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**JOSEPH CONRAD'S MARLOW:  
A STUDY IN MASCULINITY**

**Susan Hargrove-Shepley**

**A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
English**

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montréal, Québec, Canada**

**April 1996**

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# **ABSTRACT**

## **JOSEPH CONRAD'S MARLOW: A STUDY IN MASCULINITY**

Susan Hargrove-Shepley

This study questions the assumptions that any reading of a text is a reading of its masculinity. Traditional readings conducted under patriarchal paradigms lead to that assumption; to question it is to commit an act of recovery by consciously rereading. Drawing on Cultural Studies' latest theories for exploring gender in literature, this work illustrates through Charlie Marlow, a character common to four Conrad texts, how masculinity has been engendered.

Focus is on the social construction of Marlow's masculinity as it is reflected in his relationships, his beliefs and attitudes, and how it is closely associated with his misogyny and gynophobia. As well, this study examines the homosocial and homosexual aspects of Marlow's personality. Many facets of Marlow's masculinity are revealed in this work, but the thesis is only a small part of a larger project just beginning in academic circles, where Conrad's fiction (and, indeed, other male-authored fiction of the nineteenth century) is being consciously reread to uncover hegemonic masculinity engendered and its variations.

## Sentiments

Look what they done to my brain, Ma  
Look what they done to my brain  
Well, they picked it like a chicken bone  
and I think I'm half insane, Ma  
Look what they done to my brain.

Melanie Safka

I quit—I give up  
Nothing's good enough for anybody else  
it seems

Edie Brickell

My ideas are a curse.  
They spring from a radical discontent with the  
awful order of things.

Anne Sexton

SORRY I SAID ANYTHING AT ALL

Susan Hargrove

...our weary eyes looking still, looking always,  
looking anxiously for something out of life, that  
while it is expected is already gone—has passed  
unseen, in a sigh, in a flash—together with the  
youth, with the strength, with the romance of  
illusions.

Joseph Conrad

## Acknowledgments

First and foremost I'd like to acknowledge my family—Daddy, Robert, Jill, Laurie, Mother, and Sam for their patient understanding and support. This arduous task has meant that certain areas of my life have received short shrift. I am fortunate that my family gave me the space I needed and forgave me for the inevitable neglect that occurred. If I've not said it lately, I love you all dearly.

I'd like to thank Dr. Martin Gauthier, who, in the process of my writing this thesis, got to know more about Conrad and Gender Theory than he ever wanted to. I am grateful to him for allowing me to invest time on this project in each session, to explore my ideas, to gain perspective, and to vent my frustrations. I am quite confident that our time together has contributed to the success of this work.

And teachers—I need to thank a number of teachers without whom I would not have succeeded as I have. Thanks.

To Bina Friewald and Robert Martin who assisted me in progressing learnedly through this journey of mine as critic and scholar, as the little theorist.

To Lazlo Géfin for allowing me to audit the best class of the graduate program and for testing my mettle every step of the way.

To Art Broes—I am proud that Art Broes is both my advisor and my friend. Our relationship began in the late 80s when I was an undergraduate student in one of his Modern Fiction classes. This is where the seed for the thesis germinated, originally as an idea to write on Conrad's misogyny. The idea has been remarkably altered yet fundamentally still intact, and years later, we've finally finished the exercise together.

And to John Miller—John and I are Berkeley Breathed fans together, and face it, we all miss Opus and gang! We are Fry watchers and Rowan Atkinson enthusiasts, and if having someone to share all these things with is not reason enough to be grateful, it was John Miller who played the important and provocative role in directing this thesis into the little known area of masculinity. Although this adventure has caused me some grief, I am happy now that I pursued it, and ever so grateful to John for his simple and profound question: "What about the guys?"

And I must acknowledge those sharp eyes that have helped me dot the i's and cross the t's: Peter Barnes, Janet Bruce, Marta Cepek, Cathy Tsolakos, and Professors Broes, Waters, and Ronquist.

I'd like to express my love and gratitude to Deborah Gilsig and Heather Dalziel for their love and support, and their unwavering belief in me and my abilities. In my lowest moments I have leaned on you both and discovered in our friendships the primal relationships Marlow was looking for.

In 1986, Dianne Walker died prematurely at the age of 45, robbing the world of a gifted soul and me of a mentor. My personal loss was profound and I found myself without the direction and guidance I had come to rely upon. In one of our last conversations, Dianne agreed that it was time I left nursing and set myself on a new path. The path I chose was the study of literature. Early on in my quest, I discovered literary theory and without realizing I was in search of one, found a new mentor to carry on Dianne's work. Eyvind Ronquist is that mentor.

Like Dianne had, Professor Ronquist has tapped into my potential and found buried there talents and skills I never knew I had. The effect he has had on my life can never be expressed in words. Eyvind Ronquist taught me that the best answer is always a better question, it is he who gifted me with the ability to see life differently than I had before and he who challenged me in every way to be a better student of literature. I am richer for all of it. The challenges he has laid before me are as difficult and as rewarding as any Dianne put my way, and I thank them both for looking deeper, asking more, and changing my life in profound ways.

The most important acknowledgment I have to make is to Cathy Tsolakos. For the past six years, she has been there for me every minute—a kindred spirit, a goomba, a life-force, a friend.

Simply put, if not for you Cath, I would not have made it. For every black hole, for every evil twin, for every note passed, for all the angst shared, for all the laughs.. thanks.

And ultimately, to the Shepley in Hargrove-Shepley Paul, every word of this is as much yours as it is mine. As with all things, this is for you.

*...myself it speaks and spells,  
Crying What I do is me: for that I came.*

*Gerard Manley Hopkins*

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# Preface

I think a new title for my thesis--the second submission--should be *Much Ado About Nothing*. I understand that some guy named Bill used this title once before, but never was it more apropos. My first submission and the commotion surrounding it has been, and still is to me, much ado about nothing. I wanted to look at masculinity; all I wanted to ask was "What about the guys?" The question is deconstructive because it uncovers an assumption that "the guys" are always already being discussed. It is feminist in its aggressiveness at rereading what has been looked into in a different context. It is a gender study, specifically a men's study study, in that it questions the way men are men. It is a cultural study because gender is not specifically an avenue of literary exploration.

But this initial question of reading a literary text using gender theory precipitated a series of other questions that I neither asked nor answered overtly. It seemed to me at the time of writing that many of these concerns were assumed. I see now that they are not. In this Preface let me pose the questions directly that will be answered in Chapter One as I lay out the process for an examination of this type. This time out, I shall explain and define as I proceed, and I will identify the problems encountered in undertaking this work. In the subsequent chapters of this thesis, I will elaborate on this methodology with an application on the masculinity of Joseph Conrad's character Marlow.

The first question arising out of my intention to look at masculinity is what does it mean to read, or reread, for gender? What is involved in exploring or studying gender issues? A corollary question to this one is why look at men and masculinity? Isn't that a topic that in the patriarchal world has already been done to death?

The next question that I did not initially address was why apply gender theory to literary works? What purpose does such a study serve in terms of gender issues themselves and in terms of literary scholarship?

And how do you conduct such a study? Is there a definitive method for application or exegesis? How do I propose to look at Marlow's masculinity, and will my portrait be that of the definitive male in Conrad?

And finally, why Conrad? Why Marlow? What drew me to this author and this character? What do I hope to find and expose?

So this time, having posed the questions I plan to answer, I hope that I will make clear, not only my intention, but also the purpose of and method for this type of scholarship and its application to literary works. I hope as well that in doing that I will contribute to Conrad studies (and complete the requirements for my Master's degree).

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

In this thesis I wish to explore the masculinity of Joseph Conrad's character, Charlie Marlow. But what does it mean to conduct such an examination? An exploration of masculinity is a cultural study under the auspices of gender studies. Gender is to me one of the most exciting issues today. It is timely in a social context coming after the women's movement, during the onset of a men's movement, and in the face of a backlash against women. Timely yet again because of its theoretical position following the groundbreaking work in deconstruction, which opened the way for advances of both feminist and lesbian and gay studies.

Gender studies provides a framework under which readings, feminist, homosexual, lesbian, and masculinist, are conducted.<sup>1</sup> In Myra Jehlen's essay "Gender," she uses an analogy to describe the sudden impact a recognition of gender has made. "Like Molière's bourgeois gentleman who discovered one day that all the time he thought he was only talking he was in fact speaking prose, literary critics have recently recognized that in their

<sup>1</sup> The separation and distinction of lesbianism from male homosexuality or gay men is a political decision to emphasize a lesbian's strategic and philosophical differences. Adrienne Rich establishes that: "Lesbians have historically been deprived of a political existence through 'inclusion' as female versions of male homosexuality. To equate lesbian existence with male homosexuality because each is stigmatized is to deny and erase female reality once again. To separate those women stigmatized as 'homosexual' or 'gay' from the complex continuum of female resistance to enslavement, and attach them to a male pattern, is to falsify our history" "Compulsory Heterosexuality" 649.

most ordinary expositions of character, plot, and style they speak the language of gender" (263).

Although feminism falls under the broad topic of gender studies, it was feminism that politicized and recognized gender studies as a serious field for academic scholarship. Work in gender now includes studies in masculinity and men's studies, along with other subjects dealing with identity.

The word gender began life as a term for a person or a thing's biology not as a theoretical construct. Then, in the late 1960s, the second wave of feminism promoted the belief that "sexual differences were no longer accepted as natural or biological and, consequently, part of the god-given order of things" (Davis 2). Sexual difference seemed to be a "hodgepodge of social and cultural constructions" (Davis 4). Feminists needed a way to express this concept of separating biology from what was socially or culturally constructed. When they separated the term *sex* from the term *gender*, it was, as the Oxford English Dictionary states, "a euphemism." But it was a necessary alteration of the 'parole'; a needed change to the denotation of the word *gender* to now represent something other than biology as causative for distinctions not only between the sexes but also between representatives of the same sex.

The etymology of the term gender is that it originates in the fourteenth century and is primarily linked to language. It also became a synonym for sex as Hilary M. Lips states "in the past, the words *sex* and *gender* have often been used inter-changeably" (3). A current denotation for *gender* taken from the tenth edition of Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary is "the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex." For the purposes of her book, Lips adopts more precise definitions of the two terms that I feel I can use here: "The word *sex* is used to refer to a person's biological

maleness or femaleness; gender refers to the nonphysiological aspects of sex--the cultural expectations for femininity and masculinity" (Lips 3). The use of gender today is no longer a euphemism as previously stated: it is a framework established by feminists that will provide a place for feminism to gain ground, for gay and lesbian privileged readings to occur and, I hope, for rereadings of masculinity to develop as a serious subject for study. Kathy Davis and Jantine Oldersma state:

The concept of gender has since moved from its original function in establishing the distinction between biology and society to the position of undisputed central theoretical construct within the field of feminist scholarship. A substantial portion of feminist theory construction has gone into developing theories of gender, elaborating gender as the 'fundamental organizing principle' for explaining divisions in women's and men's experiences. Gender is central for understanding sexual dichotomies, behavioral differences between the sexes, sexual identity, sexual divisions in social activities and the symbolic representation of masculinity and femininity (Davis 4-5).

The study of gender has been conducted under various critical and academic methods. An earlier method of study used for decades was the sex-role model. Simply put, this model concerned itself with socialization--that is how "biological males and biological females became socialized into men and women in a particular culture" (Kimmel 12). This model has lost favour. Michael Kimmel states that it has come under a great deal of "criticism for being ahistorical, psychologically reductionist, and apolitical" (12).

Another problem with this model was its oversight of masculinity and femininity as relational constructs. Kimmel explains that "the definition of either [masculinity or femininity] depends upon the definition of the other" (12). As well the sex-role paradigm

is limiting, based as it is on the behavioural characteristics associated with being a woman or being a man. It makes for static categories that do not account for historical changes in sex roles. It also does not recognize the power basis that lies beneath gender systems, and thereby reproduces those imbalances into the system of study itself. In other words, as a group, men dominate women, but if the definitions of masculinity are associated with authority and mastery and the definitions of femininity with passivity and subordination, then the definitions themselves have reproduced masculine dominance.

What has replaced the sex-role model is the theory of social constructionism. Tim Edwards explains that the theory of social constructionism "at its simplest states that sexuality, far from being 'inevitable', 'biological', or 'natural', is in fact a deeply socially conditioned and dynamic phenomenon that is indeed 'socially constructed' as it does not in itself constitute any kind of separate entity" (7).

It should be remembered that gender studies are cultural studies; the methods for analysis must therefore look at and account for difference in gender identity both culturally and socially. Social constructionism uses anthropology and sociology as critical academic methods for this type of study. The critical work of feminism has contributed at the very least the basic feminist concept that "the personal is political." This has led a number of the theorists in this field (Sedgwick, Goldberg, Edwards...) to associate misogyny with homophobia as similar forms of oppression.

The feminist agenda is pluralist and is by no means easy to define in a couple of sentences. However, Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn provide a working definition of feminist scholarship's mandate as it involves gender studies.

Feminist literary criticism is one branch of interdisciplinary enquiry which takes gender as a fundamental organizing category of experience. This enquiry holds

two related premisses about gender. One is that the inequality of the sexes is neither a biological given nor a divine mandate, but a cultural construct, and therefore a proper subject of study for any humanistic discipline. The second is that a male perspective, assumed to be 'universal', has dominated fields of knowledge, shaping their paradigms and methods. Feminist scholarship, then, has two concerns: it revises concepts previously thought universal but now seen as originating in particular cultures and serving particular purposes; and it restores a female perspective by extending knowledge about women's experience and contributions to culture (1-2).

As an offshoot of gender discussions came the field of men's studies. Men's studies, that is the study of men and masculinity, is derived from the feminist agenda.<sup>2</sup> It "responds to the shifting social and intellectual contexts in the study of gender and attempts to treat masculinity not as the normative referent against which standards are assessed but as a problematic gender construct" (Kimmel 10). Michael Kimmel states that men's studies in this form "seeks to buttress, to augment women's studies, to complete the radically redrawn portrait of gender that women's studies has begun" (11-12).

Like a feminist reading, a reading of masculinity is an act of recovery committed by a resisting reader,<sup>3</sup> uncovering the political in the texts and subverting traditional readings. Masculinity has been taken as part of the hegemonic order--assumed but not interrogated.

<sup>2</sup> Men's Studies as an academic enterprise is derived from feminism. Certain other movements, such as the New Men's Movement proposed by Robert Bly (*Iron John*), are a response to the feminist movement.

<sup>3</sup> Acts of recovery and the resisting reader, concepts of Adrienne Rich and Judith Fetterley, are explained later in this chapter.

The question of why look at men and masculinity must first reveal this assumption before it can be answered.

Thelma Fenster believes that this assumption is not new but bears repeating. I concur. The main inaccuracy seems to be that unless something is specifically feminist, it is assumed to be about men. The main objection Fenster has heard often is "'Men's history? Men's culture? Isn't that what we've been studying for centuries, in the guise of *human* history?' History, some protested, was written 'by men about men'; they could have added that it was written largely *for* men, too" (ix). Michael Kimmel has also been asked "Aren't all courses that don't have the word 'women' in the title about men? Why do we need a separate course about men?" (Kimmel 11). Fenster corrects this assumption.

Although the subjects of traditional historical discourse were for the most part men, that discourse was still not precisely 'about men.' The conventions of modern historiography inscribed the stories of the few--the hegemonic males--as generic, human history. Readers often complied with that project, agreeing to read partial histories as comprehensive ones (x).

Kimmel also addresses this problem, stating that:

Men have been the normative gender, and those courses not specifically about some other group have always been de facto about men... But rarely, if ever, do we study men as men; rarely do we make masculinity the object of inquiry as we examine men's lives. If men have been traditionally the benchmark gender (and women the 'other'), then studies of men and masculinity have never made masculinity itself the object of inquiry (11).



Where women's studies exist to "emasculate the patriarchal ideology's masquerade as knowledge" (Brod 40), men's studies exist to use that technique to recover masculinity obscured by the same masquerade. In his introduction Harry Brod states:

While seemingly about men, traditional scholarship's treatment of generic man as the human norm in fact systemically excludes from consideration what is unique to men qua men. The overgeneralization from male to generic human experience not only distorts our understanding of what, if anything, is truly generic to humanity but also precludes the study of masculinity (2).

For Harry Brod, "the most general definition of men's studies is that it is the study of masculinity and male experiences as specific and varying social-historical-cultural formations" (40). Masculinity is a constructed thing, and out of the construction comes a hegemonic ideal. That ideal is defined as "a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance" (Brod 92).

The definition of masculinity (one that is always being redefined) can, and in this thesis does, include homosexuality. A corollary issue to the study of gender is the study of sexuality, and to masculinity, homosexuality. Gayle Rubin states that, "at the most general level, the social organization of sex rests upon gender, obligatory heterosexuality, and the constraint of female sexuality" (179). The study of gender implies heterosexuality because of an assumption that "normal" is heterosexual. A corrective to this assumption is to include homosexuality, particularly to the study of traditional masculinity, which is extreme in its need to define what is masculine by its distance from women and homosexuals (often in the past understood as "men who are like women" (Kimmel 16)).

This study includes homosexuality, but limits it to the category of homosexual desire. Homosexual acts may or may not occur in the Marlow stories (depending on your interpretation of the midnight rituals in *Heart of Darkness*), but for investigative purposes, I am looking at Marlow's curiosity of and reaction to homosexuality. Desire in this context refers to this curiosity, but also to the post-Freudian interpretation of desire as sexual.

As gender issues and questions of masculinity include homosexuality, they also include another category: *homosociality*. The leader in this work is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (*Between Men, Epistemology of the Closet*). Homosociality refers to same-sex bonds. For Sedgwick the word *homosocial* "describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with 'homosexual,' and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from 'homosexual'" (*Between Men* 1). The term *homosocial* more specifically distinguishes "homo" from "hetero" and "social" from "sexual," but what precisely counts as social is a question. It invariably applies to social settings, such as friendships, associations, clubs, including Scouting and Guiding, but it also applies to other settings. For Robert Martin, homosocial relations best describe "institutions and situations" (13), such as relations in prisons, in the military; for myself, in nursing; for Conrad or Marlow, the merchant navy world. Jonathan Goldberg states that "homosociality suggests a continuum of male-male relations, one capable of being sexualized, though where and how such sexualization occurs cannot be assumed a priori" (23). Martin explains that "prisons may be said to be homosocial institutions, but prisoners remain heterosexual or homosexual, according to their principal sexual orientation, regardless of the sexual activity they may engage in while in a homosocial environment" (13).

For Goldberg, desire is sexual and implicit in homosocial relations, although not an absolute. For Sedgwick, the term desire is used by her deliberately to emphasize "the potentially erotic" nature of a continuum between homosociality and homosexuality. Sedgwick's association of homosociality with the erotic is to demonstrate how homosocial relations between men are disrupted<sup>4</sup> where same-sex relationships between women are not. This disruption occurs partially because of socialization but also partially because of homophobia. She states that her use of the term "desire" is

in a way analogous to the psychoanalytic use of 'libido'--not for a particular affective state or emotion, but for the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotively charged, that shapes an important relationship. How far this force is properly sexual (what, historically, it means for something to be "sexual") will be an active question (*Between Men* 2).

This question then, as it pertains specifically to this thesis and the character Marlow, is "the ways in which the shapes of sexuality, and what *counts* as sexuality, both depend on and affect historical power relationships" (*Between Men* 2). These power relationships are evident in Marlow's relationship with women of course, but more revealing of his homosocial desire are the power dynamics between Marlow and other men--Jim, Brierly, Kurtz, the Harlequin, the narrator of *Chance*, Powell, and Fyne.

But I believe another interpretation of homosocial desire is Marlow's overwhelming need to establish or reestablish connections between men that are primal. Marlow's stories are about relationships, usually his relationships with other men, and told out of a

<sup>4</sup> This disruption of the male homosocial continuum is noted by Sedgwick, Rich, and others as an interruption of natural intimate relations between men. It is dealt with further in the discussion of homosocial in Chapter Two of this thesis.

need to redefine male-male relationships. It is this need to redefine friendships that motivates most of Marlow's actions and reactions. What in this context then counts as sexual, what counts as homosexual, and what counts as genital sexuality comes into direct question in the text of this thesis.

Masculinity is a topic that is much ignored in terms of literary applications. This thesis uses the cultural-study techniques of gender theory for the purposes of literary analysis. But what are the benefits of this interdisciplinary exchange? If we accept that literature is the action of social texts and that gender studies will affect the way we look at masculinity and femininity, then reading literature for gender will broaden our understanding of identity within specific cultures and historical periods. It will work to undermine the assumption that gender identities are static and predetermined by biological factors.

Feminist literary criticism has been conducting readings of literature in order to correct the assumption that male experience is human experience, and this work has brought about changes in the way we perceive women. It has worked to recover women in history and literature. This assumption of generic human experience has worked to the detriment of men and masculinity just as it has to women. If the assumption presents an ideal masculinity (or more reasonably, a strict number of varied ideals), then men with a masculinity that is ill-fitting into that (or those) ideal(s) is(are) erased or marginalized. Reading or rather rereading for masculinity will not only recover a history of non-hegemonic males, but will also broaden the base of men's studies knowledge. In short, summing up the take of this thesis on gender studies then, masculinity is an issue just coming into its own. As it gains acceptance in academic circles under cultural studies, the application of its theories to literature is timely.

How do you conduct such a study? It is feasible to say that any reading of the writings of Conrad before the advent of feminist readings was "masculinist," if there were such a term. The important first step in recovering masculinity is to accept that the previous "masculinist" readings were read (by read I mean read, written, and interpreted) through the paradigms of patriarchy. It is also fundamental to my premise that the reader admit that a patriarchal discourse does exist, and that his/her interpretation of the texts has been coloured, if not controlled, by this discourse.

If the hegemonic order in the past has been white, heterosexual patriarchy, and if this order has controlled the interpretation of texts, then it is reasonable to extrapolate the feminist assumption that readers (women and men) must challenge this authority in order to recoup the text. If in texts women have been marginalized, the "Other" made invisible, then it also stands to reason that interpretation of masculinity has been prescribed under certain, very specific, patriarchal guidelines. If women have been done a disservice by patriarchy, it is altogether possible that other victims of that adversity exist within the very gender structure itself. It is possible that some men in texts (or some aspects of some men in texts) may too have been marginalized.

My premise is simple. If, as Adrienne Rich claims, "re-vision" entails "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" ("Dead" 90), then we can use this same process, derived from feminist theory and deconstruction, to unmask the patriarchal interpretation of masculinity and to reconceptualize new interpretations of old texts. My intention is to propose an alternate method of reading Conrad by opening up a new area of discussion--that of masculinity. My ambition is to look past the unexamined assumptions of masculinity inherent in both Conrad's texts and the criticism that surrounds them.

The second step in recovering masculinity is to introduce the resisting reader, the reader who openly rejects those paradigms as not being *hers*,<sup>5</sup> and who is able to re-enter texts from a new critical angle. Feminists became this reader many years ago, and presently the gay and lesbian community and gay-positive readers are taking on the resisting role, rejecting those paradigms that do not fit, and re-entering texts from a new direction. Acts of resistance lead to new readings revealing the multiplicity of layers inherent in the text.

The idea of resistance is taken up by Fetterley in *The Resisting Reader*, and what is most interesting about the resisting reader's reading is the subversive nature of the act of rereading, the power inherent in the deconstructive process that allows readers to see the text beyond the text, to find and recover the building blocks that have created something and presented it as a "truth," as the transcendental signifier. Fetterley tells us that "to expose and question that complex of ideas and mythologies about women and men which exist in our society and are confirmed in our literature is to make the system of power embodied in the literature open not only to discussion but even to change" (Fetterley xx)

It seems obvious that women and persons of colour should be natural resisting readers, but that is an assumption that defers the actuality of the situation. In essence women and persons of colour have a vested interest in becoming resisting readers, but it is a process of unlearning. Literature, especially the reading of it, is taught from a strictly patriarchal perspective, with the inherent difference in readers being overlooked in an effort to produce the homogenous reader. That homogenous reader is a white male.

<sup>5</sup> I use the pronoun 'hers' because the original resisting readers were women--feminists actually. It is meant here only as the initial step in the advancement of all persons becoming discriminating readers.

To read the canon... is perforce to identify as male. ...In such fictions the female reader is co-opted into participation in an experience from which she is explicitly excluded; she is asked to identify with a selfhood that defines itself in opposition to her; she is required to identify against herself (Fetterley xii).

I contend that this co-opting is as applicable to persons of colour and persons of non-Western cultures (and under some circumstances, gays and lesbians) as it is to women.<sup>6</sup> This makes the act of becoming a resisting reader one of great personal development and reassessment. Fetterley goes on to say that "as readers and teachers and scholars, women are taught to think as men, to identify with a male point of view, and to accept as normal and legitimate a male system of values, one of whose central principles is misogyny" (xx). I would add homophobia as another of those central principles.

But there are problems in conducting such a work and specifically in conducting this work. The initial problem is the status of the study of masculinity in gender studies today, which is two-fold: recognition of the need for analysis of masculinity and the limitations currently found in these projects. Another problem is the time and space constraints involved in writing a Master's thesis, the theoretical approach I am taking, and the difficulties encountered with terminology.

To begin with, gender studies and feminist studies do not always recognize a need to look at or rather re-look at masculinity. An often stated corrective is that a study of gender does include masculinity. Jehlen tells us that "it is useful nonetheless to say explicitly: that speaking of gender does not mean speaking only of women" (265). In

<sup>6</sup> There are some noteworthy examples of anti-patriarchal readings conducted by women. In *The Resisting Reader*, Judith Fetterley goes on to conduct a series of resisting readings of some canonical American literature--*Rip Van Winkle*, *A Rose for Emily*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *A Farewell to Arms* among others. Other resisting readers are Adrienne Rich, in her essays, including the model "When We Dead Awaken," and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

her *Preface to Medieval Masculinities*, Thelma Fenster quotes Jane Flax's observation of the predicament an exclusively feminist perspective of gender has in re-enforcing the problems they seek to correct:

To the extent that feminist discourse defines its problematic as 'women,' it, too, ironically privileges the man as unproblematic or exempted from determination by gender relations... That men appear to be and (in many cases) are the wardens, or at least the trustees in a social whole, should not blind us to the extent to which they, too, are governed by the rules of gender (ix).

Therefore, to conduct a study of masculinity often means to defend the need for such a project to begin with.

A second problem that is directly related to the restraints on exploring masculinity is that the work done on masculinity does not yet serve the same potential as feminist analyses. There seem to be selected topics into which masculine studies venture and they are not broad but are rather limited: desire--homosocial, homosexual, heterosexual--transvestism, cross-dressing, in short aberrations or what seem to be aberrations to some asserted norm. In this study, I am broadening my approach by including narration--Marlow's and the frame narrator's--but I am also touching on some of the set topics. It seems to me that a literary study of masculinity must work to broaden the range of topics for discussion until the field becomes as pluralist and dynamic as feminist literary analyses. I think by looking at narration and the role Marlow plays in his own construction for his audience (listeners and readers), I am broadening the approach.

Out of time and space constrictions, limits occur in my approach to this study. Since gender studies are studies in identities bound up in culture, history, race, and class, a complete study should include all these perspectives. Jehlen states:



The insurgent view that gender is a cultural idea rather than a biological fact shares the ground that it has been gaining with parallel arguments about other identities--of class, of race, of national or religious association. De-naturalizing the character of women is part of a larger de-naturalization of all the categories of human character, which emerges as both a social and a linguistic construction (264).

Although I briefly address some of these issues, my analysis is not a complete study of all the intricacies of the subject. Nevertheless, of special interest to Conrad are the issues of race and national identity. Race in Conrad is a very gendered subject--in other words, white, male characters hold different concepts and attitudes towards persons of colour based on their gender.

And since gender relationships are relational, any analysis of masculinity must be closely associated with a feminist analysis. Again I only touch on this issue, but for a complete study, a parallel analysis should be conducted. Of course, it is difficult to conduct a feminist study of Conrad's works because it becomes primarily a study in absence and marginalization, but in itself, this is a vital issue of exploration.

Another problem fundamental enough that it can derail my whole thesis is that I am conducting this work from the position of the deconstructing feminist. If the fundamental premise of deconstruction and Barthes's concept of the text versus the work are not acceptable to the reader, then my work loses value. I read deconstructively in that I consider what surrounds the text, the criticism, the conditions under which it was produced, the author's or publisher's notes, but not authorial intention, as being part of text. When I speak of the author's notes as being part and package of the text, I am positioning the author as another critic of the work. Because texts inherently defer

meaning, leading to multiple readings, authorial intention becomes a problem when incorporated into a pluralist debate as an absolute in terms of interpretation, as in the "true" meaning of the text as defined by the author. The use of authorial intention as an absolute displaces or eradicates other valid meanings and interpretations. Nelly Furman explains this debate:

The literary *work*, in Roland Barthes's formulation of the traditional position, refers us to a concept of creativity whereby the author guarantees the meaning or the truth of a written piece which is apprehended by the critic as a lasting stable object. The authority of tradition belongs to the tradition which valorizes the concept of authorship. When critics are concerned with authors, influences and filiations, literary genres or problems of periodization, they assume that criticism is an empirical positivistic science, and that literature is its observable and classifiable object of knowledge. The literary *text*, on the other hand, is the result of an interaction: 'it exists only as discourse....In other words, *the text is experienced only in an activity, a production*' (Furman 68, quoting Barthes 1979, 75).

To avoid authorial intention I am steering away from biography. A difficulty I perceive with this type of textual analysis is the implications of the author's culpability. If I examine sites of misogyny, sexism, racism, or homosexuality in the texts, an immediate response, most often defensive in nature, is brought about, protecting Conrad from what are seen as damaging accusations. It is my contention that texts themselves engender meaning that is dynamic throughout time; biography provides meaning that is static. I wish to look at the text and the character Marlow separate from Conrad; what is required from the reader is the same disassociation.

And the final problem I see in the expression and reception of this thesis is my use of the word "desire." The post-Freudian interpretation and use of this word as genital sexual desire becomes problematic when trying to express desire in other terms. Sedgwick's use of the word is sexual in order to identify the erotic potential involved in homosocial relationships; my use of the word is also sexual, used to signify that intimate relationships--same-sex or not--(or the desire to attain those type of relationships), are sexual, primal, culminating human experiences. The reader here must not make a leap he/she has been asked to make in other interpretations that desire is sexual and that what is sexual is genital sexuality or sexual acts. What is sexual is more than what is intercourse. It is what is intimate; it is the connection one person makes with another that is essential not just for his/her survival but for his/her growth as an individual.

A good question to ask is why Conrad and why Marlow? In reference to my original question reiterated in the Preface of "What about the guys?" any question about "guys" is too broad. Guys are guys differently--culturally, ethnically, racially, linguistically, historically, socially, sexually, and economically. I wanted to examine the "guys" in Conrad--not Conrad himself--because gender issues in Conrad seem to be what the subtext is all about. I believe Conrad interrogated themes of masculinity, looking for a way to define men of a specific commonality and for a way to redefine male to male friendships.

Part of the need for this redefinition is the "crisis of masculinity" (Brod 294) that occurred at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. This crisis was brought about by many things: among them the redefinition of women's roles, the changing methods for men to express their masculinity, and the attention paid to sexuality.

The role of women in European and American society was rapidly changing. Women were attaining the vote and the legal right to own property. Suffragettes were the forerunner to an independence movement. As stated before, gender identities are relational, and if the behaviours and identities of women were changing, then a direct reaction in the behaviour and identity of men had to occur. James Riemer identifies this alteration as "attempts to redefine and rechannel the expression of a directly masculine identity in a culture where the alternatives for such expression were also being altered and limited by changes in the culture" (294). Although Riemer is discussing a primarily American crisis, it does not exclude Europe's changing culture from his analysis, noting that the changes in England occurred earlier, and that the American West had been considered the last frontier. The Victorian hero, a man of battle, adventure, and romance, was being replaced by a man who needed to affirm his manliness in a "changing social and economic environment" (294). This period produced a culture less interested in expansionism and colonialism; technology altered forever the way wars were fought. Previous ways of expressing masculinity were lost, creating a tension in both a "universal" and a self-definition of a masculine identity.<sup>7</sup>

The crisis was not specifically limited to gendered categories, but also involved sexuality, specifically male homosexuality. There was a movement toward regulating

<sup>7</sup> Mary Poovey points out that the social organization of this period (mid-to-late Victorian) was based on "a sexual division of labour, and a specific economic relation between the sexes, in which men earn and women 'spend' and 'husband' the earnings of men" (2). This points out the shift only a short while later (1922) noted by Reimer in the above analysis of *Babbalanza*, as men now spending their own money to establish their masculinity. This also establishes the shift between us--writers, readers, and critics--and Joseph Conrad, man of his time. We are looking at the crisis of masculinity from a position of distance and history; Conrad was not only writing during this crisis, but was himself an integral part of the flux surrounding changing roles and definitions.

sexual activity outside the marital sphere, but also working to regulate non-procreative sexual activity within marriage.

It is out of this period that "the homosexual" came into existence--not as a person but as a label. The term "homosexual" came to alter what were certain, although loosely defined, sexual acts into persons with a sexual orientation. The crisis worked to establish definitions attributed to behaviours that before were not grouped. Prior to this period

homosexuality was a sin, an abomination, a crime against nature and worthy of damnation. It is important to point out, though, that this applied to practices and not people: there were no 'homosexuals' and practices were also defined retrospectively as 'homosexual' in terms involving same-sex relations and, in particular, sodomy (Edwards 17).

According to Goldberg, Foucault argues that a change occurred: "from the sodomite, the juridical subject defined as anyone performing a sexual act not aimed at procreation within the bonds of marriage, to the homosexual as a particular form of identity" (Goldberg 9).

Why I chose to look at Marlow is two-fold. I could not look at all the guys in Conrad because the question is too broad. More importantly though, I chose to look at Marlow because he is a vital guy in Conrad and in turn of the century literature. Vital perhaps because Marlow is often taken for Conrad, or Conrad for Marlow. Vital because Conrad thought enough of this character to include him in four stories and maybe because three of those stories ("*Youth*," *Lord Jim*, *Heart of Darkness*) are the best known, most often anthologized or taught of Conrad's stories. And vital to me because I really like Marlow, in spite of his most obvious flaws, his sexism and racism, and because I am comfortable with Marlow, and because I feel Conrad was comfortable with Marlow. But

primarily I chose Marlow because he is a man of his time, his profession, his country; he is a man who explores his identity in relation to these things, to his experiences, and to other men. In terms of a gender analysis, my exploring Marlow's masculinity is just a continuation of a project he initiates.

Gender is the undiscovered country in Conrad. It is the little-discussed but constantly felt presence. The marginalization of women<sup>8</sup> and persons of colour, the imbalance in the portrayal of men, and the critics' accusations of misogyny and racism in his writings reflect the need for intensive rereading of Conrad to bring to light the ramifications of what the texts have engendered. This body of work is now underway with the advent of new critics entering what has been primarily a field dominated by a number of male critics from the 50s, 60s, and 70s.

This present study explores the character Marlow through the four stories in which he appears. Conrad tells us:

The man Marlow and I came together in the casual manner of those health-resort acquaintances which sometimes ripen into friendships. This one has ripened. For all his assertiveness in matters of opinion he is not an intrusive person. He haunts my hours of solitude, when, in silence, we lay our heads together in great comfort and harmony; but as we part at the end of a tale I am never sure that it may not be for the last time. Yet I don't think that either of us would care much to survive the other (Author's Note to "Youth" x).

<sup>8</sup> Ruth Nadelhaft disagrees with this idea of the marginalization of women in Conrad. Critic Monika M. Elbert disagrees with her assessment. I am not sure that it is a matter of opinion. It seems to be story-dependent. Certainly it seems wrong to say that Conrad or Marlow marginalizes Flora. The story, among other things, is about Flora. However the same textual presence is not given to the Intended, Jewel, or the native woman.

The above quote from Conrad leads one to believe that his relationship to Marlow is not paternal, but this does not mean that the relationship is that of the secret sharer either. I believe that Marlow developed a life of his own--appearing over and over, growing and changing. The Marlow of *Heart of Darkness* with his "...it's queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own..." (59), is not the same Marlow of *Chance* who states that "Nothing can beat a true woman for a clear vision of reality..." (281). Either Marlow's opinions have altered, or he is contradicting himself.

Chapter Two contains an overview of Marlow conducted through narration, his rhetoric, and his desire to define and explain male friendships. Part one deals with the frame narrators. An analysis of Marlow must begin with the masculine world in which Marlow lives, set up for the readers by the frame narrators. As well, we must look at the relatively small amount of space these narrators obtain in the texts and the views of Marlow they construct, providing us with the only other objective voices--those of the listeners. The interpellations by the listeners, as rare as they are, are contests for space, and in the opinion of Bette London, areas which indicate lapses in Marlow's manliness.

The second part of Chapter Two deals with Marlow's rhetoric. A large part of any analysis of Marlow must focus on Marlow as author of himself. The dual roles played by Marlow, narrator and "hero," are self-constructed within his narrative, so we must look closely at what Marlow wants us to know, think, and feel about him. This self-construction, or Marlow's rhetoric about himself, is indicative of a masculinity he desires to expose and reveal.

A third part of this chapter looks at the issue of homosociality, especially as it is defined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, established by the narration, and personified in Marlow. Marlow has contradictory desires to identify with others yet to be distinct

among them. These others are a part of the "one of us" trope that appears persistently in Marlow fiction, and not the "Others" that make up the marginalized characters of the texts--women and persons of colour.

In Chapter Three I look closely at Marlow's reaction to the "Other." In this exploration, other characteristics that make up Marlow's "persona:" his ethnocentricity, racism, misogyny, and mild gynophobia, as well as his reaction to female sexuality, are large indicators of his masculinity.

Chapter Four discusses the area of male sexuality, which for Marlow largely uncovers his asexuality or celibacy. Another area of exploration is the questions Marlow has about homosexuality, particularly as it may appear in the character Kurtz.

This reading of these texts is an opportunity to continue what is a new area of discussion. In the last few years, writers like Nina Pelikan Straus, Michael Andrew Roberts, Ruth Nadelhaft, Robert Hampson, and others have begun to look at gender in Conrad. It seems to me that while gender is being uncovered, masculinist as well as feminist issues should be examined. To me this is a fresh new direction for Conrad scholarship to undertake, and I am pleased to make my contribution to it.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Narration and Gender Identity**

I wish in this chapter to establish what links I see between narration and identity, specifically here, gender identity. The structures of narrative give the effect of an identifiable narrator. In the Marlow stories there are two identifiable narrators: the frame narrator and Marlow. Each of these narrators, while performing his act, is, as well, presenting an identity of himself and his subjects, and in almost all situations, each presented identity is gendered. What I am looking at here is how this narrator performs within a gender role.

Through the setup surrounding the telling of the "actual" story, each frame narrator presents a specific gender identity, constructing for the reader a cultural, historical model, in this case, of masculinity, but of a masculinity that is both aligned with and differentiated from Marlow's. Although Conrad has limited our sense of the frame narrators by reducing their roles to that of indicators of Marlow, facilitators of Marlow's stories, the frame narrators still present in their narration a constructed masculinity. Marlow then constructs another sense of masculinity: one that sometimes goes beyond the pale to include commonalities with women and men of colour; one that sometimes works to deconstruct the masculinity set up by the frame narrator; and one that sometimes is a reproduction of the frame narration construct making them all a collective Us.

The next issue, it seems, is how do I limit an exploration of narration to gender

identities constructed in the texts and how do I link narration to the recapitulation of a second text of men and the world of men outside the first.

Limiting the difficult subject of narratology to the confines of what is needed for this paper is a daunting task. For Jonathan Culler, a narrative contract exists whereby readers can expect "through their contact with the text, [to] be able to recognize a world which it produces or to which it refers" (192). The complicated layer structure of Conrad's narration in these texts, where things are told and retold, written and read, experienced or heard of are multiple worlds.<sup>1</sup> What I believe happens here is that the reader becomes aware of many texts present in one by virtue of the many worlds presented. For example, in *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, and "Youth," the reader reads the texts of colonialism, of slavery, of misogyny and sexism, of British Imperialism, of all things English, of seamanship, of trade, of the economic establishment, of the dominant ideology, of the patriarchy, of gender identity, and so on.

Through story-telling Conrad has made visible, among other things, significant variations of gender identity, primarily variations of masculinity. For Marlow, men are identified as men through common bonds, but they are also identified as men when they differ. The structure for Conrad and Marlow is that the spectrum of masculinity is wide, not all-inclusive, but not is it unchanging either.

The male to male production of texts (which also produces texts of women, persons of colour, foreign cultures...) reproduces male to male pursuits and power structures. The dual acts of story-telling in these tales are creative acts that produce authority and

<sup>1</sup> In the Marlow stories, and elsewhere in Conrad, many worlds are presented, but are presented always with the connection between worlds being a major focus in the text, such as Africa and Kurtz to Marlow and Marlow to the shipboard listeners or Patusan to Stein, Stein to Marlow, Marlow to Jim, Jim to Patusan.

limit the texts to particular ideological concerns. Those concerns are the power structures of the patriarchy, which uses them to reproduce itself over and over in a continual process of writing the dominant ideology.

In order to look at all these things, this chapter has been presented into three distinct parts, all concerned with narration. Part One establishes who these frame narrators are, their importance as listeners to Marlow, and subsequently, their role as the authors we read. The frame narrators provide a sense of the "real" world of "real" men that is contrasted with Marlow's fantastic stories of different worlds and different men. The frame narrator identifies Marlow and the listeners for the readers and provides us with the small amount of textual space these two share in terms of exchanges in these texts.

Part Two focuses on Marlow as narrator. What I am looking for specifically in Marlow's narration is the sense of gender identity he establishes or denies by constructionism. For while Marlow is telling a story, he is telling us many things about himself: his sense of self and others, his desires, his friendships, his sexuality--all of which are indicators of his masculinity.

Part Three looks at the world that narration has so far set up--a homosocial world of men of the sea, of trade, of colonialist intentions. What I am working to establish here is that this homosocial environment is not something which just happened because of the absence of women or the exclusion of Others. The homosocial environment of the Marlow stories is a set of active relationships pulled together by the sheer will of men united by various bonds.

## Part I: Frame Narration

The Marlow stories of Joseph Conrad are a group of tales related by a common character, Charlie Marlow. The stories vary in length: from a short story, "Youth," published in 1902; to a novella, *Heart of Darkness*, also published in 1902; to two novels, *Lord Jim* and *Chance* published in 1900 and 1913 respectively. Each of these stories is a frame narrative and in each Marlow is both the narrator of a tale and part of the larger narrative. These frame narratives provide us with two insights into the character of Charlie Marlow: the limited and qualifiable "objective" viewpoint of Marlow, and Marlow as the prime constructor of his tales and author of himself. Using the theory of social constructionism, which holds that sexuality "is in fact a deeply socially conditioned and dynamic phenomenon that is indeed 'socially constructed'" (Edwards 7), I plan to look at the frame narrator's telling of Marlow's story as indicative of Marlow's gender identity. Since gender identity, and thereby masculinity, are social constructs, then Marlow's propensity to spin yarns for his peers--his homosocial group, with which he persistently works to identify himself--can provide clues to his masculine sense of self and the masculinity of others connected with his tales or the telling.

Marlow's goal is to deflect attention from himself onto others while ultimately creating himself for his listeners. This goal is furthered in his projection through the frame narrator/writer of the stories, henceforth called the narrator, to create an intimacy with the readers that results in trust and authority. The act of deconstruction is to make visible those places where trust is tested and authority suspect.

The purpose of focusing on the narrators's narrations is to establish the important contribution they make to the texts by setting up a particular masculine world. This is not just a world of men, where women are excluded or marginalized, but it is also a

homosocial environment. The nature of this masculine world, the proximity men have to other men, the reliance they have on each other, the faith and trust that is required from one fellow to another makes intense relationships develop. Some of these relationships turn into intimate friendships, and for Marlow, cultivating such friendships is the true romantic project.

As well, this masculine world is a symbolic representation of the hegemonic structures of commerce, a microcosm of the patriarchy. This is most notable in *Heart of Darkness* and "Youth" where the listeners of the stories are the upholders of the structures: the lawyer, the accountant, and the Director of Companies. However, they are no longer "at sea," no longer viewing the Imperialist project at its level of production. It is Marlow, still at sea, still involved in trade and commerce with the colonies, who is the link between the listeners and the colonized world. Marlow can tell them what is going on, what has been going on since they left the service; Marlow can point to the "truth" behind the idea, the flaws and merits in the structures that they are all a part of. Marlow's opening story about the Roman conqueror is the first example we have of his desire to betray. A major contradiction appears here in the character of Marlow. In *Heart of Darkness*, he presents Africa and the African to the listeners as a continuation of their Victorian belief, but he presents the colonialist ideal negatively by expressing it ironically. He tells the listeners:

They [the Romans] were no colonialists;... The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea--something

you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to..." (51)

The repetition of Marlow's story by the narrator is indicative of the faith he places in his telling of the truth, of having "looked into it closely." It also establishes their mutual desire to know what it is they represent. It is in these truths and repetitions that the structures are examined and ultimately, although not in these texts, altered

Edward Said speaks about the oral nature of the stories, but ultimately the stories are written by the narrator. There is a preoccupation among critics with attributing reality to fiction, as in whether *Lord Jim* could be "yarned" in one sitting. The more implausible assumption is that the narrator recounted verbatim all that Marlow said was said. The incongruity of this should be apparent when one realizes that one is reading in *Chance*, for example, what the narrator has written that Marlow said Mrs. Fyne said that Flora said that the governess said. Still, it pleases me to think of the narrator as a medium through which Marlow's stories as Marlow constructs them are accurately given.

In *Lord Jim* and *Chance* the narrator's role differs from his role in *Heart of Darkness* and "Youth." In the latter two stories, he (I've eliminated any consideration of the narrator being she) is sympathetic to and a little in awe of Marlow. The narrator creates the frame world without including any autobiography save his presence as one, but an unidentified one, of the included. "There was a director of companies, an accountant, a lawyer, Marlow, and myself" ("Y" 3). In *Heart of Darkness* we are told:

The Director of Companies was our captain and our host. We four affectionately watched his back... The Lawyer--the best of old fellows--had, because of his many years and many virtues, the only cushion on deck, and was lying on the only rug. The Accountant had brought out already a box of dominoes, and was toying architecturally with the bones. Marlow sat cross-legged right aft, leaning

against the mizzen-mast (*HofD* 45-46).

In *Chance* the narrator has a much larger presence. The included is reduced to one: he is listener to this story. He still has no name but he has an identity. "I believe he had seen us out of the window coming off to dine in the dinghy of a fourteen-ton yawl belonging to Marlow my host and skipper" (*C* 3). He and Marlow interact in this story: we know his thoughts and feelings and this separates him from the more anonymous narrator of the other two stories.

Later on I asked Marlow why he wished to cultivate this chance acquaintance.

He confessed apologetically that it was the commonest sort of curiosity. *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* (*C* 40, *Italics mine*).

In essence, the narrator of *Chance* is the prime motivator of the story. He is Marlow's initial connection to Powell, from whom the story begins and fans out. Marlow's telling of the story is for the narrator. It is the tie that binds them.

Then there is the narrator of *Lord Jim*, who aligns himself more to the narrator of *Victory* than he does any of the Marlow stories.<sup>2</sup> There is no physical presence provided to this narrator as there is with the other stories. This narrator is omniscient; he knows things that cannot be known. The initial chapters before Marlow begins his yarn are commensurate with the information we gain of the privileged reader's preparations for

<sup>2</sup> The comparison is in terms of the anonymity only. In *Lord Jim* the narrator is sincere in his telling of Jim's story and slightly sympathetic to Jim, although clearly not as convinced as Marlow to Jim's perfection. The narrator in *Victory* relies heavily on irony to tell Hyest's story, revealing a malicious intent that is never clearly explained.

reading Marlow's text at the end of the novel: we learn of things that Marlow does not know.

The major factor to acknowledge in *Lord Jim* is how intrusive this narrator is by providing us, the readers, with more information on Jim than anyone else possesses. This information alters our perception of Jim and prevents us from identifying completely with Marlow's perception of him. What we know as an aberration of character, Marlow sees as a rash act of youth, a first test failed.

The narrator tells his readers about "Tuan Jim: as one might say--Lord Jim" (*LJ* 5). There are a number of issues here that are obscured by this authoritative voice. First of all "Tuan" to "Lord" is an inaccurate translation.<sup>3</sup> It is quite an embellishment on the narrator's part and speaks of his desire to control the reader's interpretation of the story. The narrator (and Conrad) are speaking to an audience that does not know Malay, and this audience must therefore consider this translation as authoritative. But because it is an embellishment, it smacks of irony, revealing that the estimation in which Marlow holds Jim is not shared by the narrator.

All of the stories save for *Lord Jim* are retellings of actual situations. In *Heart of Darkness* the group is waiting on deck for the turn of the tide.

We looked on, waiting patiently--there was nothing else to do till the end of the flood; but it was only after a long silence, when he said, in a hesitating voice, 'I suppose you fellows remember I did once turn fresh-water sailor for a bit,' that

<sup>3</sup> David Leon Higdon and Floyd Eugene Eddleman state that "Probably the most misunderstood and misrepresented Malay term in Conrad's novels, *Tuan* translates directly as 'mister' or 'master' and suggests deference from the speaker to the person addressed. ...As Winstedt points out, *tuan* is 'the usual form of polite address in speaking to or of European men, Malay men and women of birth and breeding...'" "A Glossary of Malay Words in Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*." *Conradiana* 10. Referring to Richard O. Winstedt, *Malay Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913).



we knew we were fated, before the ebb began to run, to hear about one of Marlow's inconclusive experiences (*HofD* 51).

In "Youth" the group, conceivably the same group, is drinking claret around a mahogany table, probably on a ship although this is not indicated. Marlow begins right away with the telling of "the story, or rather the chronicle, of a voyage" ("Y" 3).

*Chance* varies from "Youth" and *Heart of Darkness* slightly in that the narrator is hearing the story over a number of meetings. Yet the first and last meeting are established in the same manner as they are in the above stories. "We helped the boy we had with us to haul the boat up to the river-side inn, where we found our new acquaintance eating his dinner in a dignified loneliness at the head of a long table, white and inhospitable like a snow bank" (C 3). "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" (C 257). The narrator twice establishes that much of the narrative is a recreation of a number of meetings with Marlow where the story was continued: "It [the story] was given to me in several stages, at intervals which are not indicated here... I have said that the story of Flora de Barral was imparted to me in stages" (C 41 & 257).

The telling of the tale in *Lord Jim*, however, is a recreated fictional setting. There is no specific occasion, no identifiable group of listeners.

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.

*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... (*LJ* 33, Italics mine).

The inherent difference in this fictional telling of *Lord Jim* and the telling of the tale

in *Heart of Darkness* is that *Lord Jim* is less about Marlow than the other. A certain audacity becomes apparent in that Jim, while still alive, is the subject of "after-dinner hour" gossip, a "fable of strife to be forgotten before the end is told" (*LJ* 35). A certain contempt becomes evident when we learn that the listeners of these stories are men well-sated "after a good spread, two hundred feet above the sea-level, with a box of decent cigars handy" (*LJ* 35). These are 'the included,' men, white men, European men, and men of the sea or of business relating to the sea. Jim was never a part of the included save in this fashion, as a character in a story.

It is part of the "one of us" trope,<sup>4</sup> most prominently featured in *Lord Jim*, but applicable to all these stories. Tension is produced persistently at places where Marlow draws away from, then associates himself with his listeners. The narrator, more so when he is not omniscient, works to create a distance between Marlow and reader, but also emphasizes Marlow's distinctiveness from the included. This distinctiveness is essential to the separateness that Marlow desires and works to create in his narrative.

It is the narrator who initially points out Marlow's distinctions from the others. He singles Marlow out in two ways: by treating Marlow differently from the others of the included and, more importantly, by repeating Marlow's tale. In *Heart of Darkness*, before he begins recounting Marlow's tale, the narrator provides the physical positions of the included on board the *Nellie*. But directly after he situates Marlow, he provides the reader with the only physical description of any of the group, thus privileging him. "Marlow sat cross-legged right aft, leaning against the mizzen-mast. He had sunken

<sup>4</sup> The exclusiveness of this "one of us" grouping is established in Marlow's disclaimer of his friendship with the pedestrian Fyne. To be one of "one of us" you must be white, male, European, and connected to the sea. This makes Brierly, as snobbish and egotistical as he is, part of "one of us," but not Fyne.

cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol" (*HofD* 46). In the telling of his story, the narrator reveals many distinctions that separate Marlow from others. In *Heart of Darkness* Marlow sits Buddha-like: "he was the only man of us who still 'followed the sea;' .... He was a seaman, but he was a wanderer, too..." (48). The above statements refer to Marlow as an Oriental sage, the Enlightened one, a man of knowledge gained through experience. The narrator is reinforcing Marlow's authority in the tale he is about to tell. Although Marlow is not foreign, Oriental, or Other, in his travels he has been touched by them; he is like them, and can therefore speak about them authoritatively.

Marlow had the seaman's propensity to spin yarns, "but Marlow was not typical... to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine" (*HofD* 48). Again Conrad is being ironic by having the narrator "write" this passage. For Marlow the meaning lies outside the kernel; for the frame narrator the meaning of the story is the kernel, and the kernel is Marlow's story.

In *Lord Jim* it is again the narrator who initially presents and separates Marlow, doing so through Jim's eyes. "Jim's eyes, wandering in the intervals of his answers, rested upon a white man who sat apart from the others, with his face worn and clouded, but with quiet eyes that glanced straight, interested and clear.... The glance directed at him was not the fascinated stare of the others. It was an act of intelligent volition" (*LJ* 32-33).

In *Chance* we are told that the narrator remembers

"...the subtly provisional character of Marlow's long sojourn amongst us. 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. The sea is the sailor's true element, and Marlow, lingering on shore, was to me an object of incredulous commiseration like a bird, which, secretly, should have lost its faith in the high virtue of flying (C 33-34).

The narrators provide us with another equally important function to that of supplying the only objective view of Marlow (as subjective as it is); they provide us with Marlow's audience and its reaction to him. Marlow's immediate fictive audience is his listeners, not Conrad's audience of readers--although at times this distinction blurs--and to complicate the field of narration even further, not the narrator's readers, since ultimately he writes these stories down. Important to the construction of Marlow by the narrator is the presentation of these listeners and Marlow's interaction with them.

I have already presented who the listeners are--the specific "group" in *Heart of Darkness* and "Youth," the narrator in *Chance*, and the vague group of well-sated men in far off places in *Lord Jim*. The narrators provide us with the voices of these listeners and the direct comments Marlow makes to them through breaks in the narration, which Bette London calls "pinpoint areas of narrative stress" (246). In "Youth" most often these breaks are made by Marlow, requesting that the bottle be passed, which serves to rupture the narrative space with a sense of reality. But in *Lord Jim*, *Chance*, or *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow's interruptions are often challenges he puts forth to his listeners. Narration then becomes a contest for space, and contests for space become contests of identity, and therefore, of masculinity.

London discusses Marlow's opening of his tale in *Heart of Darkness* and points out that his appeal to his audience to "imagine" England as a dark place; to imagine the Roman invader with regrets "are not so much invitations as commands; the act of narration constitutes the audience as a collective 'Yes man,' invoked only to confirm preimposed structures of reality" (242). For London these preimposed structures are colonial authority, and

...Marlow's narrative practices salvage the premise his story puts to the side: the construction of an idealized British Imperialism, backed up and redeemed by 'the idea.' Edited out of the story (the narrative breaks off at the mere mention of the 'idea'), this recuperated colonial ethic re-enters in the margins of the text--re-enters in the terms of Marlow's narrative address (242).

The colonial project is important to this study only in so far as it is bound up with a man's sense of his masculinity. A man could still prove his manhood by taking to sea, exploring unknown worlds, participating in the political economy through trade. Marlow's narration is significant in that at all times he is trying to attain and maintain authority, not only over his tale but also over the larger tale he is writing: British Imperialism, romantic adventure, national identity, and masculinity. These areas of narrative stress then become moments when authority is questioned. London tells us that "Marlow's representation of himself as text produces this dual effect: establishing and challenging his authority simultaneously" (243).

She goes on to say that "Marlow's authoritative position depends upon his Englishness and his masculinity--the very qualities his manly interchanges confirm. For Marlow's aggressive encounters with his audience align him on the side of superior power, imaged as masculinity" (243). Questions arise out of the moments of stress when

Marlow identifies with the feminine or the Other.

In *Heart of Darkness* when Marlow realizes that the helmsman is dead and that his shoes are full of blood, he gives the listeners a detailed account of his thoughts and, more importantly, his feelings at the time. These thoughts and feelings all centre on Kurtz: on Kurtz's probable death, on not meeting Kurtz, on not being able to hear Kurtz's "gorgeous eloquence" for himself, on the possibility of losing that "point d'appui" that Marlow has created for himself for months. He tells his listeners: "...--and my sorrow had a startling extravagance of emotion, even such as I had noticed in the howling sorrow of these savages in the bush. I couldn't have felt more of lonely desolation somehow, had I been robbed of a belief or had missed my destiny in life..." (114). He is interrupted by "somebody." One of the listeners, unlikely the narrator, who would have owned up to it, has sighed: "Why do you sigh in this beastly way, somebody? Absurd? Well, absurd. Good Lord! mustn't a man ever--Here, give me some tobacco" (114).

What has occurred here is not really the absurd, but the close association of a white to an Other and of a man to an "extravagance of emotion." It has made the listener uncomfortable; it has exposed a part of Marlow's masculinity the listener did not want revealed. Marlow responds to this anxiety in three ways: he openly expresses hostility to all the listeners, he deflects attention to another issue--the absurd, and he robs the sigher of his masculinity by associating him with the animal--sighing in a "beastly way." It is, however, the unfinished question that Marlow poses that most intrigues me: "Good Lord! mustn't a man ever--" (114). What is it that a man mustn't... feel, think, say, be....? The possibilities of what Marlow might have said are fascinating, and I think indicative of Marlow's knowledge of other boundaries that mustn't be transgressed among men.

This interruption begins a pause in Marlow's story for two or three more paragraphs.

where the most significant disclosure made to the listeners is the introduction, then denial, of the Intended and her presence in the African story. "...Voices, voices--even the girl herself... Girl! What? Did I mention a girl? She is out of it--completely..." (115). Directly after this point in his telling, Marlow is perhaps his most hostile toward Kurtz, when he presumes Kurtz is dead and no longer available to him.

It is in relation to Kurtz that Marlow identifies with the feminine in himself, taking the place of Kurtz's Intended. Up river with the natives, Marlow identifies himself with the Other, when he points out commonalities between them. For Bette London, these moments are when he loses control and his authority and masculinity are in question.

This control is regained by the breaks in Marlow's narration. The hostility he displaces on his listeners is masculine assertion. London calls these moments "Marlow's wranglings with his audience" (246). She states that "Marlow asserts his Kurtz-like capacity for multiple conquests: "'Try to be civil, Marlow,' growled a voice, and I knew there was at least one listener awake besides myself" (*HoD* 94). These responses occur because "badgering his audience, as he does periodically, Marlow assaults their indifference, subjecting them to violent verbal harangues" (London 246). London's argument is that Marlow "implicitly project[s] them as female, or at least... challeng[es] their masculinity" (London 246). The narrator's comments at these points work to provide another voice recognizing Marlow, and for London, this

recognition reaffirms Marlow's masculinity--demonstrating its coercive power, while deflecting the narrative from Marlow's lapses in manliness. Restaged as narrative contest, Marlow's representations of personal 'weakness' emerge as displays of narrative prowess. For moments *in* the narrative that betray Marlow's contested masculinity frequently inaugurate narrative commentaries that reclaim

Marlow's voice for the dominant ideology (London 246).

Another way of looking at these contests for space is exactly as contests--Socratic challenges Marlow makes, not only to his fictive audience, but also through them to the real audience, to examine the structures. These challenges are what make Marlow dangerous. He is the examiner enmeshed in what he examines, and in doing so he does not reinforce the structure but rewrites the text, and invites the real audience to use the new text as a challenge of the old.

These episodes are not the only contests for space in these texts, but they are the most significant ones that illustrate London's point of view. Other examples occur when Marlow is frustrated by the limits of story-telling, as in *Lord Jim* when the group cannot possibly see Jim. Marlow displaces this frustration onto the group, first as a break in the narration by direct address to the group, and second by having the address consist solely of self-depreciating remarks, again denials.

Marlow paused to put new life into his expiring cheroot, seemed to forget all about the story, and abruptly began again.

"...like this fellow, for instance--and in each case all I could see was merely the human being. A confounded democratic quality of vision which may be better than total blindness, but has been of no advantage to me, I can assure you.... Oh! it's a failing; it's a failing; and then comes a soft evening; a lot of men too indolent for whist--and a story..."

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.'

'Who? I?' said Marlow in a low voice. 'Oh no!...' (*LJ* 140).



Of particular interest are the contests between Marlow and the narrator in *Chance*. These exchanges are often initiated by Marlow baiting the narrator, leaving the narrator perpetually confused: "...what are you flying out at me for like this?" (C 281). But Marlow also complicates this narrative by overtly associating himself with the feminine. Unlike this association in *Heart of Darkness* where the break in narration occurs after the connection has been made in order to restore his masculinity, the associations in *Chance* are made in the intranarrative space. Here Marlow seems to be arguing against type as opposed to establishing it. It seems that Marlow is constructing another aspect of his identity at this point in his life, one that both includes women in his life and a feminine side to his masculinity. At various times throughout the novel he tells the narrator:

"Perhaps if I had had a helpful woman at my elbow, a dear, flattering, acute, devoted woman... There are in life moments when one positively regrets not being married" (C 136).... "...there is enough of the woman in my nature to free my judgment of women from glamorous reticency" (C 53).... "I hope there's enough of a kid and an imbecile in me to answer the requirements of some really good woman eventually--some day... Some day. Why do you gasp? You don't suppose I should be afraid of getting married?" (C 150-151).

This friction between Marlow and his audience, the contest among his homosocial group, provides an important balance to the homosocial aspect of Marlow's nature as discussed later in this chapter. The interchanges between them, the fact that it is to them, for them that Marlow works to construct himself points out that homosocial relationships are like any other, and not ideal or utopian. Marlow's desire for the ideal male friendship is still a relationship based on power, and his two most significant homosocial relationships, with Jim and Kurtz, show these power dynamics at work.

In Part One we have seen that the frame narrator has provided us with three significant contributions to the Marlow stories, all of which go to identifying this second narrator, Marlow. Firstly, they have established two fictive worlds--the environment where the story is told and the larger world of Victorian England. An exception to this latter world is found in *Lord Jim* where the larger world is of English Malaysia. Secondly, the frame narrators have given us their subjective view of Marlow, the only voices that balance Marlow's construction of himself. And finally, by providing us with the exchanges between Marlow and the listeners, the narrators provide us another view of Marlow, one less controlled than the Marlow his stories construct and one Marlow is not able to "rewrite" by already knowing the end.

## **Part II: Marlow as Narrator**

In this section, I wish to introduce a number of qualities Marlow as a narrator holds. The first is his self-construction through his rhetoric, his affirmations and denials. The second quality is his self-reflectiveness, most especially in *Heart of Darkness* and "Youth," where Marlow takes his listeners inside his thoughts as they form a personal philosophy. The irony of these personal solitary acts is the public quality of self-reflection disclosed. And finally, disclosure in another sense puts a very unique spin on Marlow's reliability. The issue of confidentiality is, in Marlow, often an issue of betrayal.

No one can object to the assertion that Marlow is more than simply a narrator. He is participant, sometimes hero, sometimes catalyst, always vocal. He is, as Conrad states, assertive in his opinions.<sup>5</sup> What must be remembered is that all characters, occurrences,

<sup>5</sup> Conrad's note to "Youth," quoted in Chapter One, page 24.

and experiences are provided by or filtered through Marlow's easy authoritative voice.

They are not objective.

In Part I of this chapter, I spoke of the distinction the narrators make of Marlow, yet it is Marlow who keeps up this distinction. In *Lord Jim* he begins his tale of Jim with: " . . . if you fellows will concede to me that each of us has a familiar devil as well. I want you to own up, *because I don't like to feel exceptional in any way...* (LJ 34, Italics mine). This is one of his denials that is really an affirmation. Marlow does want to feel exceptional. Marlow's constructionism is ultimately conducted out of a defense mechanism. He must preserve his place in the "one of us" trope, but his need for individuality places a constant tension within the man's existence. Simultaneously Marlow desires to be part of and yet "exceptional" within the group. However, this desire has limits. Jim, too, achieves distinction, but Marlow is not interested in this form of recognition.

This introduction to the tale proper sets up much more than Jim--it sets up Marlow. It is this devil that Marlow blames for his running "up against men with soft spots, with hard spots, with hidden plague spots" (LJ 34). These men inflict themselves upon Marlow,

loosen[ing] their tongues at the sight of me for their infernal confidences; as though, forsooth, I had no confidences to make to 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. And what I have done to be thus favoured I want to know. I declare I am as full of my own concerns as the next man, and I have as much memory as the average pilgrim in this valley, so you see I am not particularly fit to be a receptacle of confessions (LJ 34).

Of course all this has two purposes. It sets Marlow up as distinct from others by his being a 'fit receptacle' that these men feel they can trust. But in his claiming that men, unasked, confide in him, Marlow is denying the overt detective work he conducts to uncover confidences, for example, Jim's story and its peripherals. The story does not "come" to Marlow; Marlow goes at great lengths to "get" the story from Jim, Mr. Jones, the French lieutenant, and Gentleman Brown.

It is important to show here how Marlow's narration is often a series of digressions. Through these digressions he establishes a number of his characteristics through speech, actions, or thoughts. This digression on how he actually came to know Jim's story is significant because of what we learn about Marlow from Marlow. But it is also significant because it exposes Marlow's claim that the story came to him because of his being a man to whom men may confide. The digression begins with Jim.

Jim's dinner "confession" was, in almost every way, set up by Marlow to occur. After the misunderstanding outside the courtroom, it is Marlow who catches up to Jim, twice. It is Marlow who presses the invitation for Jim to dine with him at the Malabar House. It is Marlow who says "a little wine opened Jim's heart and loosened his tongue" (*LJ* 77), and hours and chapters later, after Jim's version of the story is told, it is Jim who accuses Marlow of this coercion: "'Don't you believe me?' he cried. 'I swear... Confound it! You got me here to talk....'" (*LJ* 130-131).

In Chapter Six Marlow reveals and connects Brierly's suicide to Jim's trial. The sequence of this digression is not chronological to the telling of the trial episode. Marlow interrupts by speaking of Brierly and digresses further to a meeting sometime later between himself and Brierly's first mate, Mr. Jones. The first mate "would tell the story [of Brierly's final hours] with tears in his eyes" (*LJ* 59). It is some pages later before

Marlow returns to the trial and Jim.

In Chapters Twelve and Thirteen Marlow obtains the details of what happened to the *Patna* after it was abandoned. "...I was informed a long time after by an elderly French lieutenant whom I came across one afternoon in Sydney, by the merest chance, in a sort of café, and who remembered the affair perfectly" (LJ 137).

Through letters and various meetings with friends and acquaintances, Marlow keeps up with Jim's story as he lives it. Once Jim is on Patusan, Marlow obtains the narrative of past events from Jim himself when he visits him. But after the visit, after Jim's death, Marlow admits to a gap in his knowledge. Gentleman Brown holds the key. "Till I discovered the fellow my information was incomplete, but most unexpectedly I did come upon him a few hours before he gave up his arrogant ghost" (LJ 344). "Unexpectedly" is not necessarily accidentally. Marlow says "I had found him out in Bangkok through that busybody Schomberg, the hotelkeeper, who had, confidentially, directed me where to look" (LJ 345).

Marlow is always referring to a something away from himself--that intangible thing called youth, Africa and the darkness it represents, Kurtz, Stein, Jim, Jewel, Fyne, Flora... But the supranarrative is always about Marlow, "written" by Marlow. This authorship is constructionism. Edward Said identifies this constructionism in *Heart of Darkness* and places the onus, as I see it, on Marlow rather than on Kurtz:

Even though he had never seen Kurtz as he really is..., Marlow finds that he is attracted to him because Kurtz is a *point d'appui* of Marlow's own making, a kind of secret dream, a companion of his enforced idleness (Said 106).

There are many instances of this construction throughout the texts, but I have limited myself to presenting only a few. In *Heart of Darkness* Marlow is at his most testing.

The length of his discourse in *Lord Jim* is nothing compared to the effort he expends in *Heart of Darkness* creating impressions in his listeners' minds. The encroaching darkness serves as the mind's canvas as Marlow figuratively paints pictures for his audience. For example, Marlow tells his story using persons he does not name, whom he marginalizes with the use of appositives: the Aunt, the women, the Intended, all men of colour as shades, niggers, cannibals, and the others, the chief accountant, the chief manager, the pilgrims, and the Harlequin. The frame narrator has no choice but to continue this process, which preserves space and focus for the important players of this novel. Marlow and Kurtz.<sup>6</sup>

But Marlow must start by moving himself to the periphery so that the concrete and the real defer to the shadowy and insubstantial--or in his words, the inscrutable. The tale proper begins with Marlow denying himself as the subject of his own story, and ends with his being indistinct to his listeners. "'Of course in this you fellows see more than I could then. You see me, whom you know...'" It had become so pitch dark that we listeners could hardly see one another" (*HofD* 83). He states that what happened to him is unimportant. But it is not only important, it is vital. Without Marlow's experience there is no story. The story is about Marlow's obsession with what happened to Kurtz in Africa.

Directly after denying his own subjectivity, Marlow tells his listeners that he must explain how he got there and proceeds to relate a story that is not only about that moment in his life when he obtained this position, but also about his childhood dreams. Once the listener has heard the story, once the reader has read the novella, it becomes clear that

<sup>6</sup> The only other proper name is Fresleven, Marlow's access to the Congo, who is conveniently dead before Marlow's tale begins.

Marlow did not need to impart this information for the comprehensive flow of the story. Clearly Marlow's intent is to refocus attention to himself, but to do so using a circuitous route of denial and affirmation.

For all Marlow's raving against women and their illusions, against the worlds of their own making,<sup>7</sup> it is Marlow who never has more than an illusion of Kurtz, and in that illusion, he sees the utmost reality. Marlow states that "all Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz," but the true construction of Kurtz is Marlow's doing (*HofD* 117). What he knows initially is small, but piece by piece, Marlow constructs Kurtz for his listeners and himself.

All Marlow's stories are given to his listeners, and in turn to the readers, through hindsight. In his narrative Marlow displays contempt for his Aunt, a symbol of British Imperialism and Missionary mind-set, as he does for everyone in the sepulchral city, many of the Belgians he meets in Africa, and finally the Intended. It seems that much of his contempt is based on the fact that he now, after his experience, knows the truth of colonialism. Knowledge is a key issue in Marlow's masculinity, whether it is knowledge of facts, of men, or as we shall see later, of women. It is true that from the outset he has displayed a pragmatic sensibility concerning the colonial issue, unlike his Aunt who thinks of it as an errand of benevolence and Christian duty, but that is more due to his natural sarcasm rather than to any clear understanding of what he might encounter. "She talked about 'weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways,' till, upon my word, she

<sup>7</sup> A major contradiction in Marlow's philosophy of women occurs here. On the one hand he states that it is "...queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own..." (*HofD* 59), but later he states "'I laid the ghost of his gifts at last with a lie,' he began, suddenly. 'Girl! What? Did I mention a girl? Oh, she is out of it--completely. The--the women I mean--are out of it--should be out of it'" (*HofD* 115). They are excluded simply by the virtue of their being women, but they are also excluded by men. Women are not in touch with truth, and yet his last act for Kurtz is a lie.

made me quite uncomfortable. I ventured to hint that the Company was run for profit" (*HofD* 59).

Marlow is telling this tale after he has had the experience. In fact he protects himself by telling all his tales in this manner, by eliminating doubt and not providing any real contestation of his versions. Critic Knapp Hay identifies this protection by proclaiming Marlow "self-shielding" (170). He can in no way be objective about what he thought beforehand, but it is important to his construction that he remain aloof and not reveal any spots where he might once have been naive or deluded. His contempt works best to deflect attention away from himself, but it also provides him with outlets for venting his anger under the guise of annoyance at others' ignorance. By telling his adventure in this dramatic re-narrative fashion Marlow can once again portray the Buddha, for whom experience is the teacher of all things. Rhetorically he presents or reveals Africa and the man he became, but he never reveals the man he was. Whatever ignorance or misapprehension Marlow had about Africa or the colonial project before his experience is kept from the listeners.

The lie to the Intended is another spot where Marlow insists that he must do this--but backtracking we realize that Marlow's irritation is out of his impatience with ignorance and his desire to distance himself from the stance of pro-colonialism. A stance he emotionally and intellectually rejects, but a stance that is indicated in the Roman motif he provides his listeners when setting up his tale. Instead of providing a viewpoint of the invaded Britons--as one might anticipate from the pro-English Marlow--he provides a sympathetic view of the Roman invader. Now after the African experience, what he does not incorporate into his narrative is his participation in covering up the truth of colonialism by his lies.



I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams.... They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretence, because I felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I knew.... *I had no particular desire to enlighten them...* (*HofD* 152, Italics mine).

This of course is not the only motivation for the lie, but it is a significant one, coming as it does just after he provides his listeners with his impression of the people of the sepulchral city. It is also indicative of his ethnocentricity. Marlow has been working as a representative of a country other than England. He went to a place on the map not represented by vast amounts of red--amounts of red which were "good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there" (*HofD* 55).

It is important to remember that Marlow is here de-constructing and re-constructing the Imperialist project for his listeners. Marlow is revealing the myth of the colonialist ideal, presenting it to the listeners ironically. This revealing of the "truth" of the project, in his experience, the Belgian project, is a deconstruction of the structure in which he has had a part. He knows first hand that the idea to bow down to is a necessary illusion and that some of the methods are unsound. And yet his deconstruction is not a complete indictment of Imperialist concerns. Marlow concedes colonialism has produces *some* real work.

In *Lord Jim* Marlow makes overt this constructionism when he tells his listeners "He [Jim] existed for me, and after all it is only through me that he exists for you" (*LJ* 224). Frances Wentworth Cutler states that "there speaks not the teller only, but the creator" (29). I go further and say that this is a spot where Marlow's ultimate goal is to prove his

own existence--and his power over the imagination of others.

An important digression is the rather detailed account of Brierly, an act of deferral which is quite revealing of Marlow's character. He is recounting Jim's story--not Brierly's--but ultimately, Marlow is recounting his own story. This digression is substantial in terms of space given (thirteen pages), and is significant in that it particularly shows two aspects of Marlow's personality: his egoism and the tension that underlies his need for distinction.

Brierly attacks Marlow's sense of self. All his efforts to construct himself as a distinctive one among the included are lost on Brierly. Brierly is the most distinctive of all and the included do not reach him. Marlow reacts against this with sarcasm, which not only deflects his injuries as Brierly inflicts them upon him,<sup>8</sup> but also puts a spin on Brierly that, in essence, makes him appear foolish. For all Brierly's merits, it is the intense egocentricity of the man that Marlow dwells on. Marlow's opinion of Brierly is uncharitable and reactionary.

But in this portrayal, Marlow once again denies his feelings and once again constructs himself as distinct. "I liked him well enough, though some I know--meek, friendly men at that--couldn't stand him at any price" (*LJ* 57). But Marlow also states that he found he "could bear [his] share of his good-natured and contemptuous pity for the sake of something indefinite and attractive in the man" (58).

The Brierly episode plays an important part in Marlow's construction and more so in our analysis of Marlow from that work. It is inferred that Brierly committed suicide because of Jim's act of facing the trial. This inference is so strong that it is taken up by

<sup>8</sup> The most significant injury that Brierly inflicts on Marlow is his attack of Marlow's most prized asset: his seamanship. "'And you call yourself a seaman, I suppose,' he pronounced, angrily" (*LJ* 67).

critics, yet I believe that it is a place where meaning is determined but not substantiated. Other than circumstantial evidence--Brierly's distress over Jim's trial and the closeness of the suicide to the trial--there is no proof that Brierly's actions were prompted by his limited involvement in Jim's life. In fact neither the suicide notes nor the conversation with the mate indicate the trial as a precipitating factor. But Marlow needs to show once again how different he is from Brierly. Marlow survives Jim; Brierly does not.

It is not the cowardice that Brierly objects to. It is Jim's attempt to alter his nature by rewriting his (in)action. In facing the trial, Jim attempts to prove that he is not a coward. But for Brierly, Jim's abandonment of the ship is cowardice and a coward should be true to his nature and not affront everyone with a pseudo-noble effort of standing up for what he did. Brierly's contempt for the others of the *Patna* who are true to their nature is less than it is for Jim. For Marlow it is the opposite. Jim's leap is a sin but his facing the crime by standing trial is partial, although never complete, redemption.

Probably the most revealing place of constructionism in *Lord Jim* is Marlow's presentation of himself as Jim's friend, redeemer, and protector. Surrounding his efforts to put a spin on Jim, his life and (in)actions, are Marlow's frequent betrayals of his "friend" by repeating Jim's story and remembering what Jim wants to forget, and what he wants everyone else to forget. Yet the story is not for the edification of the listeners, but for their amusement. "...my dear chap, your dinner was extremely good, and in consequence these men here look upon a quiet rubber as a tumultuous occupation. They wallow in your good chairs and think to themselves, 'Hang exertion. Let that Marlow talk.' ...And it's easy enough to talk of Master Jim..." (*LJ* 34-35). There is perversity in Marlow's need to repeat his inconclusive experiences. By remembering Jim and

Kurtz, Marlow exposes all that is confidential. In essence he does the same thing with Flora in *Chance* by telling of her suicide attempt when she explicitly wished it to be kept secret.

It is the governess in *Chance*, a woman he never met, who suffers most from Marlow's need to construct. In this later story, Marlow is less in need of constructing his own identity than of moving more into an author-of-all realm. Marlow's long passage recounting Flora's last two days with her governess is an almost complete act of literary licence on the part of Marlow. A certain amount of the exchange between Flora and the governess is gained through reports, but the information we have, not only on events that took place in the governess's private room, but also of conversations between Charlie and the governess, the true sexual/financial nature of their relationship, and the governess's thoughts and feelings on her pent up dissatisfactions are gleaned by Marlow the Magnificent, master of clairvoyance. Marlow is turning author.

If one looks at the works from the beginning (not chronologically by Conrad but by Marlow) one lists them as "Youth," *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, and *Chance*. The two initial books are recountings of actual experiences of Marlow's. *Heart of Darkness* is stylistically more "genre-like" than "Youth," spilling over into supposition, needing to desperately reach his listeners with impressions and having only words to do so. By the end of *Lord Jim* Marlow has moved into the realm of authorship by writing the rest of his/Jim's story. In *Chance* Marlow has finally become author and now works to manipulate the story as he sees fit. "It is in *Chance* that he stands out the conscious artist, dexterously interweaving half-hinted and fleeting glimpses of men and things with his own reflections and imaginings in the full fabric of Flora de Barral's destiny" (Cutler 29)

Of course the most convincing evidence of this constructionism is the persistent use of the revealing "I" that Marlow uses in all of these books. I am not speaking here of the general plot-oriented I--"I came, I saw, I conquered"--but the I of the philosopher, the man of opinion and knowledge. Evidence also lies in Marlow's contradictions. Early in *Heart of Darkness* Marlow tells his listeners that he "would not have gone so far as to fight for Kurtz, but went for him near enough to a lie. You know I hate, detest, and can't bear a lie, not because I am straighter than the rest of us, but simply because it appals me" (82). Yet the denouement of the tale rests upon his lie to the Intended.

In another contradiction, Marlow goes on to state that he does not like work, that "no man does," but that he likes "what is in the work.--the chance to find yourself" (*HofD* 85). This affirmation for himself and his gender is denied by the frustration he reveals in his months of uselessness. Work, capitalist production and profit, is why he is out there; it is why they are all out there.

The closed nature of Marlow's narration prevents an objective voice from being heard or a contradicting point of view from being raised. Marlow as narrator is Marlow as hero only in as much as he is subject of his own narrative. The kernel speech previously quoted on page 35 plots out the rhetorical technique Marlow uses to construct his identity, his masculinity. Where it seems that "the meaning of an episode" may be Jim's morality or Kurtz's immorality, or Flora's survival, or Africa's heart, these are merely the kernels. The meaning "enveloping the tales," "the glow brought out by the haze" is Marlow (*HofD* 48).

### Part III: Homosociality

The overwhelming evidence of Marlow's homosocial desire is difficult to deny. He is a man interested in men, a man promoting the interests of other men. He is also a man interested in the society of men, as his choice of profession and companions attests. His homosocial environment is established largely by the perimeters of the sea or the brotherhood of men in business associated with the sea.

The most important display of Marlow's homosociality is the "one of us" trope, specifically spoken of in *Lord Jim*, but implicit in the other works as well. The "one of us" trope does two things: it establishes an "us" and it identifies that "one" can belong to the "us." What is important to remember is that we have already seen how Marlow is a part of this "us," this male world, but is included by his peers as a distinctive member. This is his desire; he wishes to belong, but he wishes to be distinct in that group. It is something that he achieves by being authorial, exotic, paternal, and wise.

The "us" is the included, the audience, the listeners, the men of the sea... It expands to include whomever is part of the "us" at the time Marlow is speaking. What is clear is who is excluded. Women are never part of "us;" neither are men of colour. But other men are excluded as well. Fyne is never "one of us," ostensibly because he is a landlubber, but Stein is, meaning that the definition is not static, but dynamic and entirely under the control of Marlow.

What separates *Lord Jim* from the other Marlow stories is the intensity of the "one of us" motif. This intensity is perpetuated by Marlow in what seems like a desperate need to construct a place of belonging for Jim. Throughout the story, Marlow avers to his listeners that Jim is one of us--white, European/English, a sailor, of a certain background, of a certain appearance. These efforts are consistently part of the one-way discourse. If

there is an objection to Jim's inclusion in the group, it is not presented. However, from the frequency of his efforts, one concludes that Marlow was trying to convince someone: his listeners or himself. In the end, we discover that Marlow was especially trying to convince the privileged man.

Jim's suspension of his certificate, his dismissal from the service of the sea, is a concrete place where the "one of us" trope is made invalid. He had lost, almost before his career began, the primary prize of being one of the included. Emphasizing this is Jim's pointed accusation that Marlow would not hire him for his ship. The accusation goes unanswered. Jim is right. Marlow would not hire an uncertified sailor--possibly it was illegal, but as well, it would cause dissension among his crew. And instinctively, Marlow would not hire Jim in particular. In the end, Marlow does not trust Jim.

But at every turn Jim displaces himself from the "one of us" trope. He blames the others for his leap from the *Patna*; he blames the world for its judgement of him; he sees as his only flaw a failed sense of confidence. His escape to Patusan provides Jim with the first instance of being "one of us," but it is a different us. This is the "us" of white European Imperialism. Stein's solution of sending Jim to an isolated region provides Jim with a place where he could "reign" as white colonialist. By not having other whites around to establish a code for him, Jim was free to write his own terms for colonialism, and his is a do-nothing colonialism. While "Lord" of Patusan, Jim does not effectively deal with Tunku Allang, Cornelius, nor Gentleman Brown. In essence, he does not even effectively deal with Jewel and her fears.

What is vital to an analysis of the Marlow stories that could perhaps be extended to include all Conrad texts is the importance of homosociality. Conrad's great effort through Marlow is to preserve or restore the sanctity of male-to-male relations of love.

mutual respect, and need. Marlow exists in a world where the male homosocial continuum is part of the socialization of men and not disrupted by homophobia. The redefinition of friendship therefore as something primal is the point he is trying to make. Love between men is not necessarily homosexual love.

Sedgwick's close association of homosociality to homophobia (rather than to socialization, which may be influenced by homophobia anyway) seems to be a problem in that it is a persistently moving line that makes it impossible to identify male-to-male relationships that are "homosocial" but not "homosexual."

When you identify a close, intimate relationship between men, homophobia makes it either an unreality or a homosexual desire. Although Sedgwick is quick to point out that she is not discussing genital sex, the problem arises in that she is not discussing sex at all. Two questions arise from her work: Where is the sex? and Where are the homosexuals? If all men who are interested in men are homosocial, and all homosocial men are homosexual in essence if not in practise, then where is the place for men to be without categorization?

In this setup, Marlow is faced with a great problem. His love for men, his love for the society of men may be misunderstood as homosexuality. His relationship with Jim is as primal a relationship as Marlow ever has, but it is not homosexual; it is homosocial. His affection for Stein, for the narrator of *Chance*, for Captain Beard of the *Judea* are homosocial loves. His profession encourages these bonds; his society accepts them. Outside of the included, outside of "us" this love becomes something dangerous and socially unacceptable.

Within the male homosocial sphere, knowledge of homosexuality becomes another issue: who is and who is not? Who is safe and who is not? Again Marlow is faced with



a problem. His interest in Kurtz, an interest he stops short at calling love, is the relationship of a man to a man who may have practised homosexual acts. How can Marlow "love" Kurtz, yet maintain his "expected" masculinity of obligatory heterosexuality? The question for Marlow is what is it about the unspeakable that makes other relationships impossible? It is this question that complicates his relationship with Kurtz as we shall see in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The "Other"

In exploring narration we have so far looked at Marlow, his world, and his homosocial environment. It seems to me then that the next step in this exploration is to move outward from that world to Marlow's world of the "Other." Just as Marlow creates the world of "us," he constructs the world of "Other" by either directly identifying those not the same or by marginalizing them to the far reaches of his text.<sup>1</sup> This is indeed a large world--perhaps much larger than his inclusive world of "us." For Marlow anyone not the same is an "Other:" women, children, landlubbers, persons of colour, those not English, Orientals.... It is here that many of the more controversial traits of Marlow's character can be identified: his racism, colonialism, ethnocentricity, misogyny, and gynophobia. As much as Marlow's construction of the world of "us" is indicative of his masculinity, so is his construction of the world of the "Other." Although most of Marlow's conscious efforts go into presenting the included, those that belong, he, by virtue of his construction, unconsciously identifies the excluded, those that do not belong.

In her article "Reading Race and Gender in Conrad's *Dark Continent*" Bette London sees Marlow's constructionism as presenting the dominant "ideologies of race and gender" (235). For London, "the construction of Marlow's voice--the construction of Marlow as

<sup>1</sup> Marlow's distinctiveness within his own homosocial group does not lead him to being an "Other" in any of his texts. But his association with the Buddha and the East allow him to be an authority on the "Other" for his listeners.

text--is implicated in and sustained by his construction of another text, Africa as 'Dark Continent'" (235). She goes on to say:

In *Heart of Darkness*, a novel-ethnography, we see... staging in the ongoing production of the text we read--a text that corresponds to the two ethnographic encounters the novel presents: Marlow let loose in Africa and Marlow aboard the anchored ship. To control these situations, Marlow, as author, produces pre-texts of plausibility. In the first case, he reinvents Victorian mythology, constructing Africa as text: 'the dark continent.' In the second, he reinvents himself, constructing 'Marlow, the narrator' as the voice of cultural authority. The result is a hybrid text in which resistance to conventional cultural practices (resistance that produces a text of unbelievability) is grafted onto reproduction of the dominant ideology (London 241).

By constructing a world where the rudimentary souls do not possess speech, Marlow provides the listeners with a mythical world they understand exists. By not correcting the myth, Marlow re-enforces the colonial fabrication. By vocalizing his dissent from the Belgian project, he preserves the British Imperial idea. Marlow's repetition of what is expected rather than what is marks his participation in the systems that promote racism and colonialism. These issues clearly need to be more fully developed than I am able to do here, but in order to examine Marlow's world of "Other," I will focus on a particular group of the "Other:" women.

Perhaps the largest issue of the "Other," at least from my subjective point of view, is Marlow's treatment of women. Marlow is never comfortable with women, and his discomfort is expressed in many ways: anger, hatred, contempt, jealousy, embarrassment, awe... The underlying motivation for these expressions is most often his

misogyny and gynophobia. In order to control what is almost always a reaction rather than an action, Marlow distances women: from his text, from his world, and from his life. Women who enter the masculine world of these texts do so on the periphery and in marginalized roles. Here I am not speaking of the women with whom Marlow interacts--Jewel, the Intended, or Flora, for they are not allowed into this male realm--but women who act as servants or slaves. For example, the women in Brussels are employees of no consequence and their role in Marlow's life is as objects of observations (although one announces his presence to other men). Marlow furthers this process of objectification by allegorizing the women to a revised version of a Greek myth. Another example is the native woman at the Outer Station in *Heart of Darkness*. She is represented only by the work she does--the starched linen worn by the Company's Chief Accountant--work taught to her by the accountant with much difficulty as "she had a distaste for the work" (*HofD* 68). Another example of a peripheral woman in the man's world is the wife of the captain of the *Judea*, who becomes a surrogate mother to the young Marlow. She mends his clothes and leaves when men's business is undertaken.

When Marlow does interact with women, he does so on their own "turf," which serves to keep them "out of it" (*HofD* 115). When Marlow is alone with Jewel or Flora it is always in the open--on Patusan, in the country, or on the street in London. When he is alone with the Intended, he is far from alone. In his mind, the presence of Kurtz and the native woman, and indeed the natural world of the jungle, surround him.

He lived then before me; he lived as much as he had ever lived--a shadow insatiable of splendid appearances, of frightful realities; a shadow darker than the shadow of the night, and draped nobly in the folds of a gorgeous eloquence. The vision seemed to enter the house with me--the stretcher, the phantom-bearers the

wild crowd of obedient worshippers, the gloom of the forests, the glitter of the reach between the murky bends, the beat of the drum, regular and muffled like the beating of a heart--the heart of a conquering darkness (*HofD* 155-156).

When the Intended complains "that nobody will see him again, never, never, never," Marlow's reaction is one of shock. "Never see him! I saw him clearly enough then. I shall see this eloquent phantom as long as I live, and I shall see her, too, a tragic and familiar Shade, resembling in this gesture another one, tragic also, and bedecked with powerless charms, stretching bare brown arms over the glitter of the infernal stream, the stream of darkness" (*HofD* 160-161).

It is male knowledge of the female which presents itself as one of the barriers which limits the access women have to this male world. But more specifically, men's possession of knowledge insulates them and instills within its possessors a sense of primacy. When Marlow constructs his world, he is not acting in a singular fashion. It is part of the maintenance of the patriarchy that men recognize and perpetuate this constructionism. For example, there exists in *Heart of Darkness* and *Chance* a metanarrative. When Marlow provides the listeners with his misogynistic views on women that have little to do with the narrative, the views are meant as deliberate indicators to the listeners of who belongs and who does not, who may hear and who may not. Marlow's "assumed tone of knowledgeability about women and their ways... masks a profound identification with these other men [Anthony, Fyne, and Powell] in their shared lack of understanding and their shared inability to engage with women other than through the distorting medium of complementary sets of male idealizations and condemnations (Roberts "Secrets..." 97). Roberts explains that

the basic paradigm, then, is one in which knowledge (both literal knowledge of

particular facts or events and existential knowledge) is sought, shared, competed for, and otherwise circulated among groups of men, including the implied author himself, dramatized male narrators such as Marlow, dramatized male listeners and implied male readers. Often this process is concentrated, at least for a time, on a pair of men. This circulation involves and is facilitated by the exclusion of women from such knowledge... ("What Else..." 13-14).

But this constructionism must be protected, indeed defended against the feminine. This in Conrad always means women, but it also means men who transgress the barriers of hegemonic masculinity, like Jim and Kurtz and the homosexual Jones in *Victory*. In her article focusing on the exclusion of the Intended, which she contends extends to the exclusion of female readers, Nina Pelikan Straus states that "the guarding of secret knowledge is thus the undisclosed theme of *Heart of Darkness* which a woman reader can discover. Marlow's protectiveness is no longer seen in the service of woman's deluded desires, but serves the therapeutic end of keeping the woman/intended mute" (134). And it is true to say that Marlow is also kept "mute" in the presence of the Intended when she answers her own questions.

As I have maintained so far, the criticism of Conrad seems willing to discuss certain subjects openly and just as willing to avoid others. As a prime example, female sexuality is often discussed as being symbolically represented in Conrad through the natural world of the East or of Africa. The question arises why discuss female sexuality while reading for masculinity? My response is that I am looking at Marlow's reaction to female sexuality as specific indicators of his masculinity. Gender identity and sexual identity are bound together, just as are actions and reactions. In order to understand Marlow's sense of himself as a man, we must look at his sense of women.

Bette London states that an attempt to read *Heart of Darkness* "involves the cultural practices and codes that constitute Marlow's identity--in particular, the myths of race and gender that subtend his discourse. Freud conflated these myths when he formulated feminine sexuality as the 'dark continent'" (London 236). Although this Freudian association is disputed by feminists today (specifically Cixous and Spivak) as being particularly sexist and racist, it is still pursued as a viable avenue of exploration.<sup>2</sup> Overt female sexuality, however, such as appears in Aïssa or Nina in the early novels, or in Flora or Mrs. Fyne in *Chance*, or the native woman in *Heart of Darkness*, is not discussed. The problem with female sexuality as associated with nature is that it displaces the possibility of an object identified, "real woman," female sexuality. In Conrad men are always acting toward nature with a sexual stance of invasion and conquest, but the only thing they have left for real women is male impotence. Andrew Michael Roberts discusses this deferral in the context of the traffic in women:

Women, functioning as objects of exchange (literal or psychic) and of shared desire, have been used to maintain such a barrier [between sexual and other forms of inter-male relationship] so that male desire has been channelled through women. This involves the exclusion of women from the subject-positions of power, knowledge and desire: they are established as that which is desired, that which is the object of knowledge, that which is exchanged or controlled. Hence the feminisation of the natural world which man seeks to control and commodify... (Roberts "What Else..." 12-13).

The traffic in women is a large issue of interest in Conrad that cannot be fully

<sup>2</sup> See the following authors (among others) for development of an antithesis to Freud's position. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Hélène Cixous. See Bette London for a critique of this position as it applies to Conrad.

developed here. In her article "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" Gayle Rubin conducts a reading of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Friedrich Engels, Sigmund Freud, and Jacques Lacan to argue "that patriarchal heterosexuality can best be discussed in terms of one or another form of the traffic in women: it is the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men" (Rubin in Sedgwick *Between Men* 25-26). This traffic in women does occur in many of the works, and a prime example is *Almayer's Folly*. A Malay woman is taken in battle by Lingard. She becomes his "adopted" daughter. After Lingard attempts to civilize her through education at a convent, he exchanges her with Almayer in order to secure a partner in trade at Sambir and a son. This synopsis is, of course, merely the bare bones of the story as it relates to the standard traffic in women theory. And this motif is repeated in other Conrad stories, such as *An Outcast of the Islands*.

But in the Marlow stories, the standard motifs of the kinship structures are disrupted. Incestuous relationships between fathers and daughters figure prominently in two of the Marlow stories: *Lord Jim* and *Chance*.<sup>3</sup> This contradicts the primary purposes of kinship systems as Lévi-Strauss defines them. Lévi-Strauss states in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* that "the total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman, but between two groups of men, and the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners .." (quoted from Rubin 174). The traffic in women is part of obligatory heterosexuality and

<sup>3</sup> Incest occurs elsewhere in Conrad as well. Even in *Almayer's Folly* where the traffic in women works to promote bonds and alliances between men, and ostensibly to ensure obligatory heterosexuality and the sanctity of the incest taboo, Almayer has incestuous feelings for Nina, his daughter, and refuses to offer her in marriage to anyone.



a method of ensuring that the incest taboo remain intact and revered.

In *Lord Jim* and *Chance* three women are victims of incestuous overtures: Jewel, Mrs. Fyne, and Flora, but only one is also an object of exchange: Jewel. These women are all orphans "to a certain extent" (C 60). Mrs. Fyne and Flora are both motherless, and for most of her life, Flora's father has been absent. Jewel's father abandoned her and her mother on the island of Patusan. For whatever reasons, Jewel's mother married Cornelius, a man whom the text presents with utter contempt. After the death of Jewel's mother, she is alone save for Cornelius. Jewel is symbolically exchanged from the absentee father to Cornelius, Cornelius to Jim, and then finally, after Jim dies, from Jim to Stein. Marlow is witness to most of these exchanges, a participant only in the sense of his being part of the social system which supports such trades.

In *Lord Jim*, before Jim arrives at Patusan and makes contact with Jewel's step-father, Cornelius, Jewel is very much abused by the man. The abuse continues while Jim is there. Marlow ascertains from Jim that "Cornelius led her an awful life, stopping only short of actual ill-usage.... He insisted upon her calling him father--'and with respect, too--with respect...'" (LJ 288). Jim witnessing horrendous scenes between them tells Jewel "I can stop his game... Just say the word'" (289).<sup>4</sup> Cornelius, seeing Jim as a threat to his position with Stein and perhaps to his position with Jewel, plots to have Jim killed. It is Jewel who thwarts the attempt by her vigilance and protection of Jim. After the attempt is made Jim appropriates Jewel and makes her his mate. But it is fair to suggest that Jewel quickly assessed Jim's ambivalence towards acting and doing nothing, and therefore used her knowledge to ensure Jim appropriated her.

<sup>4</sup> I believe this statement reveals the hesitation that is such a large part of Jim's masculinity. Instead of acting, he needs Jewel, the victim, to request that he intervene. No doubt it is this hesitation that underlies Jewel's persistent insecurity in Jim's fidelity.

Mrs. Fyne, when she was Miss Anthony, was subject to the tyranny of her father, Carleon Anthony, a famous poet. Daniel Schwarz states: "Mrs Fyne and Captain Anthony had as father a poet who, while celebrating 'the domestic and social amenities of our age', in his own life 'showed traces of the primitive cave-dweller's temperament'" (51). Marlow tells the narrator that "[The father] was a savage sentimentalist who had his own decided views of his paternal prerogatives..." 'the daughter... remained in bondage to the poet for several years, till she... seized a chance of escape by throwing herself into the arms, the muscular arms, of the pedestrian Fyne" (C 38 & 39). Schwarz states: "Like Flora, Mrs Fyne is also victim of incestuous impulses. Indeed, there may be a hint in phrases such as 'paternal prerogative' or 'remained in bondage' that the poet had not repressed his impulses" (51).

What occurs as a result of this incest, realized or potential, is that the woman is not offered into the political economy as a symbolic exchange. Survival for the women caught in these circumstances becomes a matter they must take into their own hands. For Mrs. Fyne, it is elopement; for Jewel it is complete devotion; for Flora it is suicide, and when that is thwarted, she takes a lesson from her mentor Mrs. Fyne, and elopes with Captain Anthony.

Flora's incestuous relationship only occurs after she is married to Anthony and her father is released from prison in a decidedly dangerous state of mind. He has imbued his daughter with the possibilities of his recovery and success. In the cab leaving the prison, he tells her his survival for those years in prison was her. "'I lived only for you, I may say. I suppose you understand that. There were only you and me'" (C 357).<sup>5</sup> When he

<sup>5</sup> An interesting area for further exploration is the relationship parallels between Nina and Flora and their fathers, and how these parallels are split by race. Where Flora is led by guilt to keep loyal to her father, Nina is presented as having just enough of her mother's savagery to

discovers that she is married, his reaction is of physical shock: "'You--married? You, Flora! When? Married! What for? Who to? Married!'" (C 359). Marlow states "A jealous rage affected his brain like the fumes of wine, rising from some secret depths of his being so long deprived of all emotions" (C 360). His rage continues for pages, emphasizing time after time, a delusional ideal he had of a relationship with his daughter. His rage infects his feelings for Anthony; he "would like to break his neck" (C 363) and eventually he attempts to poison him. In the end, this crisis, the attempted murder, is the catalyst that brings the union of Flora and Anthony together sexually. But after Anthony's death, Flora is once again alone. It is Marlow who is instrumental in pushing forth into the open the obvious feelings Powell and Flora have for one another.

There are two women to whom Marlow is sexually attracted: the native woman in *Heart of Darkness* and Flora in *Chance*. His attraction to the native woman is complicated by the entire sexual nature of the African experience for Marlow. A sexual continuum exists linking nature to the woman, the woman to Kurtz, Kurtz to Marlow, and finally Marlow to the Intended. I am purposely not referring to this woman of colour as "Kurtz's woman" because I believe that the proprietary nature of that phrase is incorrect. If anything, Kurtz is hers. This perspective is reinforced by the terror she inflicts on the Harlequin and the preoccupation Marlow has in associating her with nature. It is through this woman that Marlow has his first contest for Kurtz. As he takes Kurtz away from the station, he takes him away from the woman. Marlow describes her reaction to this:

"There was an eddy in the mass of human bodies, and the woman, with helmeted head and tawny cheeks rushed out to the very brink of the stream. She put out her hands, shouted something, and all that wild mob took up the shout in a roaring chorus of

resist her father's designs to live vicariously through her.

articulated, rapid, breathless utterance" (*HofD* 146). It is woman-speak that the natives know, that Kurtz knows, but that Marlow cannot know. "'Do you understand this?' I asked.... He made no answer, but I saw a smile, a smile of indefinable meaning, appear on his colourless lips that a moment after twitched convulsively. 'Do I not?' he said slowly, gasping, as if the words had been torn out of him by a supernatural power" (*HofD* 146). Once again Marlow has associated the woman not only with what is natural but with what is supernatural and powerful.

It is important to note, however, that this association Marlow makes of the native woman to power is a contradiction. Her power is spiritual and expressive. She controls nature; she controls the mob. It is, however, Marlow whose power is physical and literal. It is Marlow who wins the contest. He takes Kurtz away; Kurtz dies with him, not with her. And he betrays the native woman just as he betrays others. By later comparing her to the Intended, actually fusing them in his mind, he is now taking away what he had given to her, her individuality and nativeness: "...and I shall see her, too, a tragic and familiar Shade, resembling in this gesture another one, tragic also, and bedecked with powerless charms, stretching bare brown arms over the glitter of the infernal stream, the stream of darkness" (*HofD* 160-161). She is now associated with the delusions, repression, and pathos of the Intended. Her charms are powerless. In Africa, she was a woman who held power over the mob; here in Marlow's mind in Brussels, she is just another girl mourning the loss of her man.

There are other contests for propriety, with the manager and the Harlequin and death, but only the contests with woman, this woman and later the Intended, are significant to Marlow.

Marlow's attraction to Flora only truly occurs after he discovers that she is a victim.

which I believe associates her with Jim.<sup>6</sup> Her first attempt at suicide, a leap off the edge of a high quarry with a sheer hundred foot drop, is thwarted by either or both Marlow and the Fynes's dog. When she catches up to Marlow and he realizes what her intention was, his study of her deepens.

I perceived then that her thick eyelashes were wet. This surprising discovery silenced me as you may guess. She looked unhappy. And--I don't know how to say it--well--it suited her. The clouded brow, the pained mouth, the vague fixed glanced! A victim. And this characteristic aspect made her attractive; an individual touch--you know (C 45).

Before this discovery, Marlow thought of her as a rude girl and a minx. But the knowledge of her victim status, even though he does not know the nature of her sorrow, combined with what he now realizes was her attempt at suicide objectifies her for Marlow. The "individual touch" is not only as Marlow suggests something which distinguishes her from others, but more concretely, the touch is the physical and emotional pull she has on Marlow. No relationship between Marlow and Flora is ever contemplated. In following Flora's life as a tale, however, Marlow discovers the possibility for himself of a sustained, mature heterosexual sexual relationship, like the one Captain Anthony finally gets. A relationship that may indeed even end in marriage. Flora herself is not this possibility; she represents one.

Straus has suggested that Marlow was sexually attracted to the Intended.<sup>7</sup> Although

<sup>6</sup> Jim as victim is not my assessment of this complicated character but rather the portrait Jim paints of himself. This portrait draws Marlow to Jim in an ambivalent relationship that at one moment provides Marlow with satisfaction and then frustrates him.

<sup>7</sup> "Projecting his own love on to the form of the Intended, Marlow is able to conceal from himself the dark complexity of his own love--a love that strikes him with horror--for Kurtz" Straus 135.

Marlow does describe the Intended as attractive. I see his relationship to her as oppositional. There is an exchange between Kurtz and Marlow, represented by the manuscript and bits of paper, but symbolizing the Intended. Marlow's desire is to replace her. His relationship with Kurtz sets him apart from all the others. He physically takes Kurtz away from his foster home. He is with Kurtz during two intensely intimate moments: the midnight rituals and Kurtz's last moment of consciousness. Marlow's assurances to the Harlequin and his disagreement with the manager demonstrate the lengths Marlow will go to to preserve Kurtz's reputation, but more so, the proprietary nature of his relationship with Kurtz. This proprietary nature is represented in Marlow's absolute resistance to turning over Kurtz's papers to the Belgians.

This proprietary nature extends itself into the motivation for Marlow's visit to the Intended--besides the extraordinary curiosity that we know him for. It is his second to last chance to expropriate Kurtz from everyone else for himself. His last chance is with his story. The listeners, and therefore the readers, know as much of Kurtz as Marlow wishes us to know. His control of the story, his interpretation of words and events, are part of his protection and defense of Kurtz, part of the bond he made with him. Is *Heart of Darkness* a defense of Kurtz? To a certain extent, yes it is. Marlow's lie is told to protect Kurtz, but his revealing that lie to the listeners is a betrayal. This contradiction continues with the conflicting emotions Marlow has for Kurtz.

The interview with the Intended is as unsuccessful as Marlow's interview with Jewel in Patusan, underlying Marlow's ineptness at speaking to or with women. In both meetings, Marlow is torn between truth and lies, what he wants to reveal and what he wants to hide, but most especially what he wishes to take or rather keep for himself--his unique and "special" relationship with Jim and Kurtz. These relationships are vital to

him, although he is never clear as to why. Both women, Jewel more overtly, contest his appropriation of their men. It is then that Marlow realizes that speaking in terms the other won't understand--of civilization to Jewel, of the primitive to the Intended--he will maintain his sovereignty over the women. He chooses the truth for Jewel and the lie for the Intended. Each of these choices preserves for him his relationships and ends the battles with these women.

I have alluded before to Mrs. Fyne's lesbianism, which like any sexuality in Conrad, must be qualified. Whatever the physical nature of Mrs. Fyne's relationships to other women is, the text is not explicit. It is, however, implicit that she desired a much closer homosocial bond with other women, younger women, to whom she wished to impart her feminist views. It is through her feminism that she channels much of her homosexual desire. Daniel R. Schwarz feels that the close association of Mrs. Fyne's feminism and lesbianism is an implication of Conrad's "that the heterosexual woman whose desires are being fulfilled cannot be interested in woman's rights... Not only does she write 'a handbook for women with grievances... a sort of compendious theory and practice of feminine free morality,' but further, she is depicted as a lesbian" (52).

Before dealing with her feminist views, I will provide the textual extracts that led me to believe in her lesbianism, although I again state, I am not discussing genital sexuality. Marlow alludes first to the conditions under which Fyne and the then Miss Anthony eloped. I have stated above that Carleon Anthony was too possessive of his daughter to exchange her with any man, and that Miss Anthony therefore used any means at her disposal to place herself into the political economy. John Fyne was the means.

Marlow twice describes her in masculine terms: "Mrs. Fyne had a ruddy out-of-doors complexion and wore blouses with a starched front like a man's shirt, a stand-up

collar and a long necktie" (C 39). "I looked at her, sitting before the lamp at one o'clock in the morning, with her mature, smooth-cheeked face of masculine shape..." (C 59). This later comment comes directly after Mrs. Fyne has 'knocked Marlow down' by giving him her "knock-me-down doctrine" (C 59), which to Marlow is an unfeminine position. It is natural that he would therefore attempt to masculinize the speaker of such. And as I later point out, Marlow's descriptions of men always emphasize their youth and fairness, but Mrs. Fyne has a ruddy complexion, with a mature masculine-shaped "handsome face" (C 50).

Other comments lead to a suspicion of her lesbian desires as disclosed by Marlow. When he first introduces the Fynes to the narrator, he immediately speaks of the girl-friends, since the connection he is making is to Flora, one of the girl-friends.

'The girl-friend problem exercised me greatly. How and where the Fynes got all these pretty creatures to come and stay with them I can't imagine. I had at first the wild suspicion that they were obtained to amuse Fyne. But I soon discovered that he could hardly tell one from the other.... These girls in fact came for Mrs. Fyne' (C 42).

In this passage, Marlow informs the narrator that he puzzled over the purpose of these girls being at the cottage. It occurs to him first that the women may have been procured for the male, for Mr. Fyne, but on observation he discovers that this is not so. Also it occurs to him as a "wild suspicion" which indicates that he was thinking of their presence in sexual terms. His flat statement "These girls... came for Mrs. Fyne" is emphasized by his inclusion of "in fact," which serves to anticipate and eliminate doubt in the listener.

They [the girl-friends] treated her with admiring deference. She answered to



some need of theirs. They sat at her feet. They were like disciples... [After tea] Mrs. Fyne would be gone to the bottom of the garden with the girl-friend of the week. She always walked off directly after tea with her arm round the girl-friend's waist (C 42, 43).

Here Marlow presents the physical relationship between Mrs. Fyne and the girl-friends as he witnessed it. It is barely physical, but intimate and, we are told, exclusionary: "Of Fyne they took but scanty notice. As to myself, I was made to feel that I did not exist" (C 42). Marlow provides a religious aspect to it by referring to them as disciples, but this is to indicate jealousy, not piety.

Marlow said that there was only one girl-friend with whom he had conversed at all. It had happened quite unexpectedly, long after he had given up all hope of getting into touch with *these reserved girl-friends* (C 43, Italics mine).

This final passage confirms Marlow's exclusion from these women, something that Marlow has always had the power to do to women that is now being done to him. But it also plays on the word "reserved." In one way it is implied that the girl-friends are shy or coy, but it can also be read that they are reserved, as in, set aside, for Mrs. Fyne exclusively.

Mrs. Fyne's feminism is a simple doctrine clearly wrought out of her past difficulties with her father. Schwarz states "The father completely dominated the daughter... and when she escapes she devotes herself to defending the prerogatives of women" (Schwarz 51). To Marlow Mrs. Fyne's doctrine is "naive atrociousness," (C 59) borne out of her innocence which, for Marlow, is akin to ignorance. He vacillates between being extremely "knocked down" by her doctrine, amused by it, and greatly annoyed by it. He tells the narrator:

It was not political, it was not social. It was a knock-me-down doctrine--a practical individualistic doctrine. ...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, their abominable tyranny) from taking the shortest cut towards securing for herself the easiest possible existence (C 58 & 59).

At least this is what Marlow gleaned about Mrs. Fyne's doctrine. Once again Mrs Fyne has excluded Marlow, this time from feminist knowledge. Marlow states, "Indeed I think that she herself did not enlighten me fully" (C 59). A contest is always present between Marlow and any listener, and it is always a contest of knowledge. In this situation Marlow ensures he has the upper hand by graciously informing the narrator: "You would not thank me for expounding it to you at large" (C 59). And then he nullifies the contest by stating that ignorance is not only universal but mandatory in gendered terms: "There must have been things not fit for a man to hear" (C 59)

Mrs. Fyne's lesbianism and feminism are two subjects at which *Chance* takes only the slightest look. In essence, both subjects are brought up only as they connect to Marlow's storytelling, which is to say that neither of these issues bears dramatically on the plot, but that they both affect Marlow deeply. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Marlow is at his most misogynist in *Chance*, and it is the governess who seems to take the brunt of Marlow's dislike. I submit, however, that this may be partially due to a projection of the antagonism Marlow feels toward Mrs. Fyne. Schwarz states that "Despite his sympathetic description of her as the victim of her father, Marlow is hostile to Mrs. Fyne, and his nasty sexual innuendoes about Mrs. Fyne's female friends seem unjustified"

(51-52).

It is reasonable to assess this antagonism as a homophobic reaction to Mrs. Fyne's lesbianism and a misogynistic reaction to her feminism, as well as a sign of Marlow's gynophobia. Schwarz states "For Marlow... the stodgy, complacent, threatening Mrs. Fyne crystallises his fear of women" (52). In another long passage concerning the brief dealings Marlow has with Mrs. Fyne, he interrupts his narrative to inform his listener

...in his tone between grim jest and grim earnest:

"Perhaps you didn't know that my character is upon the whole rather vindictive."

"No, I didn't know," I said with a grin...

".... For myself it's towards women that I feel vindictive mostly..." (C 150).

Although Flora insists that her elopement is an act in accordance with Mrs. Fyne's teachings, she doesn't really believe in loveless unions for survival sake. Flora may be a girl-friend and a disciple, but she is a poor practitioner of Mrs. Fyne's doctrine. An interesting case can be made for Lena in *Victory* as the ideal follower of and early feminist in the Fyne tradition. Lena lets no scruples stand in her way from taking the shortest cut towards securing for herself the easiest possible existence. The text brings up both these issues, lesbianism and feminism, and then drops them. This is because *Chance* is not about homosexuality or feminism; it is about masculine heterosexuality.

In Robert Martin's groundbreaking work on Melville he states that sex in Melville is subversive, and that homosexual sex even more subversive. I believe that the same can be said of the presence of sex in Conrad. Although there is little genital sex, there is much desire. Although there is no open male genital homosexuality, the possibility that it occurred ritualistically in *Heart of Darkness* is there. And in the later novel *Victory*, overt indications of such a relationship between Jones and Martin do exist. In only a few

instances, Nina and Dain in *Almayer's Folly* for example, do participants engaged in genital sex survive. In Conrad, genital sex of any orientation appears to have fatal consequences.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Onwards

Perhaps the most difficult challenge of this thesis is sorting out the "right" way to discuss male bonds and male desires as they are revealed in Marlow. Marlow is a positive character in Conrad--and positive characters in Conrad are a rarity. It is a real challenge for me to promote new ideas about Marlow that may be perceived by readers as offensive. After all, Marlow is a hero, a flawed hero but one nonetheless. Of course, to see him as such you must qualify your idea of what makes a hero. Conrad is not writing stories of knighthood where the hero slays the dragon and saves the fair Lady. In Conrad, the hero is just as likely to slay the Lady and save the fair dragon. Conrad's heroism is patriarchal and lived at the expense of women and persons of colour.

Then there is Marlow as foil for Conrad. I am not disputing this position. I think that in many ways, Marlow was an ideal alter-ego for Conrad--especially in his being truly, recognizably English, and for his being able to interact with characters that for Conrad were only composites of people he had met and assimilated in his imagination. I do think that Conrad and Marlow diverge at places, but that in many ways, Conrad expresses through Marlow an intimacy of the kind he felt for many of his real life acquaintances: Ford Maddox Ford, C. Cunningham Graham, Stephen Crane, and Richard Curle. The connection of author to character adds to any discussion of desire a distinct possibility that Conrad is again allowing Marlow to speak for him. As I am not

working biographically on Conrad. I shall not make that connection but will admit that the potential for further investigation exists, perhaps using the work of Bernard Meyer as a starting place.

The acts of deferral and displacement that occur in Marlow's narration also occur in the area of male sexuality. The frigidity that Marlow displays, the celibacy of most of the men in Marlow's world at one time or another, the misogyny, the gynophobia, the homophobia, the violence, and the homosocial and homosexual continuum are other areas one can look at to uncover male sexuality, and in doing so, examine masculinity. In the following pages I am going to look at a few of these categories to reveal a sense of Marlow's gender identity. The categories I will look at are bachelorhood and alternate expressions of marriage, ephebe-mentor relationships, the use of sexually-charged language, sexual tensions, and Freudian elements of eroticism.

The bachelor and the celibate are not found exclusively in the Marlow stories. They are a recurring motif in much of Conrad's fiction. Celibacy in Conrad even occurs within marriage: Almayer and Mrs. Almayer, Willems and Joanna, Captain Anthony and Flora, and one assumes, Schomberg and his wife.

An example of the bachelor as an indicator of homosexual preference occurs in *Lord Jim*. After the trial, Marlow sets Jim up with a friend of his who owns a rice-mill. Like most people connected with Marlow, this man is unnamed by him, the term "my friend" used repeatedly as an appositive. He is described as "a cynical, more than middle-aged bachelor, with a reputation for eccentricity" (*LJ* 187). Both words "bachelor" and "eccentric" are sometimes associated with homosexuality, but these are not the only indicators. The friend writes twice to Marlow concerning Jim. The contents of his first letter to Marlow--reinforced by comments in the second--are explicit of homosexual desire

with Jim as object of that desire.

Much comment has been made on the feminisation of Jim, a large part of which is indicated here. In this passage the friend comments on Jim's blooming appearance, similar to a violet, or so it could be said of him "had he been a girl" (*LJ* 187). He admits to his *heart* having an intolerance of any individual, which has forced him to live a solitary existence, but with Jim, the friend goes on to say, "I have had him to live with me." Marlow surmises that not only has his friend's *heart* developed "more than a tolerance for Jim,--that there were beginnings of active liking" (*LJ* 187). What is significant is that the word "heart" is associated with this lack of, then discovered feeling, thereby including all the romantic connotations of the word. He elaborates on Jim's perfections, providing Marlow with mundane occurrences that evidently move him deeply and make him feel "more in touch with mankind than I had been for years" (*LJ* 188).

In the second letter, Marlow is chastised by his friend. Jim has left without warning save "a formal little note of apology, which is either silly or heartless" (189). This response is personal and intimate--it is also inappropriate if Jim were merely an employee. His disclosure of his feelings to Marlow enlarges the circle to include Marlow in another version of the "one of us" trope. The disclosure continues, "Allow me to say, lest you should have some more mysterious young men in reserve, that I have shut up shop, definitely and for ever. This is the last eccentricity I shall be guilty of" (*LJ* 189). His meaning is purposely vague. Does he mean by shutting up the shop that he has closed the rice-mill simply because Jim has left? Or is shutting up the shop a euphemism, a coded message for Marlow that his friend is no longer interested in the association of young men? The latter is more plausible.

As for the statement that he does not "care a hang" (*LJ* 189), Mr. Denver expresses a

deep sense of regret and pain in a denial that Marlow would be expected to see through. And the final example of the homosexual subtext is the plausible lie the friend has made at the club to save face. "...he is very much regretted at tennis-parties, and for my own sake I've told a plausible lie at the club..." (*LJ* 189) His embarrassment is not just personal, it is public.

This leads one to question Marlow's motivation in sending Jim to Mr. Denver. To send Jim there was evidently a conscious decision on Marlow's part, but that it was partially shadowed by an unconscious motivation seems also apparent. Marlow tells us that "Evidently I had known what I was doing" (*LJ* 188). I submit that out of a homophobic protest against his own desirous feelings for Jim, Marlow sent Jim to a man where desires of that sort were not inhibited. Homophobic protest is a literary term I have created to define the reaction characters have to their homosexual desire. Again desire is a qualified term. It may mean the wish to engage in same-sex genital relations or it may mean, as I think it does for Marlow, a curiosity about homosexual relations, genital or not, which move beyond a boundary he is not willing to venture.

Jim is, of course, unaware of this objectification. It is part of that naïvete that draws men, and Jewel, to him. It is also this naïvete that allows him to provide a double meaning to the word "familiarity."

Among the packet of letters which included the second one from the friend, Marlow discovers one from Jim, again requesting assistance in the form of a recommendation for a permanent posting at a new situation. In the letter he briefly states his reasons for leaving Mr. Denver to be the coincidental presence of the second engineer from the *Patna* working temporarily at the rice-mill. "I couldn't stand the *familiarity* of the little beast" (*LJ* 189, *Italics mine*). When Marlow next meets Jim, Jim once again uses the word



familiar but this time in reference to Mr. Denver and in an entirely different context.

"He [Mr. Denver] began to chaff me in his kindly way... I believe he liked me... I know he liked me.... That morning he slipped his hand under my arm... He, too, was *familiar* with me" (*LJ* 190, Italics mine). Jim uses the word in two radically different ways that both point to his inclusion in a world of men--one as familiar/beast and the other as familiar/father-guide. However, inclusion in the shared secret past with the engineer is odious to him; inclusion with Mr. Denver is desired, it is familial--he was treated like a son.

In *Epistemology of the Closet* Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick discusses the bachelor as a literary classification rising out of the early to mid-Victorian period. She goes on to analyze James' "The Beast in the Closet" as a bachelor fiction "subject to a change of gestalt... as soon as an assumed heterosexual male norm is at all interrogated" (195). I see the character Marlow as perpetually interrogating heterosexuality, not as a social order but as an individual commitment. It is apparent that Marlow understands male homosexuality as a destructive force to social order, hence why the possibility of it is only openly permitted in the heart of darkness, an inverse social order.<sup>1</sup> It is also apparent to Marlow that overt homosexuality makes specific homosocial bonds impossible because of homophobia and homosexual panic, a psychological condition where an individual feels

<sup>1</sup> Its presence in "Il Conde" is descriptive of homosexual panic, of discovery and revelation, and of labelling. The possibility of a potential homosexual identity is not permitted there as it is in *Heart of Darkness*; its presence in this novella is coded in order to preserve the homosocial continuum between Marlow and the listeners. As well, the lesbian existence of Mrs. Fyne does not have the destructive social force behind it that male homosexuality does. It may be conducted under the nose of her husband and daughters in rural England, once again stressing the gendered differences in the continuums. At this point Conrad closely associates Mrs. Fyne's feminism to her lesbianism, and it is Marlow's homosexual panic that causes him to treat her "work" with disdain. Later in *Victory* we see that Conrad has altered his position. Indirectly Lena is following Mr. Fyne's feminist philosophy but has in no way any ties to lesbianism.

threatened by the advances or presumed advances of a same-sex individual. This difficulty in establishing some homosocial bonds is a major consideration in Marlow's constructionism; it is the reason the "unspeakable" is not spoken.

Although Marlow understands obligatory heterosexuality, he has found an acceptable way of circumventing his participation in it--a sailor can remain technically a bachelor while being married to the sea. Perhaps this is why in *Chance* when Marlow has left the sea, he can envision his inclusion into a world he has so far avoided.

Another version of this idea of substitute marriage is portrayed in *Chance* by the mate's reaction to Captain Anthony's marriage to Flora. Roberts writes that homosexual feelings may be detected

in the enigmatic statements of Captain Anthony's jealous bachelor first mate,

Franklin, that "There are friendships that are no friendships, and marriages that are no marriages" (*Chance* 405). By this remark Franklin seems to imply not only that the marriage which has displaced him from intimacy with his Captain is 'no marriage' but that his former friendship with Captain Anthony was a sort of marriage (Roberts "Secrets..." 99).

I would go so far as to say that Franklin's definition of the term friendship actually excludes himself from that kind of relationship with the captain, just as a man may not consider his relationship with his wife a friendship. The differences in rank and breeding between Franklin and Anthony prevent "friendship."

Friendship is the guise under which Greek love in the Marlow stories falls. It does seem that Marlow is attempting to construct his relationship with Jim in that vein, but to the reader what transpires between them is not a friendship as such--not a friendship of the kind that Marlow has with Stein for example. By using the term Greek love I mean

same-sex male relationships between a youth and an older man, usually conducted under the auspices of some sort of craft apprenticeship. The nature of these relationships is non-genital but sexual insofar as they are intimate, exclusionary, and power based. Friendship of a mentor-son relationship, based on the Greek love model, is common with Marlow, being the nature of the trade that experience teaches the younger. It is in *Lord Jim* that Marlow goes on at length of ephebe-mentor relationships.

The sea has been good to me, but when I remember all these boys that passed through my hands, some grown up now and some drowned by this time, but all good stuff for the sea, I don't think I have done badly by it either. Were I to go home to-morrow, I bet that before two days passed over my head some sunburnt young chief mate would overtake me at some dock gateway or other, and a fresh deep voice speaking above my hat would ask: "Don't you remember me, sir? Why! little So-and-so. Such and such a ship. It was my first voyage"... and the man who had taken a hand in this fool game, in which the sea wins every toss, will be pleased to have his back slapped by a heavy young hand, and to hear a cheery sea-puppy voice: "Do you remember me, sir? The little So-and-so." I tell you this is good; it tells you that once in your life at least you had gone the right way to work. I have been thus slapped, and have winced, for the slap was heavy, and I have glowed all day long and gone to bed feeling less lonely in the world by virtue of that hearty thump (*LJ* 44-45).

Even this portion of a long passage displays Marlow's romantic nature, the nature later attributed to Jim and causing his downfall. But it also speaks of an intuition present in the business of the sea. The mentor must select the "right kind" of youth to train and season. For Marlow this selection is based on the youngster's appearance: "He was the

kind of fellow you would, *on the strength of his looks*, leave in charge of the deck " (LD 44, Italics mine).

The forerunner for Jim as the ephebe in Greek love is the Harlequin in *Heart of Darkness*. As Kurtz' ephebe, the Harlequin displays open affection and admiration, even awe of the man. Marlow's physical description of the Harlequin's beauty and youth is typical of Marlow's focus on young men. "A beardless, boyish face, very fair, no feature to speak of, nose peeling, little blue eyes, smiles and frowns chasing each other over that open countenance like sunshine and shadow on a wind-swept plain" (*HofD* 122). His initial impression of Jim is of the same focus, and both descriptions work not only to objectify these men, but also to feminize them. This comparison of the Harlequin with nature is remarkably different when compared to the association of the native woman with nature.

She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul" (*HofD* 135-136).

Male sexuality may be a destructive social force, but it is tame compared to the potential human (and natural) destructiveness of female sexuality and fecund desirability.

The Harlequin makes continued associations with the natives. When he tells Marlow that the native are simple people, he is including himself, something he later does overtly "I am a simple man" (*HofD* 139). When he confides to Marlow that the native's antagonism is because "they don't want him [Kurtz] to go," he is caught up in his own

ambivalence. He wishes for Kurtz to go to be cured and celebrated, given his due, but he is also aware of his own loss of a mentor with Kurtz gone. When he says the natives "adored him," he is speaking as well of his own adoration. It is now that Marlow realizes the depth of the feeling the Harlequin has for this Kurtz and the element of destructiveness inherent in it: "I did not envy him his devotion to Kurtz... I must say that to me it appeared about the most dangerous thing in every way he had come upon so far" (*HofD* 127). This sense Marlow has is followed by a confession from the Harlequin of a certain occasion when he and Kurtz had talked all night: "We talked of everything... The night did not seem to last an hour. Everything! Everything!... Of love, too." Marlow gleans at this point another element to their relationship: "Ah, he talked to you of love! I said, much amused." The Harlequin protests this belittling of something which to him was profound "It isn't what you think," he cried, almost passionately. "It was in general. He made me see things--things" (*HofD* 127).

I believe this exchange can be interpreted as revealing a physical relationship between the two, but this relationship may have existed only in Marlow's own mind.<sup>2</sup> It is Marlow who says, "They had *come together* unavoidably, like two ships becalmed *near each other*, and *lay rubbing sides* at last" (*HofD* 127, Italics mine). It is also Marlow who states that "their [the Harlequin's and Kurtz'] *intercourse* had been very much broken by various causes" (*HofD* 127, Italics mine). These word choices are indicators of the subtext.

Marlow is astonished at how Kurtz "filled his [Harlequin's] life, occupied his

<sup>2</sup> Professor Waters has suggested the term "phallogoeroticentric" to describe their relationship. A neologism she coined while reading my description, it seems appropriate. Their relationship does revolve around the phallus--they are men in Africa raping the land of its Ivory, around words--"We talked of everything" (127), and around eroticism--the intensity of their attachment to one another.

thoughts, swayed his emotions" (*HofD* 128). It is the Harlequin who defends the natives and his own adoration of Kurtz. "What can you expect?... he came to them with thunder and lightening, you know--and they had never seen anything like it--and very terrible. He could be very terrible. You can't judge Mr. Kurtz as you would an ordinary man. No, no, no!" (*HofD* 128). This suspension of judgement is something that Marlow also concludes after he meets and bonds with the real, not imagined, Kurtz. Although Marlow's relationship with Kurtz is not ephebe-mentor, the one he cultivates with Jim is

It is this model of male to male love that Marlow uses in his later relationships with Jim and the narrator of *Chance*, but it is modified. Marlow never inflicts terror or violence upon the ephebe as Kurtz does to the Harlequin. Jim is, of course, Marlow's most fully described ephebe relationship. However, before I treat *Lord Jim* in this context, I would like to briefly address *Chance* and the narrator of this later novel. This narrator may be Marlow's most successful ephebe relationship as heterosexuality embraced is the result.

*Chance* begins with a meeting between the narrator, Marlow, and Powell at a river side inn. Powell, an ex-seaman like Marlow, "cruises about the mouth of the river [the Thames] all the summer," (*C* 40) and over dinner that evening, reminisces about his first chance, a position of second mate on the *Ferndale*, obtained through the kindness of the Senior Shipping Master, also named Powell. In the first exchange between the narrator of *Chance* and Marlow, Marlow makes reference to Socrates. Responding later to the allusion, Powell inquires further on this reference: "This Socrates was a wise man, I believe?" Marlow tells him that he was "a true friend of youth" (*C* 13). This confirms Marlow's knowledge of Greek love, of male homosexual practises, of the enchantment of youth and beauty, and of mentorship. Roberts also picks up on this reference

Mentorship between an older and younger man was, as the reference to Socrates may remind us, overtly associated with homosexuality in classical Greek society. That this was no longer so in early twentieth-century English society does not alter the form and purpose of the relationship as much as a simple antithesis between the sexual and the non-sexual would suggest (Roberts "Secrets. ." 99)

Marlow goes on to say "He [Socrates] lectured them in a peculiarly exasperating manner. It was a way he had" (C 13). This is indicative of the intimate relationship Marlow has with the narrator--the narrator who is torn between anxiety and pleasure in their verbal exchanges; the narrator who at times is particularly exasperated. "'Upon my word, Marlow,' I cried, 'what are you flying out at me for like this?'" (C 281).

Throughout the story, the internarrative space containing the narrator and Marlow is full of tension. The narrator describes them as "always tilting at each other" (C 81). But this tension is not sexual tension--even the scene in the narrator's room is remarkably tame when compared to the tension surrounding Jim's visit to Marlow's rooms as we shall see. The tension between the narrator and Marlow is playful, affectionate, as their use of "dear" displays, and almost entirely about women, and men's knowledge of women. This preoccupation with women is the first example of Marlow allowing them textual space and allowing the narrator opinions contradicting Marlow's misogyny. This leads me to see Marlow moving away from celibacy and solely male to male unions toward an established patriarchal institution--heterosexual marriage. Marlow admits the possibility, perhaps for the first time, of marriage. "Perhaps if I had had a helpful woman at my elbow, a dear, flattering, acute, devoted woman... There are in life moments when one positively regrets not being married. No! I don't exaggerate. I have said--moments, not years or even days. Moments" (C 136). Robert Hampson says "In

this somewhat arch speech, Marlow simultaneously asserts a heterosexual orientation and refuses heterosexual practice" (115).

As pointed out before, Marlow's attraction to Jim is his physical beauty and youth "The third was an upstanding, broad-shouldered youth... Clean-limbed, clean-faced, firm on his feet, as promising a boy as the sun ever shone on" (*LJ* 40).<sup>3</sup> Marlow goes out of his way to tell his listeners that his fascination was limited to Jim. "And note, I did not care a rap about the behaviour of the other two" (*LJ* 41).

But this attraction is rife with resentment, and typical of the ambiguity that Marlow is filled with concerning Jim. At the same time that Marlow is drawn to Jim's appearance, he is repelled by Jim's bodily stance. Jim stands with "his hands in his pockets... making no movement, not even stirring his head," staring "into the sunshine. look[ing] as unconcerned and unapproachable as only the young can look... I asked myself, seeing him there apparently so much at ease--is he silly? is he callous? He seemed ready to start whistling a tune" (*LJ* 40 & 41). This nonchalance angers Marlow, partially because he has attributed a humanity, that is, a sense of British nautical ethics to Jim based solely on his appearance, which his posture betrays. But partially Marlow is being betrayed by his homophobia, evoking a reaction of anger. Marlow's anger, he contends, is because he "detected him [Jim] trying to get something out of me by false pretences" (*LJ* 40). Although he does not indicate what that something is, and perhaps is himself unaware of the sexual nature of Jim's appeal, I believe that this is a possible reading.

<sup>3</sup> This reference to the sun corresponds to the description of the Harlequin with his "smiles and frowns chasing each other over his countenance like sunshine," all over his face. It is also dramatically gendered when one compares this youthful male sunshine to the darkness of the native woman and the darkness surrounding the interview with Jewel.



The feminisation of Jim is primarily constructed by others, Denver and Egstrom,<sup>4</sup> but reported by Marlow. Quite possibly this is a way for Marlow to convey the seductiveness of Jim without associating himself as a proponent of it. The reports themselves, however, work to do more than just objectify--they also point to the subversive element of the feminine in any form. There is one example of Marlow giving a detailed description of Jim that works to objectify him and identify in him boyish properties if not girlish ones. Outside the courtroom, after Jim has understood that the cur in question was a dog and not him, Marlow tells his listeners:

I looked at him. The red of his fair sunburnt complexion deepened suddenly under the down of his cheeks, invaded his forehead, spread to the roots of his curly hair. His ears became intensely crimson, and even the clear blue of his eyes was darkened many shades by the rush of blood to his head. His lips pouted a little, trembling as though he had been on the point of bursting into tears (*LJ* 74).

This observation of Jim here is similar to the one he made of Jim when he was standing outside the harbour office; however, that one is much more personal, and causes Marlow discomfort. In watching Jim's emotional reaction to his mistake, a reaction that Marlow cannot identify specifically as humiliation or disappointment, Marlow says "it was pitiful" (*LJ* 75).

There are two specific incidents in *Lord Jim* which I believe display the sexual nature of Marlow and Jim's relationship. The first incident occurs just after the tribunal indicts Jim and the others of the *Paina* and cancels their certificates. Jim, dazed, is led by

<sup>4</sup> "Had he been a girl... one could have said he was blooming--blooming modestly--like a violet, not like some of these blatant tropical flowers... The dew is yet on him" (*LJ* 187). "Such a quiet, soft-spoken chap, too--blush like a girl when he came on board.. " (*LJ* 195)

Marlow. "He followed me as manageable as a little child, with an obedient air, with no sort of manifestation, rather as though he had been waiting for me there to come along and carry him off... I steered him into my bedroom..." (*LJ* 170-171).

The portentous atmosphere of that bedroom scene goes on for nearly three chapters. The sexual tension duplicates the overall tension the men feel individually. Jim is "taking too much to heart an empty formality" (*LJ* 173). Physically "he was rooted to the spot, but convulsive shudders ran down his back; his shoulders would heave suddenly. He was fighting, he was fighting--mostly for his breath..." (*LJ* 172). Marlow wishes to provide Jim a place in the universe where he can take things to heart--which he does--an intimate, personal, and private place. But Marlow also does not want to intrude on Jim's pain. He acts as though Jim were invisible, writing letters but all the while being acutely aware not only of Jim's presence but also of the weighted tension surrounding them both.

The massive shadows, cast all one way from the straight flame of the candle, seemed possessed of gloomy consciousness; the immobility of the furniture had to my furtive eye an air of attention. I was becoming fanciful in the midst of my industrious scribbling; and though, when the scratching of my pen stopped for a moment, there was complete silence and stillness in the room, I suffered from that profound disturbance and confusion of thought which is caused by a violent and menacing uproar--of a heavy gale at sea, for instance. Some of you may know what I mean,--that mingled anxiety, distress, and irritation with a sort of craven feeling creeping in--not pleasant to acknowledge, but which gives a quite special merit to one's endurance (*LJ* 172-173).

This passage foreshadows the pathetic fallacy which follows shortly after. Robert Lange states: "A Gothic thunderstorm comes up, reflecting the tension in the room, the

sexually charged atmosphere..." (66).

An abrupt heavy rumble made me lift my head. The noise seemed to roll away, and suddenly a searching and violent glare fell on the blind face of the night. The sustained and dazzling flickers seemed to last for a unconscionable time. The growl of the thunder increased steadily while I looked at him, distinct and black, planted solidly upon the shores of a sea of light. At the moment of greatest brilliance the darkness leaped back with a culminating crash, and he vanished before my dazzled eyes as utterly as though he had been blown to atoms (*LJ* 177-178).

The storm opens a dialogue between the two men, a dialogue which Marlow initially dreads: "... my sudden anxiety as to what he would say was very great, and akin to a fright" (*LJ* 178). This interview, like Marlow's private interviews with women, goes poorly, and is rife with misunderstanding. The greatest of these is that for Marlow "[Jim] was not--if I may say so--clear to me. He was not clear" (*LJ* 177). Jim abruptly leaves. Marlow coaxes him to return to the room and what follows alters not only the mood of their exchange but the nature of their relationship forever.

Jim is resolute; Marlow is insistent that Jim accept his help, but "every time I looked up at that absorbed smooth face, so grave and youthful, I had a disturbing sense of being no help but rather an obstacle to some mysterious, inexplicable, impalpable striving of his wounded spirit" (*LJ* 182). Marlow's offer of assistance becomes a plea, stalwartly refused or denied by Jim out of his own insistence to stay firmly planted in his own constructed pathos of "them agin me." This angers Marlow and he furthers his offer. "I got very warm. 'But I can,' I insisted. 'I can do even more. I *am* doing more. I am trusting you...'" (*LJ* 183). With these words Jim "became another man altogether" (*LJ*

Pathetic fallacy follows this scene as well. In the moments that Jim is reflecting on Marlow's offer, "the water-pipe went on shedding tears" (*LJ* 183). But everything has changed. The storm is over, the night is done, and Jim, exuberant at what he sees as his second chance (this same exuberance which he displays over another "second chance" when he is offered Patusan), affects Marlow with his enthusiasm and gratitude. Marlow makes two statements that display his discomfort at Jim's reaction, a reaction he had hoped to get from Jim in a more controlled fashion. "'Had he suddenly put out his tongue at me in derision, I could not have felt more humiliated'" (*LJ* 183) and "'I was almost alarmed by this display of feeling, through which pierced a strange elation'" (*LJ* 184).

In a state of "jerky agitation" (*LJ* 184) and clear inarticulateness, Jim abruptly leaves Marlow. "'But as to me, left alone with the solitary candle, I remained strangely unenlightened'" (*LJ* 185). This candle, this phallic symbol, is a major motif throughout this scene. It is also a symbol of Jim's fundamental nobility, the failure of which in one moment is Jim's shame. Before this statement Marlow states that the candle's still flame flares "upright in the shape of a dagger" (*LJ* 183), which associates the candle with another phallic symbol, one indicative of danger, and foreshadows the piercing action of elation.

Indeed these three chapters contain many other examples of the intimate male bond forming between Jim and Marlow, but as Lange states: "The entire scene at Marlow's hotel room is so charged... that it is difficult to focus on any particular part of it to signify the whole" (66). What I hope I have provided is a reading that reveals the potential for further and more detailed exploration.

The other scene in *Lord Jim* which I wish to look at occurs in Chapter 19. Jim has left a number of jobs, the last "retreat" after a bar-room brawl at Schomberg's. All of Jim's retreats have been because someone has identified him with the *Patna* and his sensibilities cannot allow him to stay where someone else knows his secret. Ironically, many people do know, but have not remembered or cared. But Jim remembers and cares and believes that the whole affair is his to shoulder--not anyone else's concern. He shows up at midnight on board Marlow's ship.

Marlow takes Jim away. Their shipboard relationship is radically different from the emotional and sexual one of the bedroom scene. "... we had a longish passage. It was pitiful to see how he [Jim] shrank within himself" (*LJ* 200). But Marlow as well withdraws into himself: "For whole days we did not exchange a word..." (*LJ* 201). He has become aware of Jim's betrayal of the "one of us" trope--the part where Jim and Marlow are "brother seamen" (*HofD* 138):

A seaman, even if a mere passenger, takes an interest in a ship, and looks at the sea-life around him with the critical enjoyment of a painter, for instance, looking at another man's work. In every sense of the expression he is 'on deck', but *my Jim*, for the most part, skulked down below as though he had been a stowaway (*LJ* 200-201, Italics mine).

The first significant thing to note in this passage is Marlow's lack of insight into the truth about Jim's nautical prowess--the truth that was revealed on the *Patna* which Marlow wishes to believe was a rash act of youth. Secondly, the reference to "on deck" harks back to one of the first observations Marlow makes of Jim: "He was the kind of fellow you would, on the strength of his looks, *leave in charge of the deck...*" (*LJ* 44, Italics mine). Jim is negating that first observation, furthering the betrayal, not only of

his seamanship but also of Marlow's trust in him. Finally we once again see possession asserting itself. Marlow's reference to Jim as "my Jim" is both proprietary and ironic.

Jim has change from an object of interest and desire to an albatross

The discomfort between the two on Marlow's ship is also significant in that this is the first occasion where they are removed from land and therefore from female society (although neither of them has seemed to notice women in any context). This is to say that they are now in a completely male world, a homosocial environment, an environment where homosexual acts may have occurred or been committed.<sup>5</sup> Besides Jim's disappointment in the world's memory and Marlow's annoyance with Jim's continued efforts to undermine his opportunities, they are faced with an intimate setting between them and an unspoken opportunity that neither of them wants realized.

But at this point, shipboard, where once again Marlow is "saving" Jim, it is Jim who holds the power. Not only can Marlow not make eye contact with Jim, he is made even further impotent: "He infected me so that I avoided speaking [to him] on professional matters, such as would suggest themselves naturally to two sailors during a passage... I felt extremely unwilling to give orders to my officers in his presence. Often, when alone with him on deck or in the cabin, we didn't know what to do with our eyes" (*LJ* 201).

*Lord Jim* is full of sexually charged language. The double meaning Jim gives familiar is indicative of other word play of this type. A number of these double meanings occur in the initial moments when Marlow is observing Jim from a close distance. It

<sup>5</sup> Robert K. Martin, in speaking of Melville's awareness of homosexual practices shipboard states: "...it seems that Melville distinguished between homosexual practices such as might occur on shipboard, frequently involving force and arising more out of necessity than out of affection, and a passionate love of men that he repeatedly described as an ideal and sought a place for" (26). I submit that this danger of assault added further tension to the atmosphere between Jim and Marlow.

seems as if the ambivalence evoked in Marlow has made him lose verbal control. The statement "I liked his appearance. I knew his appearance; he came from the right place, he was one of us" (LJ 43), is followed by such words as "temptations," "the seductive corruption of men," "solicitation," and "perversions" (LJ 43-44). Besides identifying Jim as a sexual object who is tempting, seductive, and corrupting, Marlow is making an identification of Jim not only to others whom he has known before, but also to himself as a youth. This type of analysis could be pursued in a psychoanalytical approach to the novel, but I mention it briefly here to demonstrate the significant difference between this work with its sexually charged language and innuendoes that are not taken further by Conrad or Marlow and *Heart of Darkness* where sexuality is represented symbolically and is the inherent nature of the story itself.

The sexual nature of *Heart of Darkness* lies in the many Freudian elements of eroticism: orality, sexual imagery, and narcissism. But surrounding these indicators are other issues: quests to manhood, men's lack, and the truth of the "unspeakable."

The core element of the story--the penetration of the interior of Africa--is set up deliberately by Marlow at the start of his oration:

Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map. I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there... I have been to some of them .. But there was one yet--the biggest, the most blank, so to speak--that I had a hankering after.

True, by this time it was not a blank space any more. It had got filled

since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery--a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness (*HofD* 52)

The recounting of this childhood fantasy by Marlow completely removes the fictional space between him and Conrad. Conrad has taken this passage and embellished it ever so slightly from his own entry in "A Personal Record."<sup>6</sup> At this time exploration of dark places and primitive worlds is still a manner of expressing one's masculinity. The quest nature of this mythical fantasy turned reality (in Marlow's case, fictional reality) is for Bernard Meyer the travel from childhood to manhood, connected to the snake and bird imagery Marlow relates:

But there was in it one river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land. And as I looked at the map of it in a shop-window, it fascinated me as a snake would a bird--a silly little bird (*HofD* 52).

While speaking of the quest up the river to save Kurtz, Marlow persists in furthering the fairy tale motif he has begun: "The approach to this Kurtz grubbing for ivory in the wretched bush was beset by as many dangers as though he had been an enchanted princess sleeping in a fabulous castle" (*HofD* 106). This metaphor works to make Kurtz's masculinity suspect while asserting his own, if one takes Marlow for the prince who rescues the princess. And it is important to remember that this exploration/penetration is

<sup>6</sup> "It was in 1868, when nine years old or thereabouts, that while looking at a map of Africa of the time and putting my finger on the blank space then representing the unrolled mystery of that continent, I said to myself with absolute assurance and an amazing audacity which are no long in my character now: 'When I grow up I shall go *there*'" (A Personal Record 13).



already associated with dark Africa and female sexuality. Bette London states: "The narrative's production, then, of the second dark continent (female sexuality) repeats the formation of the first, where 'a place of darkness' fills the 'blank space' a boy hankers after and dreams about. In the mapping of this new representational field, 'the woman,' like Africa, drops out, giving way to the fiction of 'impenetrable darkness' that the image projects" (London 237).

Concerning this whole fantasy, Meyer contends that there "is little difficulty in discerning the sexual implications." He goes on to say:

The boast of a young boy that on attaining manhood he will enter into some dark mysterious place in which a river, shaped like 'an immense snake uncoiled,' penetrates the body of the land, offers self-evident symbolic meaning. Moreover, the contention that the need to prove his manliness was an inherent, albeit unconscious, element in the realization of this fantasy is supported from a passage in *Heart of Darkness* in which Marlow apologizes to his audience for having stooped to enlisting the aid of a woman in securing him his Congo job: "Then would you believe it?--I tried the women. I, Charlie Marlow, set the women to work--to get a job.' A man secure in the image of his virility would hardly consider that he had compromised it by accepting a woman's help. Marlow protests too much (Meyer 97).

The opening of the Congo fantasy with Marlow as a silly little bird and the river as a snake implies a conquest the bird is bound to lose. Marlow echoes this idea of a conquest when he says of Kurtz: "But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion... it had consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul" (*HofD* 131). This is the sexual imagery of oral aggression. Orality is one of

the first stages of sexual development and a major preoccupation in this work. Cannibalism, the greed for ivory, passages of eating or of hunger are all indicators of an oral fixation, but for Marlow, Kurtz represents the ultimate in voraciousness. "I saw him open his mouth wide--it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him" (*HofD* 134). So indelible is this image that months, possibly a year later, upon his return to the sepulchral city while waiting for the Intended, Marlow evokes the same image: "I had a vision of him on the stretcher, opening his mouth voraciously, as if to devour all the earth with all its mankind" (*HofD* 155). It is also significant to note that for Marlow Kurtz's appetite is for all men and all mankind; Kurtz's appetite is gendered.

Another pertinent issue to the sexual nature of this story is that of men's lack. The theory of lack has developed out of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis as a significant part of the Imaginary and Symbolic Orders. In the Imaginary Order there is no separation between mother and child, child and world. All is one entity, one reality. The baby then moves through the Mirror Stage, where it identifies dual relationships--itself and mother, etc. Later, the Oedipal crisis allows a child to cognate an identity of a separate individual, that is, "I am he/she" significantly different from "I am part of the mother." Although an identity is gained, a symbiotic relationship is lost, and this loss is experienced by children of both sexes, hence the crisis. But the next stage in development is to enter into the Symbolic Order and entry into this "means to accept the phallus as the representation of the Law of the Father" (Moi 100). This leads the female child to feel that she is inferior because she is castrated, because she lacks a phallus. In this story lack is also displayed by men. Marlow lacks a certain confidence in his own masculinity and virility--indeed in his heterosexuality--as the aporias in his own

construction indicate. But it is Kurtz, the enchanted princess, who Marlow constructs most closely with the properties of the feminine. "In Marlow's configuration, woman occupies the place of lack, emptied of even the darkness of feminine sexuality. In the context of the ensuing narrative, the blankness of the feminine constitutes the stable ground upon which masculine adventure can be mapped, the sameness that sets masculine difference in relief" (London 236). By moving women to the margin and out of the narrative, Marlow enhances his own masculinity. By turning Kurtz into a symbol of feminine lack, Marlow serves the same purpose.

Kurtz "was *hollow* to the core;" he "*lacked* restraint in the gratification of his various lusts..." (*HofD* 131, Italics mine). Marlow portrays Kurtz as a man needing to be filled, a man who lusts. Marlow sets himself up as a man full of

emotion so overpowering [that he received a moral shock], as if something altogether monstrous, intolerable to thought and odious to the soul, had been thrust upon me unexpectedly... I was anxious to deal with this shadow by myself alone,--and to this day I don't know why I was so jealous of sharing with anyone the peculiar blackness of that experience (*HofD* 141-142).

Bette London states that "the real terror... as Marlow presents it, thus turns out to be *Marlow's* loss of his sexual and racial identity" (245). By placing the lack, the feminine onto Kurtz, Marlow asserts his masculinity, but also asserts his homosexuality, which for him surpasses the terror and becomes the horror.

The truth of the unspeakable seems to be a very opinionated issue among the critics, cannibalism and human sacrifice the most popular conceptions of the climax of the midnight rituals. These conclusions seem to be drawn upon two things: the heads on the spikes and the deliberate vagueness Marlow gives to what he saw. Heads on spikes

indicate murder, not cannibalism or human sacrifice, and it is much more likely that these heads were gained in tribal battles over ivory, maintained on the posts as a sign of warning of Kurtz's tribes' ferocity to any revenge-seekers. As well, Marlow has already discussed murder and cannibalism, so why at this point would either act become unspeakable? I hypothesize Marlow may be pointing to a decidedly different meaning to the acts that he witnessed and his vagueness as a conscious act of deferral, a self-protecting coding of specific events.

It is possible that the unspeakable pertains to "the love that dare not speak its name"<sup>7</sup> or sexuality between men. Male same-sex genitality had, "throughout the Judaeo-Christian tradition, been famous among those who knew about it at all precisely for having no name--'unspeakable,' 'unmentionable,' 'not to be named among Christian men. .'" (Sedgwick *Between Men* 94)

The first we hear of unspeakable rites is on page 117, just after Marlow has come upon Kurtz's manuscript. He reflects on the superb eloquence of the report, seventeen pages of close writing. "But this must have been before his--let us say--nerves, went wrong, and caused him to preside at certain midnight dances ending with *unspeakable rites*, which--as far as I reluctantly gathered from what I heard at various time--were offered up to him--do you understand?--to Mr. Kurtz himself" (*HofD* 117-118, Italics mine).

Most explicit here is Kurtz's identification as not only a participant but as a figure around whom the culmination of the ritual centres. Above all though, this passage is rife with the same problem we have with Marlow as narrator all the way through this book. It appears as though he is foreshadowing, and therefore the unspeakable would have been

<sup>7</sup> Lord Alfred Douglas, "Two Loves," *The Chameleon* 1 (1894): 28.

spoken by someone since at this time Marlow has neither met Kurtz, the Harlequin, nor witnessed a midnight dance. And yet the tale is being told well after the adventure is over, so the question becomes how much does Marlow know and how much had he "reluctantly gathered from what [he] heard?" And it is significant that Marlow is reluctant to gather such information, since later when he hears of such things from the Harlequin, he becomes downright resistant. "The camps of these people surrounded the place, and the chiefs came every day to seem him. They would crawl. 'I don't want to know anything of the ceremonies used when approaching Mr. Kurtz,' I shouted" (*HofD* 131-132).<sup>8</sup>

But this reaction, protest or panic, leads Marlow to reflect on the true nature of his feelings:

Curious, this feeling that came over me that such details would be more intolerable than those heads drying on the stakes under Mr. Kurtz's windows. After all, that was only a savage sight, while I seemed at one bound to have been transported into some lightless region of subtle horrors, where pure, uncomplicated savagery was a positive relief, being something that had a right to exist--obviously--in the sunshine" (*HofD* 132).

The final encounter is the experience which Marlow "was so jealous of sharing with any one... (142)." Covert activities occur after midnight by the light of fires and are set

<sup>8</sup> This use of crawl echoes Marlow's own use of the word many times before. On the steamer's voyage up the river, Marlow remarks: "For me it crawled towards Kurtz" (*HofD* 95). And two pages later, "...and we crept on, towards Kurtz" (*HofD* 98). Marlow uses the word one more time in connection to Kurtz directly after he refuses to hear the Harlequin out. The Harlequin is surprised at the vehemence of Marlow's reaction. "I suppose it did not occur to him that Mr. Kurtz was no idol of mine... If it had come to crawling before Kurtz, he crawled as much as the veriest savage of them all" (*HofD* 132). As well, when Kurtz escapes from the steamer and Marlow sets off after him, he thinks to himself "He can't walk--he is crawling on all-fours" (*HofD* 142).

up against the uncomplicated savagery which existed in the sunshine. Marlow comes upon Kurtz thirty yards from the nearest fire, where "a black figure stood up, strode on long black legs, waving long black arms across the glow. It had horns--antelope horns, I think--on its head. Some sorcerer, some witch-man, no doubt: it looked fiend-like enough" (*HofD* 143). Kurtz summons enough strength to issue to Marlow a command: "Go away--hide yourself" (*HofD* 143). This utterance serves two purposes. to protect Kurtz and Marlow from discovery and provide them a vantage point to view the tribal ongoings. Marlow obtains from Kurtz an acknowledgment of his past inclusion and a motivation for his escape from the steamer: "'Do you know what you are doing?' I whispered. 'Perfectly,' he answered" (*HofD* 143).

But this is all that Marlow gives us of what happened, of what he observed. He follows Kurtz's association with the natives with his own warning:

"You will be lost," I said--"utterly lost." One gets sometimes such a flash of inspiration, you know. I did say the right thing, though indeed he could not have been more irretrievably lost than he was at this very moment, when the foundations of our intimacy were being laid--to endure--to endure--even to the end--even beyond (*HofD* 143).

For the next two paragraphs Marlow is obsessed with the spell the wilderness had on Kurtz, but just as obsessed with the spell Kurtz has on him. Marlow has no resources with which he can appeal to Kurtz: "I had to deal with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low. I had, even like the niggers, to invoke him--himself" (*HofD* 144). Faced with such an unsurpassable power structure, Marlow desperately fights for survival, literally from detection and possible murder by the natives, and figuratively from being drawn into the darkness of the night, the wilderness, the rites.

and Kurtz's body and soul.

This episode with Kurtz in the forest is the closest Marlow comes to genital sexual experience--both of them as voyeurs upon the midnight ritual. I submit that once he experienced male to male genital intercourse, even in this limited fashion (possibly symbolic or ritualized), Marlow was strongly influenced by homosexual panic and homophobic protest. It is out of these reactions that Marlow turns to Greek love relationships, bonding with men, keeping intact a social and sexual continuum, but never nearing genital intercourse of any kind.

There is ambivalence in Marlow, not of the kind he had with his feelings for Jim, but a more complicated kind to match his more complicated feelings for Kurtz. Violence is the most noticeable reaction Marlow has to any action taken by Kurtz. When Kurtz crawls away from the steamer back to the jungle, Marlow chases after him, striding "rapidly with fists clenched" (*HofD* 142). Once Marlow catches up with Kurtz, almost colliding into him, they hide themselves. As the rituals are going on, Marlow thinks to himself: "If he makes a row now we are lost, I thought to myself. This clearly was not a case for fisticuffs, even apart from the natural aversion I had to beat that Shadow--this wandering and tormented thing" (*HofD* 143). When Kurtz begins to speak, Marlow fears detection by the natives. He threatens Kurtz: "'Yes,' said I; 'but if you try to shout I'll smash your head with--' There was not a stick or stone near, 'I will throttle you for good,' I corrected myself" (*HofD* 143). While the midnight rituals are being witnessed, Marlow's need for violence is waning: "I did not want the throttling of him, you understand--and indeed it would have been very little use for any practical purpose" (*HofD* 144).

Straus detects this ambivalence in Marlow's language, with his "intertwining

descriptions of Kurtz's 'abject pleading' with his 'gorgeous eloquence'" (Straus 132)

This along with Marlow's ambivalence about his own actions--he detests a lie and then lies--are suggestive of "what Freud calls narcissistic 'ambivalence.' For it is clear that Marlow's identification with Kurtz is of a violently passionate kind" (Straus 132)

The Intended nearly stumbles upon defining Kurtz and Marlow's relationship and does so by making Marlow complicit in an almost confession:

'You knew him well,' she murmured, after a moment of mourning silence.

'Intimacy grows quickly out there,' I said. 'I knew him as well as it is possible for one man to know another.'

'And you admired him,' she said. 'It was impossible to know him and not to admire him. Was it?'

'He was a remarkable man,' I said, unsteadily. Then before the appealing fixity of her gaze, that seemed to watch for more words on my lips, I went on. 'It was impossible not to--'

'Love him,' she finished eagerly, *silencing me into an appalled dumbness*. 'How true! how true!' (*HofD* 158, Italics mine).

Although they are bound by mutual love for Kurtz, the Intended is determined to show Marlow who "knew him best" (*HofD* 158). London states that "Marlow's final interview with the Intended, where he doubles her every word, ironically points to the position they share. In this scene of rivalry, Marlow and the woman compete for the Intended's place: the right to know Kurtz best" (London 245).

In *Chance* we see Marlow exhibit all his male-male desires for the last time. In part this is because it is the last book which features Marlow and the final in a chronological sequence of the Marlow stories. But I submit that *Chance* is in part, Marlow's



relinquishing of what will never be and his final acceptance of his heterosexuality

As we have already seen, Marlow's relationship with the narrator of *Chance* is part of his Greek love phenomenon. The narrator, still unnamed, is Marlow's last ephebe. And his fascination with Powell, to the point of obsession--the same obsession that drove his relationships with Jim and Kurtz--has a finality to it. This obsession is displayed in the extraordinary efforts Marlow goes to in cultivating and maintaining a friendship with Powell. It culminates when Marlow purposely follows Powell down a tributary of the Thames, ostensibly to acquire the rest of the story, but truly out of burning curiosity about why Powell disappears every so often and whether or not it is indeed a tryst he is having. To the frame narrator, Marlow defends his actions as that he acted out of "the commonest sort of curiosity;" (C 40) and continued a relationship with Powell out of a "liking for each other" (C 257). Andrew Michael Roberts raises an alternative explanation.

A stronger (though by no means unrelated) motive may be found in Marlow's intense interest in femininity. He says of Captain Anthony that "He was a-hungering and a-thirsting for femininity to enter his life" (327), but Marlow himself is as persistently, if more obliquely, concerned with a search for the feminine; even perhaps with a desire to be entered or penetrated by the feminine (Roberts "Secrets..." 95).

When Marlow tells the narrator that "there is enough of the woman in my nature to free my judgment of women from glamorous reticency" (C 53) we know growth has occurred. This Marlow is certainly an evolved character from the Marlow who horrified at his desperation, admits to his listeners "Then--would you believe it?--I tried the women. I, Charlie Marlow, set the women to work--to get a job" (*HofD* 53).

Marlow's final act of construction is his belief that he is instrumental in motivating Powell and Flora's relationship to its inevitable conclusion--an inevitability that apparently only he can see. The book and the Marlow sagas end with Marlow telling his last ephebe "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..." (C 447). The fear is not connected to paganism; Christian religiosity is not the problem. The fear is metonymical for protest--the other protest that Marlow has made for so long--against marriage and women. But now, for Powell and for Flora, Marlow is willing to go to church to see the ultimate heterosexual affirmation rite: marriage. It is Marlow who tells the narrator: "I hope there's enough of a kid and an imbecile in me to answer the requirements of some really good woman eventually--some day... Some day. Why do you gasp? You don't suppose I should be afraid of getting married?" (C 150-151).

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Conclusion

The first part of my conclusion concerns itself with what I consider to be the two biggest problems with Conrad scholarship: the static state of discussion and the emotional investment critics have placed in Conrad himself. Conrad scholarship needs to move away from biography--in which there is little controversy--and update itself by exploring fresh ideas with new critical approaches.<sup>1</sup> It also needs to objectively look at the responses critics make to other critics taking up the challenge of moving away from biography.

While it is true that new critics have recently begun to explore the texts of Conrad once again, and have brought to that work a theoretical outlook that is contemporary, it does seem that there is also a great effort on their part to connect to past academic work, insinuating a continuous cycle where there really is none. Since the greatest amount of work on Conrad has been biographical or critical biography, what inevitably happens in attempting to make this connection is a meshing of fiction with reality, which cannot but affect the treatment of the fiction. For the intrusion of biographical elements in Conrad have very little to do with authorial intention, quite possibly because Conrad always

<sup>1</sup> Katherine Waters has suggested to me that Conrad scholarship has suffered as well from over-formalistic studies, such as "his new realism; and by assumed male models of development (psychological--Jungian and Freud, and Literary--male bildungsroman"). She is correct in this assessment and I add that again this type of study returns to biography to support its findings

indicated his intentions post-publication--in letters, prefaces, interviews--therefore squashing most of the discussion often before it began. The elements have much more to do with a tracing of character/author-identified pseudo-reality in the texts. No one holds that Conrad was writing an autobiography, yet it is argued that he was writing autobiographically.

I concur, at least to the degree that the autobiographical elements of his life have been subject to strong literary licence and fictionalization. And I believe that this in itself is a wonderfully fascinating approach--but it has been done. It has been done in straight undisguised forms--Moser, Hewitt, Guerard, Said, Meyer, Baines, Watt, and Watts, and as secondary and primary subjects in academic journals, most specifically, *Conradiana*. I think it is time for a radical departure from the status quo, and well past time for new challenges.

The other problem, that of caution and loyalty to Conrad, is taken up by Andrew Michael Roberts in his introduction to *Conrad and Gender*. He speaks of the emotional reaction readers have to the commentary surrounding Conrad:

Another sort of anger also contributed to my change of mind... the anger generated among critics and lovers of Conrad's work by political criticisms. ... I was struck by the very personal and yet depersonalized nature of the debate. It was personal in that one sensed, behind many of the comments, various loyalties and feelings: political loyalties; intellectual allegiances created by years of reading and study; emotional attachments created by the pleasures of reading and of identification; patterns of acceptance and denial created by those processes, partly mysterious to ourselves, by which we shape our self-understanding. The debate was depersonalized in that we did not speak about such feelings, but

discussed the qualities of an object 'out there,' which we called 'Conrad' or 'Conrad's work' (x).

What is required, I think, is an open dialogue on the unconscious and emotional boundaries imposed on scholarship. A realization that biases are inherent in readers is a necessary first step to search for objectivity. Subjects then that have plagued Conrad scholarship for a couple of decades by taking the focus off the texts and placing the debate on the debate may be looked at more reasonably. Here I speak of racism, colonialism, and indeed, gender.

Racism and colonialism have been looked at in Conrad ever since Achebe's essay in the late 70s proclaimed Conrad and *Heart of Darkness* as racist. But this work, and the subsequent articles that follow it, usually arguing against Achebe and defending Conrad, have all been very emotional and, although not strictly historical, biographical in the larger sense. I think racism and colonialism in Conrad needs to be looked at from the text's point of view. The relationship of White European hegemony to the production of racial stereotypes needs to be examined for motive and effect. As well, in Conrad, nationality plays perhaps a more important role than racism, and requires exploration in order to uncover the ethnocentricity of Conrad's main characters.

The study of gender in Conrad has by no means been exhausted yet. The analyses conducted so far have primarily been limited to only a few texts. Part of the problem lies in the confines that currently seem attached to the study of gender. The study of gender is most closely associated with feminist readings, not only in methodology, but also in exegesis. Therefore studies are conducted by and large on texts which present both genders in order to establish that "gender is a socially imposed division of the sexes" which leads to the oppression of women. (Rubin 179). Masculinity then is only

examined in opposition to the feminine in these texts, not as an a socially constructed element of the same species. It is then excluded from consideration by its overgeneralization to generic human experience, and yet it is clearly a subject in need of investigation. Although feminist readings on Conrad's works have not been completed, these readings can and should be conducted concurrently with readings to uncover masculinity.

I believe a study to recover masculinity is a prerequisite for a more complete analysis of gender. As one can see from my work the texts can support this re-vision, and new discussions can be wrought out of the examination.

As a necessary next step, I see incorporating a wider range of Conrad texts into this type of study with two objectives. The first is to see whether there is an inherent hegemonic masculinity in the Conrad canon, and if so, how that masculinity differs, if it does, from the hegemonic norm of Conrad's time. The second objective will take the findings of this study and compare it to the larger project of recovered masculinity in male-authored fiction of the nineteenth century just now underway.

The second part of this conclusion discusses the work I've conducted and my impression of its status at this point. In terms of my thesis, it is neither possible nor appropriate to make any definitive conclusion. This is my initial step into a much larger project. It is also my small contribution to the exploration that is now underway in Conrad.

At this point masculinity in Conrad cannot be absolutely defined. There is a hegemonic masculinity in many of Conrad's novels, which is usually split along racial and national lines. But in the Marlow stories there is no hegemonic order. All masculinity is interrogated by Marlow--and while interrogated, is always being redefined. For Marlow,

and perhaps for Conrad, the ultimate question is what is masculinity to him, what defines him.

By looking at how Marlow constructs himself for his listeners, and to a larger extent, specifically in *Heart of Darkness*, how he constructs himself for himself, I have shown how perceptions of our masculinity are productions. They are productions of a specific social environment, such as Marlow's nautical world, but also productions of larger social groupings, such as White Europeans, Imperialists, or Capitalists. It is also personal production--what you want known, how you present it, and to whom you want it known. I have investigated these productions through what is said about Marlow and by Marlow. I have looked at his actions or inactions, and I have listened carefully for what I believe is a subtext to Marlow's identity tied to his masculinity. And perhaps the most important reason for my including constructionism in this thesis is to establish that looking at gender is not solely looking at sexuality, and more specifically, looking at masculinity is not solely looking at homosexuality.

But then I do look at the sexual aspects of Marlow's character--because it is part of gender analysis and because it is a very rich area of investigation in Conrad. Marlow's feelings on women and female sexuality are by no means covert, and it is these feelings that make up a large part of his character--his masculine character: his misogyny, gynophobia, and frigidity. His preference for the sociality of males and his active exclusion of females is part of Marlow's homosociality. He exhibits a strong desire to have a world of male friendships free from the threat of women and perhaps "Others." The Others would most likely be persons of colour, but they may also be men of a different masculinity--men who may take friendship further forming homosexual relationships or men who may misunderstand close male friendships as homosexual ones.

The discussion of homosexual desire in the Marlow stories is really a discussion of "The horror! The horror!" (*HofD* 149) because as a reality, genital homosexuality between men for Marlow is never anything else. The exploration is really an exploration of how close to the edge Marlow can step and yet "draw back [his] hesitating foot" (*HofD* 151). It is a tracking of Marlow's fascination and repulsion with male homosexual desire.

In this project, I had hoped to cover some topics more fully and to include others that I feel are important to examine. Unfortunately, limitations and confines to such a project do exist. However, I feel at this stage, I can propose material that would continue this project in the direction I have laid out.

An important issue to be covered in other Conrad material is the traffic in women. There are women in Conrad who are exchanged between men, and this itself is an interesting area of analysis. But as well, I have pointed out that Conrad thwarts the standard kinship systems by adding incest overtones to his stories thereby countering the incest taboo; he also thwarts this system by having women (Mrs. Fyne, Flora, and Lena) place themselves into the political economy rather than their being tokens of exchange between men. Both of these motifs are fascinating when contrasted to Lévi-Strauss and Rubin's hypotheses.

And for myself personally, I regret not treating *Victory*, which perhaps is Conrad's most controversial, and I think most misunderstood, novel. It is also the text that planted the seed for my gender investigation. It is in *Victory* that one finds all aberrations to hegemonic masculinity. A gender investigation of this novel, with its fetishist Martin, its anti-hero Hiest, and its overt homosexual Jones, is a project I hope to engage in later.

And finally the issue of gender and race or race and gender. Marlow's sentiments on race are gendered. Or it could be said that his sentiments on gender are split racially.



Inevitably it would really depend on which subject you were privileging. Although White men in *Heart of Darkness* are marginalized, the Blacks are treated stereotypically. I think the most racist thing that Marlow does is construct Africa and the African as a fiction, just as he constructs himself, his "adventure," and Kurtz. His creation of Africa and the African are the simple conjuring of exactly what his audience expects Africa and the African to be (Marlow's audience of English sailors on the ship and Conrad's audience of English readers). There is little to humanize the African in any actual way. On a couple of occasions Marlow makes an attempt to point out the human, the "sameness" in this Other, but it is an attempt so self-conscious, it attracts attention to itself as posturing. The text betrays these attempts by having the narration broken so that Marlow is overtly addressing his listeners and no longer caught up in his story. It is rather as if "he caught himself in the nick of time." Whatever similarity he temporarily found with the man of colour, he quickly defers it by an assertion of his own self-construction.

And yet this portrayal of Black men is not the portrayal of the native woman or indeed of Jewel. The native woman is revered by Marlow; she impresses him so much that he aligns her with the jungle of Africa that has impressed him so much. And further, she is never treated with contempt or disdain as the Intended, the White woman, is. Marlow distances Jewel, too.

The question: is Conrad racist or is Conrad sexist has been raised by critics. I answer those questions with another question, one more conducive to a determinable reply. Is Marlow racist? Is Marlow sexist? Taking the latter question first, clearly he is sexist. Marlow harbours deep feelings of misogyny and does exhibit some gynophobia at times.

As to whether Marlow is racist, I believe he demonstrates this well enough in *Heart*

*of Darkness*, but for a more definitive examination of this question, one needs to explore the relationship of racism to history and culture. If racism is a product of one's time and culture, is one a racist? And if so, what does it mean to be true to one's time and place and be a racist? A new question arises that does not limit itself to Conrad but extends itself to many writers of the period: can one fault Conrad, as Achebe does, for being racist? Then again, can one, as many critics do, excuse or deny Conrad as a racist? The issue is complex and worthy of an effort toward clarification.

And finally I would like to add that although my topic is somewhat controversial, or at least so it seemed when I began this project, living with the subject, researching the area, finding critical material which points to my arguments or agrees with me, has made this seem far less radical. Perhaps controversy is only what is unfamiliar, what is new. I, in no way, believe that my reading of Conrad is the only reading of these stories, but I do believe it is an exciting new reading. I have, like Marlow, interrogated his masculinity, and looked at the masculinity of some of the other characters through his eyes. And like Marlow, I have been fascinated.

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