, Marlow takes great pains to understand what brought de Barral to this situation, and at this particular point he especially explores the effect of prison on such a man. Thus, as we watch the interaction of the characters on board the ship, we are acutely aware of the pressures, needs, and motives which have gone into the making of their conflict. Marlow describes the atmosphere of the ship:

"The most unrestful ship that ever sailed out of any port on earth. I am not alluding to her sea-going qualities. Mr. Powell tells me she was as steady as a church. I mean unrestful in the sense, for instance, which this planet of ours is unrestful--a matter of an uneasy atmosphere disturbed

by passions, jealousies, loves, hates and the troubles of transcendental good intentions, which, though ethically valuable, I have no doubt often cause more unhappiness than the plots of the most evil tendency." (376)

The tension of this false situation mounted, and Flora and Anthony found it more and more difficult. All this time her father wanted to separate them. Anthony, as Marlow suggests, gradually came to realize what he had done to himself: "'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'" (395). On the other hand, Flora seemed to remain rigidly behind her own wall:

"And it must also be said, in order not to make Anthony more stupidly sublime than he was, that the behaviour of Flora kept him at a distance. The girl was afraid to add to the exasperation of her father. It was her unhappy lot to be made more wretched by the only affection which she could not suspect. She could not be angry with it, however, and out of deference for that exaggerated sentiment she hardly dared to look otherwise than by stealth at the man whose masterful compassion had carried her off. And quite unable to understand the extent of Anthony's delicacy, she said to herself that 'he didn't care'." (395-396)

Of course, the combination of de Barral's evil intention and a series of accidents brought the situation

to the breaking point. As Marlow retells Powell's story of the night of the attempted murder, he pauses to offer his analysis of the mistake that Flora and Anthony made:

" . . . I believe that just then the tension of the false situation was at its highest. Of all the forms offered to us by life it is the one demanding a couple to realize it fully, which is the most imperative. Pairing off is the fate of mankind. And if two beings thrown together, mutually attracted, resist the necessity, fail in understanding and voluntarily stop short of the--the embrace, in the noblest 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."
(426-427)

Marlow seems to see the union of the sexes as the closest to the achievement of completeness that human beings can achieve, and if we recall his attitude toward the two sexes, we can understand this view. He associates men with the surface world, with the world of illusions which govern society, and he sees women as closer to the darkness, more in touch with the emotional life which society attempts to order and control. Men are brought into closer contact with reality when in the context of love, they experience the mystery of sexual intercourse. Anthony attempted to defy nature by denying the natural fulfillment of his love. Fortunately the situation led Flora to break out of her wall of passive endurance, and, when Anthony said that he was beaten and would give her

up, she would not accept his decision. Because she overcame the barrier between them, they consummated their love, thus fulfilling their call to acknowledge life to the fullest. Her choice of Anthony over her father, as we have seen, drove de Barral to suicide. Although there is justice in de Barral's end, Marlow emphasizes the tragic element in the life of this very lonely man. He shares his thoughts on de Barral which came to him at the end of Powell's narrative: "'We sat silent then, my mind running on the end of de Barral, on the irresistible pressure of imaginary griefs, crushing conscience, scruples, prudence, under their ever-expanding volume, on the sombre and venomous irony in the obsession which had mastered that old man'" (435).

At the close of Powell's narrative, Marlow learns from him that Flora is living nearby, and he finally understands the reason for Powell's mysterious disappearances. When he suggests that Powell approach Mrs. Anthony, he detects something of Captain Anthony's idealism: "'... he allowed a gleam to light up his eyes, like the reflection of some inward fire tended in the sanctuary of his heart by a devotion as pure as that of any vestal'" (441). Marlow knows that this is not the kind of devotion Flora needs and tells Powell so.

Marlow reveals to the anonymous narrator that he himself has seen Flora. As he describes the setting

of the visit, there is a noticeable contrast with the stifling urban setting of his previous conversation with her:

"The afternoon was well advanced before I approached the cottage. The amenity of a fine day in its decline surrounded me with a beneficent, a calming influence; I felt it in the silence of the shady lane, in the pure air, in the blue sky. It is difficult to retain the memory of the conflicts, miseries, temptations and crimes of men's self-seeking existence when one is alone with the charming serenity of the unconscious nature. Breathing the dreamless peace around the picturesque cottage I was approaching, it seemed to me that it must reign everywhere, over all the globe of water and land and in the hearts of all the dwellers on this earth." (442)

The story of Flora's difficult adventure has led Marlow to see the extent to which men introduce complications into their lives. Far away from the ugly city he can for a moment forget men's conflicts, but he is aware that they are yet there. Flora seems to him to have achieved a peace and harmony unattained by most--". . . she was like a fine tranquil afternoon" (442). And she tells Marlow "'all the details which really matter in this story'" (443), for as we have repeatedly seen, it is the inner truth of the story, the feelings of the people involved, with which Marlow is concerned. And he learns the truth: "'I loved and I was loved, untroubled, at peace, without remorse, without fear. All the world, all life were transformed for me. And how much I have seen! How good people were to me! Roderick was so much liked everywhere. Yes, I have known kindness

and safety. The most familiar things appeared lighted up with a new light, clothed with a loveliness I had never suspected. The sea itself! . . . You are a sailor. You have lived your life on it. But do you know how beautiful it is, how strong, how charming, how friendly, how mighty? . . ."" (444-445). Marlow is "'amazed and touched'" (445) because of the extent to which Flora has really experienced life since she escaped the restricting bonds of society. He is also impressed by her ability to accept life's realities. Believing he sees more happiness in store for Flora, Marlow hints that Powell loves her. His understanding of Flora's character and his understanding of Powell lead Marlow to encourage them to share their lives. He tells Powell not to forget that ""the science of life consists in seizing every chance that presents itself"" (446). Marlow himself has certainly seized the chance to learn all he could about Flora's story, and it seems to have led him to an awareness of the meaning of the love-relationship between the sexes. Life totally outside of society is impossible, for society is a means of controlling the darkness, but life within society is in danger of being superficial and illusory. Acknowledged love between two people affords a means of compromise, and the commitment between them diminishes the individual's essential loneliness. Marlow knows that his good intentions may not bear fruit.

But he can be sure that inaction will not result in happiness; and he knows that the possibility of happiness between Flora and Powell is worth the risk. He tells the anonymous narrator: "'I am not afraid of going to church with a friend. Hang it all, for all my belief in Chance I am not exactly a pagan . . .'" (447).

Throughout his narrative, then, Marlow has explored a group of people and the story in which they are involved in the context of his society, which he views as a game, a necessary set of rules which men adhere to to enable them to deal with the human condition. Marlow views the actions of men as minute glimmerings in the immense darkness which is reality. Adherence to the rules of the game can sometimes obscure man's nature. But the story of Flora and Anthony offers a means of establishing as real contact and communication as is possible between two human beings. Marlow has shown us that such relationships between a man and a woman can reach a dimension impossible in the ordinary commerce of life. Such relationships bring man into touch with his emotional life, which is close to the reality of the darkness. Marlow explores this idea when he says of marriage: "'The ceremony, I suppose, is adequate; the institution, I dare say is useful or it would not have endured. But the human relation thus recognized is a mysterious thing in its origins, character, and

consequences'" (209). To find such relationships, however, depends upon transcending the concerns of society and responding to another as a human being stripped of the labels of society. On the surface marriage may seem just another aspect of playing the game, but the nature of the relationship may bring two people closer than is otherwise possible. Marlow has had a rare glimpse into such a relationship, and his narration records the process of coming to understand how it was attained. It is truly a "chance" worth taking, and, as a result of what he has learned from his contact with Flora and Anthony, Marlow encourages Powell to take that risk. He is always aware of the possibility of chance occurrences interfering with man's plans, whether chance take the form of a force from outside or an irrational impulse from within, but he is also aware that the word "chance" can mean "opportunity" and even "luck." Clearly the story of Flora and Anthony and the other characters who play a part in their lives acquires much of its meaning from the fact that we approach it through Marlow's mind and share his way of looking at that story. As Palmer writes, it should be evident "that the reader ought to focus his attention on Marlow's consciousness rather than on the physical events he reports."¹⁶

Marlow is able to see so much of the inner truth of the story he tells, more even than the participants

ever see, because he is an onlooker and is relatively uninvolved in the outcome. We are able to understand Marlow largely because we see him through the eyes of another onlooker, the anonymous narrator, who reports the story of Marlow's narration to us. Henry James recognizes the importance of the narrator: ". . . 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 that 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."¹⁷ The word "omniscience" is incorrectly applied to either Marlow or the anonymous narrator, but James' comment reminds us of the importance of these consciousnesses which intervene between our own and the story. Other critics, like Mégroz and Palmer, simply identify the narrator with Conrad and thus avoid the necessity of dealing with him as a character in the novel.¹⁸ Some, like Baines, assign him a purely technical function and do not explore his character: "He can perform the task of analysis and comment without the illusion being destroyed through the obtrusion of the author. He can more easily impart to the events a quality of reality and authenticity than can be conveyed by

impersonal narration. . . . He can present a character, thus avoiding the need for the author to get inside his characters and use interior monologue or to develop them solely through what they say and do."¹⁹ Johnson, in his article "Marlow and Chance: A Reappraisal," views the narrator as a contrast to Marlow and claims that "the 'I' narrator of the novel iterates the cynical point of view. . . ."²⁰ Geddes does not assign him so specific a philosophy but notes that by means of "by-play between Marlow and the narrator, a kind of dialectic or ironic counterpoint is established which allows for the clarification of important issues in the novel."²¹ The latter view is the one most borne out by the examination of the text, for the narrator is not consistently cynical as Johnson suggests. He often takes a view in contrast to Marlow's, sometimes cynical, sometimes not, to encourage Marlow to further explain his position. Probably the most important function of this secondary narrator in Chance is that he is a means of eliciting Marlow's attitudes and philosophy.

The presence of the narrator also suggests another means of overcoming the isolation that separates human beings. Not everyone attains a relationship of the quality of Anthony's and Flora's, but through an attempt to probe underneath the conventions and labels of society, as Marlow does, one can come to a limited understanding

of other people. Marlow achieves this understanding to a considerable degree, and through his sharing of his understanding with the narrator, he and the narrator communicate on a deeper level than people ordinarily do. The very fact that the narrator retells the entire story, not only of Flora and Anthony but also of Marlow's communication of that story, is indicative of the importance of the experience for him. He makes no comment after Marlow's last remark, but leaves his audience to draw their conclusions. And his lack of comment reveals the degree to which he understands Marlow's point; there can be no comment or predictions about the future. The story of Flora and Anthony has proven that.

The narrator is established as an observer from the very first. On the occasion of the first meeting of Marlow and him with Powell, he tells us, "They kept up a lively exchange of reminiscences while I listened" (4). The narrator, too, has spent part of his life on the sea, but he does not participate; he seems to prefer to observe. He makes comments primarily to keep the others talking: "To keep the ball rolling I asked Marlow if this Powell [the Shipping Master] was remarkable in any way" (7). Obviously the narrator is more interested in Marlow's comments than in Powell, and, as we have seen, he emphasizes Marlow's capabilities as a commentator. He implies that he is in a position to learn something

from Marlow because Marlow has remained distant from the life of society.

The narrator's interest, then, centers in Marlow and he is actually surprised to find Marlow pursuing the relationship with Powell, for, of course, at this point he does not know that Marlow wishes to learn more about Flora. The narrator shares the attribute of curiosity with Marlow, though he does not think there is more to learn about Powell: "I flatter myself that I understand all sorts of curiosity. Curiosity about daily facts, about daily things, about daily men. It is the most respectable faculty of the human mind--in fact, I cannot conceive the uses of an incurious mind. It would be like a chamber perpetually locked up" (40). Of course, the narrator's curiosity, his obvious eagerness to learn more of Flora's story, makes him an ideal audience for Marlow. And he implies that he learns something from listening to Marlow: "This chance meeting with a man who had sailed with Captain Anthony had revived [Marlow's curiosity]. It had revived it to some purpose, to such purpose that to me was given the knowledge of its origin and of its nature" (40-41).

Often the comments of the narrator seem intended to tease Marlow and to keep him talking, but on the one subject of women Marlow and the narrator really differ. Marlow calls the narrator a "'chivalrous masculine

beggar'" at one point, and it seems evident throughout the novel that the narrator accepts society's conventional view of women. Marlow challenges him to see, through a sharing of his own understanding of Flora, the potential women have for keeping men in fuller touch with reality. The narrator's thinking is also challenged by Marlow's analysis of de Barral's career, in which he emphasizes the guilt of society because of the prevailing atmosphere it perpetuates: "'Come, Marlow,' I said, 'you exaggerate surely--if only by your way of putting things. It's too startling'" (80). The narrator's way of seeing things is, then, more conventional than Marlow's, and he finds it uncomfortable to have his illusions tampered with, but his curiosity will not allow him to ignore the truth Marlow is offering to share with him.

When Marlow's theorizing about motives makes him especially uncomfortable, the narrator questions the purpose of such exploration of other people's lives. As we saw earlier, Marlow's basic philosophy is revealed in his answer: "' . . . from that same provision of understanding, there springs in us compassion, charity, indignation, the sense of solidarity . . .'" (117). Because of Marlow's story, the narrator comes to share this view.

An interval of time passes before the narrator learns of the events on the Ferndale. He must see some

purpose in growing in understanding of others, for he has been thinking of Flora:

I have said that the story of Flora de Barral was imparted to me in stages. At this stage I did not see Marlow for some time. At last, one evening rather early, very soon after dinner, he turned up in my rooms.

I had been waiting for his call primed with a remark which had not occurred to me till after he had gone away.

"I say," I tackled him at once, "how can you be certain that Flora de Barral ever went to sea?"
(257)

When he discovers that Marlow has learned more from Powell, he is eager to share the information. He soon speculates along with Marlow.

But sometimes the narrator seems to maintain a degree of distance from what Marlow is saying. This pose usually has the effect of encouraging Marlow to develop his ideas more fully, and then the narrator has even greater opportunity to come to an understanding of Marlow's viewpoint. An example of this strategy occurs when Marlow asks if he understands his analysis of Flora:

"Perfectly," I said. "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. Go on." (311)

One comment that the narrator makes about Marlow gives us an insight into both Marlow and himself.

Describing a typical expression on Marlow's face, he says, "that slightly mocking expression with which he habitually covers up his sympathetic impulses of mirth and pity before the unreasonable complications the idealism of mankind puts into the simple but poignant problem of conduct on this earth" (325). This comment suggests that the narrator shares Marlow's view of the human condition, the tendency of man to get in his own way, so to speak, with his illusions and ideals. This basic sharing of philosophy prepares the ground, of course, for the narrator's sharing of Marlow's attitudes toward this particular story.

At the end of Marlow's narration, we know from what Marlow says that the narrator grins sarcastically at the news about Flora and Powell. Possibly he suspects that in encouraging these two Marlow may have repeated the same mistake he made with Flora and Anthony--again with the best of intentions. But Marlow has come to believe that human relationships are all important and that, although we can never predict the outcome of our actions, we do better to take the risk of acting than to allow life to act on us. And the narrator has no response to Marlow's statement, "'I am not afraid of going to church with a friend. Hang it all, for all my belief in Chance I am not exactly a pagan . . .' [emphasis added]" (447). Perhaps the narrator too has come to

share Marlow's belief in the importance of human relationships, which, in spite of the game we play within society every day, can be very meaningful and bring us closer to reality--if we work to maintain understanding.

The levels of narration of Chance, then, enable us to see the story of Flora and Anthony on several levels simultaneously. We see their relationship develop against the background of a society that limits and determines people and covers up the realities of existence with its rules. We can see that if people break through the shells in which society encloses them, they can attain a level of relationship which creates a bond within the reality of the darkness, a bond infinitely more meaningful than the social amenities. We ourselves, along with the narrator, are enabled to break through the surface of these lives, through the aid of Marlow, who, combining chance with his philosophical mind, has been able to come to know these characters to an unusual extent. Marlow, through communication, establishes a bond between himself and the narrator, and by the recreation of Marlow's narrative, the narrator reaffirms his own belief in the need for communication which leads to understanding among people.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The narrator-device is an essential element in Lord Jim, Under Western Eyes, and Chance. Conrad's technique transforms each novel from a record of the adventures of the main character--Jim, Razumov, and Flora--to one of the effect of those adventures on the narrators: Marlow, the professor of languages, and, in Lord Jim and Chance, the anonymous narrators. These novels, then, focus not only on the actions of the central characters, but also on the narrators' observations of those characters; analysis of the narrators as well as of the central characters is important for an understanding of Conrad's themes.

To varying degrees both the central characters and the narrators confront the darkness, Conrad's pervasive symbol of the ultimate reality. Conrad believes that man's civilizations, institutions, and values are necessary illusions that enable man to live with his awareness of the darkness, though many men go through life simply accepting these illusions as reality. He frequently describes these illusions as rules in a

serious game that men must play to maintain order in their individual lives and in the social structure. But Jim, Razumov, Flora, and the men who narrate their stories are unable to live according to these rules without at least questioning them or even substituting different ones.

Jim, Razumov, and Flora suffer traumatic experiences that shatter their worlds and force them to search for a means of dealing with their knowledge of the darkness. These characters are the primary actors in the novels; their experiences constitute the plot in the traditional sense. Their search for a way of reshaping their shattered lives is centered in their actions.

Marlow and the professor of languages are primarily contemplators who observe this activity of the central characters. These narrators come to their relationship with Jim, Razumov, and Flora committed to a set of values, but because of their observations of their subjects' experiences, they are forced to reexamine their own rules. Both Marlow and the professor grow in understanding of the human situation, though neither, particularly the professor, confronts all the implications of his experience. In Lord Jim and Chance the reader is able to assess Marlow's position because an anonymous narrator, a more detached contemplator than Marlow, records the process of Marlow's narrations and provides

information about him. This additional narrator enables the reader to balance the central character's response to the darkness with Marlow's response and to experience the tension between the two approaches. In Under Western Eyes a similar tension is established between the professor's initial reaction to Razumov and, after reading the journal, his reassessment of the young Russian. In this novel the tension is underscored not by an anonymous narrator but by the professor's self-revelatory comments that expose his unconscious motivations.

The ironic tension thus established by the narrator-device affords the reader a wider perspective on the issues raised by the novel than any one character can attain. The device allows Conrad to present several alternative ways of confronting the darkness and to reveal the advantages and limitations of each. Such a choice is integral to his philosophy, for Conrad believes that no one way is completely adequate. Illusions have validity as long as one remains conscious that they are illusions, and, as such, may at some time fail. As soon as an individual takes his illusions too seriously and believes them finally and permanently valid, he is in danger of being destroyed by the darkness. Of course, abandoning all illusions also makes one vulnerable to the darkness. Awareness of the reality of the darkness and commitment to a value system one recognizes as

illusory is a very difficult philosophical position to maintain, but, according to Conrad, it prepares one for the failure of values. Conrad is not cheating by not offering his readers a specific and clear set of rules. His truth is the complexity of all possibilities, not the simplicity of a final prescription. In a sense he really does offer the solution that awareness of the darkness helps man to recognize that however he chooses to live he is subscribing to what are ultimately illusory values.

For Conrad, the individual's confrontation of the darkness is a lonely task. But he also recognizes the need of man to communicate his experience. The narrator-device enables Conrad to dramatize this theme of the essential isolation of each man while at the same time portraying man's attempts to achieve solidarity. In all three novels the irony created by Marlow's and the professor's mistaken assumptions about their subjects emphasizes man's isolation. As a result of such assumptions, that usually stem from stereotypical thinking, they sometimes mistakenly interfere in others' lives in spite of good intentions. The narrator-technique dramatizes the attempt to communicate even as it enables the reader to perceive the gap between the narrator and his subject. Conrad demonstrates that the risk of misunderstanding is minimized when a person responds to others

without allowing the man-made barriers of nationality, social status, wealth, or political association to govern his response. The more the narrators learn about their subjects, the more their preconceptions are broken down and the more accurate their judgments are, though they are never infallible. By revealing the psychology of Marlow and the professor as well as of the central characters, the narrator-device points up, then, the universality of man's situation. Even if the limited and inadequate communication man can achieve leads to considerable misunderstanding, it nonetheless makes men conscious that other men are undertaking the same struggle. And men can work to overcome stereotypes that emphasize the incidental rather than the essential.

When one understands Conrad's view of the human condition and analyzes the narrator-device in that context, many of the questions that critics of Conrad have dealt with are answered. First of all, any notion that the narrator is either a dispensable or even a detrimental gimmick in these novels is eliminated. The narrator-device is the source of Conrad's primary themes. If Conrad had simply presented the lives of Jim, Razumov, and Flora, the reader's response would probably have been to pronounce judgment on the meaning of their lives, but the narrator-device encourages an assessment that balances the various possibilities of judgment.

Close study of these works also illuminates the problem of Conrad's relationship to the narrator. Of course, any attempt to make a character, even an obviously autobiographical one, identical with his creator, overlooks the change that is inevitable when an author tries to objectify himself, and, even more serious, ignores the all-important unconscious motivations that may cause the author to alter his real character considerably. Even if an author intended to portray himself exactly, he could not. In fact, Conrad repeatedly dramatizes the inability of a character, for example Marlow and the professor, to maintain such distance when he portrays himself. Obviously the people created by an author grow out of his experience and personality, but their significance for the literary critic lies more within the context of a work than in the context of the author's life.

Conrad's narrators do share to an extent some of his ideas, but the narrators are distinct from their author because he portrays them in the process of evaluating their ideas. As the author of the total work, he is obviously cognizant of the limitations of these narrator-characters and is analyzing their ideas in a larger context. He presents the overall picture that none of the narrators can see totally. The reader of these novels is, like Marlow himself, limited in his

perceptions if he identifies a particular character as Conrad's voice. Even the anonymous narrator, whose perspective is closest to the reader's, is by the close of Marlow's narrative only rethinking his position. As we have seen, Conrad's position lies in the balancing of viewpoints not in focusing on a particular one.

Thus no one character is identifiable with Conrad. Nor are any of his narrators simply a means of presenting opinions that Conrad could not present in his own voice. Certainly he could not present what Marlow and the professor say, but not because he was incapable of doing so. He could not offer these assessments because they were not his; if he did, he would not remain true to his belief that judgments are never final. The context within which Marlow and the professor express their opinions points up the danger of final judgment.

Conrad goes beyond simply suggesting that each man must face the darkness alone and underscoring the fact that one man can never completely understand the struggle of another. As we have seen, the very concept of a narrator implies communication. Even though these three novels often reveal the inadequacy of communication, they also dramatize the idea that it is worthwhile for the individual to attempt to understand others and to help others to understand him. As fragile as one's

values are, they gain strength when another acknowledges them as a possible way to confront the darkness, even if he cannot accept them as his own. The quotation from Novalis that serves as a prologue to Lord Jim summarizes this theme: "It is certain that my conviction gains strength the moment another will believe in it."

Thus the meaning of life for Conrad lies not in particular achievements but in the effect of individuals on others. No achievement is impervious to the darkness, but the acknowledgment in the mind of another is a kind of triumph. Jim is dead at the end of Lord Jim; in Conrad's terms, he is reabsorbed into the darkness from which he came. But the fact that he has communicated at least something of his experience to Marlow who is affected enough to communicate his perception of that experience is a triumph over that darkness. Likewise Marlow attains a degree of success when he conveys to the privileged man, the anonymous narrator, the mental struggle that Jim's story has caused him. The chain of understanding thus established becomes a defense against the darkness; it is the basis of solidarity.

Even though Conrad's conception of the nature of the universe implies the ultimate futility of the struggles of human beings, his philosophy is not in the final analysis pessimistic. Conrad portrays the very process of struggle, both to find values and to

communicate them, as an achievement. Man is the more dignified for trying to attain ideals that are beyond his potential; by doing so he achieves a level unattainable if he abandons the attempt. Although there are limitations to the solutions that Jim, Razumov, and Flora find in their confrontations with the darkness, they are admirable because, even though they are tempted, they never abandon their efforts. And the reader admires, too, the very real mental struggle that the narrator undertakes in order to understand these characters. Of course, one important result of the narrator-technique is the demand it places on the reader to take up that struggle. He shares in the process of giving transitory human efforts a form of permanence.

Because the struggle of man is worthy of acknowledgment and admiration, it certainly is worthy of being afforded the permanence of art. Through the narrator-device Conrad captures the dynamism, the ambiguities, and the ephemerality of human life. Each narrator, from the most incidental reporter to the narrator of the entire novel, is in a sense an artist who tries to preserve a moment or a whole life and to present it to others. The major narrators--Marlow, the professor and the anonymous narrators--are collectors and interpreters of others' narratives which they shape into a meaningful whole. As contemplators, rather than major actors, they

have more perspective than the central characters, and their narrations are therefore more true to the complexity of life as Conrad sees it. Conrad provides the reader with an even wider perspective to enable him to witness the dynamic process of these men's evaluations of the central characters, and thus he dramatizes the fluidity of the process of understanding. Through his art Conrad captures both the active struggle of the central character and the contemplative struggle of the various interpreters of that action. The adventures of Jim, Razumov, and Flora provide the material of art; the narrators and finally Conrad himself are voices in the darkness shaping and interpreting that material in order to find its meaning and hold it in permanent suspension.

Conrad realizes the necessity of the "rules of the game" in human affairs. He is not an iconoclast. But he sees the role of the artist as revealing those rules as illusions meant to control the darkness. In Lord Jim, Under Western Eyes, and Chance he exposes some of those illusions and presents the reality of the darkness. Because such awareness cannot in practice remain static, he preserves it in these complex works of art. The narrator-device is the primary means through which Conrad achieves the complexity that is indispensable in conveying his themes.

FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER I

¹Newhouse, Joseph Conrad (New York: Arco, 1969), pp. 54-55.

²The following texts of the novels discussed are cited throughout this study: Lord Jim (Garden City: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1924); Under Western Eyes (Garden City: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1924); and Chance (Garden City: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1924).

³C. K. Allen, "Joseph Conrad," Contemporary Review, 125 (1924), 59.

⁴Beebe, "The Masks of Conrad," Bucknell Review, 11 (1963), 41.

⁵Hewitt, Conrad: A Reassessment (Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, 1952), p. 2.

⁶James, "The Younger Generation," Times Literary Supplement, 19 March 1914, pp. 133-134; 2 April 1914, pp. 157-158; rvd. and enlgd. as "The New Novel," Notes on Novelists with Some Other Notes (London: Dent, 1914), pp. 249-87.

⁷Mégroz, Joseph Conrad's Mind and Method (1931; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), passim.

⁸Walter Allen, The English Novel (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1954), p. 366.

⁹Burkhart, "Conrad the Victorian," English Literature in Transition, 6 (1963), 5.

¹⁰Follett, Joseph Conrad (Garden City: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1915), p. 68.

¹¹Cross, "Joseph Conrad," Four Contemporary Novelists (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p. 29.

¹²Crankshaw, Joseph Conrad: Some Aspects of the Art of the Novel (1936; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), p. 70.

¹³Crankshaw, p. 71.

¹⁴Crankshaw, p. 72.

¹⁵Crankshaw, p. 73.

¹⁶Crankshaw, p. 85.

¹⁷Crankshaw, pp. 85-86.

¹⁸Crankshaw, p. 87.

¹⁹Guerard, "Joseph Conrad," Direction, 1 (1947), 66.

²⁰Cox, "Joseph Conrad: The Teacher as Artist," English Journal, 19 (1930), 787.

²¹Hewitt, p. 133.

²²Tindall, "Apology for Marlow," From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad, ed. Robert C. Rathburn and Martin Steinmann, Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), p. 275.

²³Mencken, "Joseph Conrad," A Book of Prefaces (New York: Knopf, 1917), p. 38.

²⁴Mencken, p. 36.

²⁵Cutler, "Why Marlow?" Sewanee Review, 26 (1918), 37.

²⁶For example, Joseph Warren Beach in "Impressionism: Conrad," The Twentieth Century Novelists: Studies in Technique (New York: Appleton-Century, 1932), p. 353, carefully relates technique to Conrad's complex view of reality: "Conrad's problem was to secure the advantage of the many points of view without losing that of coherence. It was to make a real composite of these many pictures taken from so many diverse angles, to make a synthesis of material so disparate. And he solved that problem most successfully through the help of Marlow." Dorothy Hoare, in "The Tragic in Hardy and Conrad,"

Some Studies in the Modern Novel (London: Chatto and Windus, 1938), p. 119, points out that Conrad's purpose is "to show the tangle, the inexplicable element in life." She explains the relationship of this theme to technique: "For this purpose he invents in some of his most important novels the figure of Marlow, the shadowy ideal spectator who tells the story as he sees it. By means of him the story can be told with the effect of conversational ease and with a wealth of detail otherwise impossible; we see the incidents as it were coming to life, beating themselves out in his mind as it discovers and illuminates truth" (pp. 119-120). Lawrence Lerner, in "Conrad the Historian," Listener, 73 (1965), 554, also suggests a reason for Conrad's choice of technique. He contrasts Conrad with an author like Thackeray who portrays himself as a puppet-master, the maker of his story who fully understands and controls his characters. Lerner describes Conrad as a novelist as historian who does not know everything about his characters "but is desperately trying to find out."

²⁷Warren, "On Nostromo," in Robert W. Stallman, ed., Joseph Conrad: A Critical Symposium (East Lansing: Michigan State Press, 1960), pp. 209-227; Miller, "Joseph Conrad," Poets of Reality (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 13-67; Royal Roussel, The

Metaphysics of Darkness: A Study in the Unity and Development of Conrad's Fiction (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971).

²⁸Warren, p. 218.

²⁹Warren, p. 218.

³⁰Warren, p. 218.

³¹Miller, p. 14.

³²Miller, p. 17.

³³Miller, p. 17.

³⁴Miller, pp. 18-19.

³⁵Miller, p. 20.

³⁶Miller, p. 28.

³⁷Miller, p. 29.

³⁸Miller, pp. 33-34.

³⁹Roussel, p. vii.

⁴⁰Roussel, p. 1.

⁴¹Roussel, p. 2.

⁴²Roussel, p. 3.

⁴³Roussel, p. 4.

⁴⁴Roussel, p. 5.

⁴⁵Roussel, p. 5.

⁴⁶Roussel, p. 6.

⁴⁷Roussel, p. 8.

⁴⁸Roussel, p. 11.

⁴⁹Roussel, p. 12.

⁵⁰Roussel, p. 15.

⁵¹Roussel, p. 16.

⁵²Roussel, p. 17.

⁵³Roussel, p. 18.

⁵⁴Roussel, p. 21.

⁵⁵Roussel, p. 22.

⁵⁶Roussel, p. 23.

⁵⁷Roussel, p. 23.

⁵⁸Roussel, p. 25.

⁵⁹Roussel, p. 25.

⁶⁰Roussel, p. 26.

⁶¹Roussel, p. 26.

⁶²A remarkable similarity of phrasing in these three novels suggests that this concept of a game is a basic one in Conrad's philosophy. In Lord Jim, Marlow appeals to his audience for understanding: "'Were my commonplace fears unjust? I won't say--not even now. You may be able to tell better, since the proverb has it that the onlookers see more of the game'" (137). Razumov, in Under Western Eyes, accuses the narrator--and with justification--of seeing Russian affairs as a game: "All this was a sort of sport for him--the sport of revolution--a game to look at from the height of his superiority" (168). Finally, in Chance the anonymous narrator of the entire novel uses the same image of Marlow and Powell, both of whom are also narrators: "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" (33).

FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER II

¹Typical of the positive readings of Jim's character is that of Adam Gillon, The Eternal Solitary: A Study of Joseph Conrad (New York: Bookman Associates, 1960), p. 169: "Conrad's characters are not happy people, but the state of happiness is not excluded from their lives as an impossibility. Indeed, sometimes they achieve a state of exalted happiness at the moment of supreme self-sacrifice (e.g. Lord Jim)." Robert F. Haugh, Joseph Conrad: Discovery in Design (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), p. 141, also offers a positive reading: "Jim is . . . keenly tried . . . and he redeems himself magnificently." Jocelyn Baines, Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), pp. 251-252, writes: "Some critics have asserted that Jim's life ended in defeat but despite the reference to his 'exalted egoism' which recalls Brierly's suicide there can be little doubt that Conrad approved of Jim's action. . . . Cowardice in the face of the crucial test was contained in Jim's destiny; and only by conquering his destiny could he atone for his offence. An act of cowardice had to be expiated with the supreme act of courage, the deliberate going to meet certain death."

Eloise Knapp Hay, The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad: A Critical Study (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 66, is less optimistic: "Jim fails to redeem himself, but he comes as close as humanly possible to redeeming Marlow's belief . . . by his willingness to die for it." Robert J. Andreach, The Slain and Resurrected God: Conrad, Ford, and the Christian Myth (New York: New York University Press, 1970), p. 61, says of Jim: "His choosing death as a way of erasing his desertion of the Patna rather than life with [Jewel], since accepting life would have meant submitting to the human condition, was another betrayal, another desertion of the Patna." Dale Kramer, in "Marlow, Myth, and Structure in Lord Jim," Criticism, 8 (1966), 278, writes: "Jim has failed even at the end, for in accepting death, Jim has taken the irresponsible way."

²Among the critics who see Marlow as a technical device and nothing more is James T. Farrell, in "On Joseph Conrad," Conradiana, 1 (1968), i: "Marlow is a fictional device. . . . Marlow is a happy invention or conception for the narrating of Lord Jim despite the fact that the narrative is far too long and parts of it are definitely too clearly written rather than spoken passages for us to accept that an old sea captain, Marlow, could tell such a story during an evening."

Richard Curle, Joseph Conrad and His Characters: A Study of Six Novels (1957; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1968), p. 62, says that Marlow is ". . . there more as a historian, whose business it is to record convincingly, than as a participant, busy though he be." Some critics give Marlow more importance, but still keep him in a subordinate role. Gerald Garman, in "Lord Jim as Tragedy," Conradiana, 4 (1972), p. 34, compares Marlow's role to that of a Greek chorus, and John A. Palmer, Joseph Conrad's Fiction: A Study in Literary Growth (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 2, makes a similar assumption, although he sees Marlow's presence as very important: "In all the stories in which he appears, Marlow must be taken as a choral character in the fullest sense--for all practical purposes the voice of Conrad himself; and Marlow's meditative history--not the train of physical events reflected in that history--must be taken as the reader's primary object of interest." Stanton de Voren Hoffman, Comedy and Form in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), p. 68, gives equal importance to Jim and Marlow as characters: "The novel is Marlow's tale of Jim, and of himself as he responds to Jim and seeks self-knowledge." Dale Kramer, p. 264, has a similar view: "Lord Jim, then, is as much about Marlow as it is about Jim." Zdzislaw Najdir, in "Lord Jim: A

Romantic Tragedy of Honor," Conradiana, 1 (1968), p. 4, calls Marlow a "co-protagonist." And Raymond Gates Malbone, in "How to Be: Marlow's Quest in Lord Jim," Twentieth Century Literature, 10 (1965), p. 172, writes: "Marlow is the main character in Lord Jim and the theme of the novel rests in what Jim's story means to Marlow rather than in what happens to Jim."

³George Jean-Aubrey in The Sea Dreamer, trans. Helen Sebba (New York: Doubleday, 1947), p. 239, finds a clear theme in Lord Jim: "Lord Jim is not only a development of the theme of remorse but also of the responsibility borne even by the man who believes himself free and exempt from any obligation to society, like Conrad himself." Curle, in Joseph Conrad: A Study (London: Kegan Paul, 1914), p. 33, also finds a definite theme and calls the novel "a story of remorse and of the effort to regain self-respect for a deed of fatal and unexpected cowardice." And Haugh, p. 140, cites Lord Jim as an illustration of Conrad's "dominant theme," which he defines as "the transcendence of fidelity, honor, and nobility of soul over the moral darkness that forever assaults man from the outer darkness." More common, however, are the readings of the novel's theme as ambiguous. Elizabeth Drew in The Novel: A Modern Guide to Fifteen English Masterpieces (New York: Dell Publishing

Company, 1963), p. 164, suggests the questions that Jim's story raises: "Is his death defeat or victory; failure or triumph; courage or abdication of his responsibilities; supreme sacrifice or theatrical flourish? Is he tragic hero or romantic fool?" Malbone, p. 177, has no final answer to Jim's case either: "The safest conclusion is that Lord Jim gives no answers, takes no sides, but only poses the antithesis and examines many aspects of it." Lerner, pp. 554-556, finds no resolution, nor does Dayton Kohler, "Introduction," Lord Jim (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. xix. Kohler cites Marlow as the cause of the ambiguity: "Conrad raises important moral issues but makes no attempt to offer a final solution. . . . For what Conrad did in Lord Jim was to give shape and life to an enigma." J. E. Tanner, in "The Chronology and Enigmatic End of Lord Jim," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 21 (1967), 369-380, uses a study of the chronology of the novel to show "the very deliberate and delicately balanced ambiguity which inheres in everything Marlow says at the end of the novel."

⁴Beach, p. 354.

⁵Nadjir, p. 1, for example, writes: "Jim's thoughts are related to the reader by an omniscient narrator, and it is not until the fourth chapter that the novel's world . . . emerges from the seeming

chaos of the pre-narration." Bruce McCullough, in the chapter "The Impressionist Novel," in Representative English Novelists; Defoe to Conrad (New York: Harper, 1947), p. 346, makes similar assumptions: "The first four chapters of the novel, which are related directly by the author, perform the double function of providing an outline of Jim's career and of leading quickly to the crucial scene on board the Patna. They also introduce Marlow, a spectator at the trial, who becomes the narrator at the beginning of the fifth chapter." William John Harvey in Character and the Novel (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1965), p. 116, is of the same school: "We start with a few chapters of omniscient narration which slide, with the Court of Inquiry, into Marlow's tale."

⁶Andreas, Joseph Conrad: A Study in Non-Conformity (London: 1959; rpt. Vision, 1962). Another example of this type of critic is G. H. Bantock, "Conrad and Politics," Journal of English Literary History, 25 (1958), 122-136, who makes no mention of a narrator at all. And Oliver Warner in Joseph Conrad (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1951) emphasizes Jim as central to the novel by describing the theme as "lost and redeemed in full" (p. 95).

⁷Baines, p. 382. Palmer, p. 38, also refers to

this character which he calls the "frame narrator."

Thomas Moser in Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 166, implies a similar idea when he says parenthetically that the author is "a character in the novel, since Marlow writes him a letter."

⁸Karl and Magalaner, A Reader's Guide to Great Twentieth Century English Novels (New York: Noonday Press, 1959), p. 51.

⁹Andreas, p. 64.

¹⁰Gillon, p. 79.

¹¹Dale Kramer, p. 278.

¹²Cheris Kramer, "Parallel Motives in Lord Jim," Conradiana, 2 (1969), p. 58.

¹³Daiches, The Novel and the Modern World, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 32.

¹⁴Hay, p. 16.

¹⁵Harold Kaplan, "Character as Reality: Joseph Conrad," The Passive Voice: An Approach to Modern Fiction (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1966), p. 108.

¹⁶Roussel, p. 81.

¹⁷Roussel, p. 83.

¹⁸Roussel, p. 84.

¹⁹Roussel, p. 98.

²⁰Beebe, p. 41.

²¹Malbone, p. 175.

²²Kaplan, p. 208.

²³Kohler, p. xv.

²⁴Palmer, p. 2.

²⁵Nadjir, p. 2.

²⁶Roussel, p. 80.

²⁷Roussel, p. 85.

²⁸Roussel, p. 87.

²⁹Kenneth B. Newell's article, "The Yellow-Dog Incident in Conrad's Lord Jim," Studies in the Novel, 3 (1971), discusses the significance that Marlow sees in Jim's behavior:

In Jim's mistake about the "wretched cur" Marlow realizes a significance that Jim does not realize. Jim's movements and speech betray something within himself that feels the insult to be not "justified," exactly--but natural and expected, though debatable. Jim is threatening violence, yet he is "strangely

passive": he shows a "slow and ponderous hesitation." And because it is "with just a faint tinge of bitterness" that he says, "You thought I would be afraid to resent this," he unwittingly acknowledges that he would expect Marlow to have this thought, that the thought is natural. By this "tinge of bitterness" Jim unknowingly disarms his own self-justification, though certainly he does not justify the insult. (29)

Newell is assuming the validity of Marlow's code, just as Marlow is. But neither assesses Jim correctly; although he knows Marlow's code and knows they will judge him unfavorably, he does not judge himself in this way.

³⁰Karl, in "Conrad's Stein: The Destructive Element," Twentieth Century Literature, 3 (1958), 165, is typical of this type of critic. He calls Stein "by far the most pregnant figure in the novel, a man whose awareness of both the imaginative and the real and their relative place in the modern world stamps him as one of that renaissance type which our own age has split into parts." E. K. Brown in "James and Conrad," Yale Review, N. S. 35 (1945), 273, defines the role of Stein as that of the "most important lens" through which we see Jim. Palmer, p. 30, calls Stein the "final choral authority." Newell in "The Destructive Element and Related 'Dream Passages' in the Lord Jim Manuscript," Journal of Modern Literature, 1 (1970), 31-44, devotes his entire article to Stein's dependability and insists that he comes closest of the characters in the novel "to being Conrad's spokesman" (p. 44). Leo Gurko, Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile

(New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 110, sees Stein as an "older, wiser, more successful Jim." Later in his discussion he calls Stein "the one ideal figure in the novel, the man who combines physical and spiritual success, who defeats his enemies and finds the rare butterfly he has pursued for years, who triumphantly demonstrates his own advice to men that they should 'in the destructive element immerse' . . ." (p. 111).

I can see no justification for this tendency among critics to use one incident in the novel as a "key" to the whole. As Guerard, Conrad the Novelist (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 157, points out, the emphasis on Stein may be attributable to Marlow's character. Guerard finds Marlow eager to be lenient with Jim and eager to dismiss the pronouncement of the French Lieutenant. Thus Marlow casually introduces the French Lieutenant and rather quickly dismisses him because he is "the most damning witness and reflector of all." Guerard notes, "Marlow, who in these chapters clearly diverges from Conrad, would have liked so to dismiss him. But his role in the novel may be as crucial as Stein's; the scenes are in a way pendant." If we study the words of the French Lieutenant, we can see that they are no less "true" than Stein's. One of the main points of the novel is that there is more than one truth.

There is, of course, evidence in the novel which gives us reason to doubt Stein as a final authority. Regardless of Marlow's trust of Stein, he seems to be the man who fathered Jewel and left her mother weeping; he is probably the person who used Patusan to bury his past. And we must remember that when Stein makes his pronouncement about Jim only half of Jim's story has been told. Here again a recognition of the novel as a whole as more important than any of its parts is important--just as it is important to avoid focusing solely on Jim's character without taking point of view into account. Certainly Stein's reaction to Jim's death should qualify our reading of his assessment of Jim. When Marlow visits him and learns of Jim's death, he finds Stein troubled and sad. There is no evidence that he is satisfied with Jim's end and it is clear that he is very saddened by Jewel's unhappiness.

Moser's approach to Stein seems reasonable. He writes: "All the narrators of Lord Jim convey not only information about Jim but also a moral attitude. Conrad's art lies in the way he carefully qualifies each narrator's analysis of Jim and shows clearly that the truth about Jim must be the sum of many perceptions." Speaking of Stein's words, he continues, "For some critics these words have been practically the key to Conrad, but to accept them without qualification is to miss all the

complexity of Conrad's method" (p. 39).

³¹A few examples will suffice to show the diversity of interpretations of Stein's words. I will cite a few of those critics who use the speech as a key to point up the inconclusiveness of such an approach. Karl, in "Conrad's Stein," writes:

Against man's imperfections, a mankind perhaps spawned by an artist who "was a little mad," Stein offers the imperfections of nature, particularly the beauty and delicacy displayed by the incomparable butterfly. Then in a statement central to Jim's character, central to the novel, and central to Conrad himself, Stein speculates on the relative merits of the butterfly and man. The butterfly clearly accepts reality, but man "wants to be a saint, and he wants to be a devil"; in short man sees himself as he can never be. The question, adapting Hamlet's, is how to be; and the answer is to follow the dream which is self-destructive, to submit to what is an eternal condition of man, and in the submission, temporary though it is, lies the only relief, the salvation.

This doctrine is a recognition that man is limited by his own inferiority in an inexplicable world, a realization that violence and destruction are a concomitant of the will to live, and that the loss of self-protective illusions is the surest way to self-destruction. As Robert Penn Warren pointed out in his fine essay on *Nostromo*: "The last wisdom is for man to realize that though his values are illusions, the illusion is necessary, is infinitely precious, is the work of his human achievement, and is, in the end, his only truth." (pp. 165-166).

Palmer's interpretation is somewhat different: "'To the destructive element submit yourself,' Stein tells Marlow, 'and with the exertions of your hands and feet' make it keep you up--follow the dream, but at the same time by whatever means, wrest survival from those nonideal,

amoral, or immoral forces which threaten the individual dreamer, his safety and his concept of himself" (p. 33). Gurko defines the destructive element as life which one cannot escape, as Jim tries to, except through death. To survive, however, requires exertion" (p. 111).

³²Roussel, p. 94.

³³Roussel, p. 94.

³⁴Roussel, p. 95.

³⁵Roussel, p. 93.

³⁶The most notable example of this kind of juxtaposition occurs at the beginning of Chapter Sixteen when during his relating of the lowest point of Jim's fortunes, Marlow comments: "'The time was coming when I should see him loved, trusted, admired, with a legend of strength and prowess forming round his name as though he had been the stuff of a hero'" (106).

³⁷Tony Tanner, Conrad: Lord Jim (London: Edward Arnold, 1963), p. 14.

³⁸Malbone, p. 178.

³⁹McCullough, p. 346.

⁴⁰Guerard, Conrad the Novelist, p. 147.

⁴¹There are several technical advantages of the point of view of Lord Jim. Moser, p. 39, points out that the presence of Marlow "gives the reader a sense of actuality." He also sees Marlow as an interpreter for Jim but his reasoning is weak, for he claims that Marlow "has a more subtle mind than Jim and can see implications where Jim cannot." Marlow can be viewed as Jim's interpreter but not because he is more subtle. As we have seen, Jim's values are apart from those of civilization, and from the time of his trial Jim makes no public attempt to articulate them. Recognizing the absurdity of the standards by which he is judged, Jim does not feel compelled to communicate with the society whose standards they are. Thus Marlow serves as a bridge between Jim's world and that of his audience. Moser is correct, however, when he views Marlow as adding "a new moral dimension"; the novel is a different entity from what it would be without Marlow. Finally, Moser points out that "Marlow acts as an interviewer who brings together and comments upon the testimony of more than a dozen secondary observers of Jim." The latter point is probably the one most cited by critics as an advantage of Marlow as narrator. According to Beach, p. 353, for example, the use of Marlow allows Conrad "the advantage of the many points of view without losing that of coherence." The use of the privileged man, of course,

allows the introduction of still another point of view, and although we know Marlow better than any other character in the novel, the balancing of his ideas with those of the privileged man reinforces the idea that all conclusions are tentative.

Beach, p. 354, also emphasizes the authenticity that Marlow's voice lends to the oral part of the novel. He says that, because "By far the largest portion comes not from his pen but from his mouth, in the form of a story told aloud over the after-dinner cigars," the manner is "natural" and "anecdotal," that of "one speaking with authority of things of which he knows, and yet--in such a strange story--striving for plausibility, striving to convert his audience to sympathy with his point of view, arguing with them over the character of his hero, producing evidence for his knowledge of this or that episode. All this gives to the narrative an amazing air of authenticity."

Of course, the unusual chronology of Lord Jim, which serves many artistic purposes, can be seen as one of the advantages of the use of Marlow and of the third-person narrator. On a simple level, the chronology allows for the creation of suspense. More important, as we have seen, it provides meaningful juxtapositions of events or scenes separated by time. This strategy encourages us to look for the meaning behind events,

to see their relationships, and to accept nothing as final. The privileged man, too, has an effect on chronology. In his portrait of Jim in the opening chapters he relates Jim's life almost entirely in chronological order except for the first impression. We meet Jim during his days as water-clerk. In a sense, this period is the most neutral in his life, and thus the first view we get of Jim is the fairest possible. This tampering with chronology is another factor in the third-person narrator's attempt to present us with a balanced picture of Jim.

It must be noted that the chronology of Marlow's written narrative is not as complex as that of his oral tale. This variation, too, has an artistic function. As J. E. Tanner, p. 374, points out, "In these chapters [xxxviii through xlv] there is no movement back and forth in time, nor are there digressions to interrupt the flow of events, for Conrad's intent here on adding the sense of progress, the effect of inevitability which is the great strength of the well-done chronological novel, to the illusion of depth achieved through the shifting perspectives of Marlow's oral narrative." The pace of Marlow's writing is much faster than that of his talking and, indeed, it can be concluded that one of the advantages of the change in form of communication is to provide naturally a means of removing Marlow's reflecting

from the novel in order that faster pace and greater intensity may be achieved.

Philip Freund, in his "Introduction" to Lord Jim (New York: Collier Books, 1967), p. 15, cites as an advantage of Marlow "that Conrad can use Marlow as his mouthpiece, so that he can comment on Jim, analyze him, praise or denounce him, without actually intruding into the story in his naked role as author; instead, it is Marlow, the author's proxy, who intrudes." But Freund qualifies his apparent equation of Marlow with Conrad: "And since Marlow is only a character himself, and not the omniscient author, he does not know all the facts and is freer to heighten our interest by conjecturing about them." Later in his introduction, p. 16, Freund states that the use of Marlow rather than an "I" is preferable. He correctly suggests that we can see Marlow as a character in his own right, not a final authority on Jim. The use of Marlow also engages the reader.

Tony Tanner, pp. 12-13, writes:

If we were simply told the facts of Jim's life we might feel sorry for him, but as we watched him, haunted, bemused, and alone, we would never feel ourselves involved in his predicament. We would remain disengaged and feel, perhaps a trifle superior, not to say safer. But it is impossible to remain outside the circle of Marlow's auditors. He professes a range of values which are too central, civilized and humane to permit of any disaffiliation on our part. His doubts and questions, his speculations and assertions, his tolerance and self-effacement, the leisurely quest of his memory, the feeling he conveys of being aware yet incapable of the

extremes of human behavior--all these things bring us into the story.

⁴²Harvey, p. 116.

⁴³Beach, p. 364.

⁴⁴Guerard, p. 127.

⁴⁵Guerard, p. 127.

⁴⁶Guerard, pp. 126-127.

⁴⁷Guerard, p. 129.

⁴⁸Guerard, p. 142.

⁴⁹Palmer, p. 19.

FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER III

¹Kaye, "Conrad's Under Western Eyes and Mann's Dr. Faustus," Comparative Literature, 9 (1957), 62.

²Roussel, p. 153.

³Roussel, pp. 153-154.

⁴Kaye, p. 62.

⁵Kaye, p. 64.

⁶Johnson, Conrad's Models of Mind (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 140.

⁷Several critics do, however, interpret Under Western Eyes as a primarily political novel. Most notable among these studies are chapters in Hay's The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad, pp. 265-313; Avrom Fleishman's Conrad's Politics: Community and Anarchy in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), pp. 217-242; Irving Howe's Politics and the Novel (1957; rpt. Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett, 1967), pp. 79-115; and Claire Rosenfield's Paradise of Snakes: An Archetypal Analysis of Conrad's Political Novels (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 123-172.

⁸Razumov's story suggests many themes, most of which have been explored by critics of the novel. Baines, p. 360, discusses the theme of guilt and atonement. The need for solidarity and the necessity of relationships with other men, emphasized by Karl in A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad, 2nd ed., rev. (New York: Noonday Press, 1969), p. 220, are certainly illustrated by Razumov's painful story. Gurko, p. 190, sees Razumov as one of the many Conradian characters who discover that "excessive isolation leads to moral collapse; a purely egotistic attachment to society can be equally destructive. . . ." And Bantock, p. 134, interprets Razumov's plight as "the dilemma of the rootless individual seeking normal expectations in a political age. . . ." But all of these interpretations are based on the assumption that Razumov is the protagonist. Even those that deal with the narrator do so incidentally, ignoring the fact that we know everything about Razumov from the professor.

⁹Curle, Joseph Conrad and His Characters, pp. 145-183.

¹⁰Karl, A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad, p. 220.

¹¹Andreas, p. 127, offers an example of such an interpretation. He analyzes the theme solely in terms

of Razumov: "Under Western Eyes constitutes much the most thorough exploration of the theme that the individual rather than the group suffers destruction from his use of group-membership as a cloak to keep the group from becoming aware of the enemy in its midst and taking steps to guard itself against his hostile actions." Gillon, p. 164, writes: "The chief problem in Under Western Eyes is . . . Razumov and his moral struggle." Another example, more recent, is Johnson's, p. 142, in which the author focuses on Razumov's "twin questions of identity and community." Such interpretations, even when they acknowledge the presence of the narrator, do not explore his effect on our understanding of Razumov. And the themes these authors discuss apply to the professor as well as to Razumov.

¹²Hagan, "Conrad's Under Western Eyes: the Question of Razumov's 'Guilt' and 'Remorse,'" Studies in the Novel, 1 (1969), 316-317.

¹³Roussel, p. 140.

¹⁴Roussel, p. 142.

¹⁵Hagan, p. 317.

¹⁶Roussel, p. 143.

¹⁷Curle, Joseph Conrad and His Characters, p. 148.

¹⁸Fleishman, p. 228.

¹⁹Roussel, p. 147.

²⁰Leavis, The Great Tradition (1948; rpt. New York: New York University Press, 1957), p. 222.

²¹Guerard, Conrad the Novelist, pp. 235-236.

²²Palmer, p. 131.

²³Roussel, p. 155.

²⁴Roussel, p. 156.

²⁵Roussel, p. 157. Some critics find the novel flawed because the narrator denies his ability to write yet very successfully and artfully presents his material, using painstaking care to achieve his effect. For example, Crankshaw, p. 135, refers to the narrator as a mere device and finds his character inconsistent with the quality of his prose: "You do not find writers of genius like the teacher of languages who have waited until late middle-age before putting pen to paper and then do not realize the strength of their talents." Such an analysis is over-simplified and incomplete. Crankshaw attributes literary defects to Conrad when in fact he has failed to perceive a subtlety of characterization.

²⁶Morton Dauwen Zabel, "Introduction," Under Western Eyes (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1963), p. xxxvii.

The complexity of the narrator's character certainly indicates that he is more than a technical device. However, as a character with particular knowledge and skill, he does perform some relatively mechanical functions. His knowledge of Russian enables him to translate Razumov's journal. He has had considerable experience with Russians, and, regardless of his protests to the contrary, he manifests considerable understanding of the Russian mind. He enables us to penetrate the uniqueness of the Russian character and to see the universal needs that motivate the characters, needs that transcend nationality. And as a close friend of Nathalie, the professor has a unique opportunity to know Razumov from both personal contact and the journal.

²⁷"Author's Note," p. x.

²⁸Rosenfield, p. 172.

²⁹Roussel, p. 158.

³⁰Rosenfield, p. 172.

FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER IV

¹Diana S. Neill, A Short History of the English Novel (New York: Macmillan, 1952), p. 263.

²Andreas, p. 153.

³James Guetti, The Limits of Metaphor: A Study of Melville, Conrad, and Faulkner (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 146.

⁴Gillon, p. 145.

⁵Wilson Follett, Joseph Conrad: A Short Study (1915; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), p. 99.

⁶Roussel, p. 169.

⁷Roussel, pp. 169-170.

⁸Roussel, p. 171.

⁹Roussel, p. 171.

¹⁰Roussel, p. 171.

¹¹Curle, Joseph Conrad: A Study, p. 155.

¹²Geddes, "The Structure of Sympathy: Conrad

and the Chance that Wasn't," English Literature in Transition, 12 (1969), 178.

¹³Geddes, p. 178.

¹⁴Lorch, "The Barrier Between Youth and Maturity in the Works of Joseph Conrad," Modern Fiction Studies, 10 (1964), 80.

¹⁵Karl, A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad, p. 237.

¹⁶Palmer, p. 18.

¹⁷Henry James, "The New Novel," p. 348.

¹⁸Mégroz, p. 163, and Palmer, p. 18.

¹⁹Baines, p. 384.

²⁰Johnson, "Marlow and Chance: A Reappraisal," Texas Studies in Language and Literature, 10 (1968), 96.

²¹Geddes, p. 181.

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